



How this guide helps

The following step by step guide provides you with basic information and advice on what to do if you have damp and disrepair issues in your privately rented property. If you would like additional support, you can contact us using the details below.

Advice Centre contact details

- **Tel** 023 80 59 2085
- **Email** advice@susu.org
- **Website** susu.org/support
- **Facebook** The Advice Centre - SUSU

Wellbeing

If you are concerned for yours or a fellow students wellbeing, you can contact the Universities wellbeing team on studenthub@soton.ac.uk or by calling 023 80 599 599. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Understand your rights to repairs

To understand your legal rights as a tenant regarding disrepair, you need to know what kind of agreement you have with your landlord. Do you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or are you a lodger (with a License)? If you are not sure, use the helpful Tenancy Checker tool: [Link to Shelter check your tenancy webpage](#).

Under the Assured Shorthold Tenancy your landlord has a legal responsibility to:

- Ensure all gas appliances are serviced and checked every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer (you have the right to see a copy of the gas service record).
- Ensure national standards safety standards are met for electrical installations and that appliances are checked by someone suitably qualified every 5 years.
- Maintain the structure and exterior of the house, including rooves, guttering, windows, drains and garden walls
- Repairs to common areas including entrance halls and stairways
- Repair appliances included as part of the rental agreement
- Repair sinks, WC, hot water, electrical installations and appliances and central heating and gas appliances

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 advice@susu.org

 **02380 592 085**



You will find a good summary of the landlord's repair responsibilities in the following video by Shelter: [Link to landlord repair responsibilities video](#)

Note: If you have a License (i.e.: you live with your landlord), your landlord is still responsible for making sure your home is in a proper condition.

What are my responsibilities for repairs?

Although the landlord must address the issues listed above, you are responsible for behaving in a 'tenant like manner'. What this means is that you need to keep the home reasonably clean, carry out minor maintenance like changing batteries in smoke detectors, or changing a light bulb. You usually also need to keep the garden and outside areas (including around the bins), in an acceptable state.

How do I know if my property is safe?

You may find the following guide on useful in assessing your property. It gives you tips on what to look out for and what the acceptable standards are.: [Link to guide how to rent a safe home.](#)

How to report disrepair to the landlord?

Whilst your landlord must by law address disrepair in your property, they can only do that once you have notified them of the issues.

The best way to report the problems is to write a letter. It is important that you report any repairs needed as soon as possible, as the owner cannot be held responsible if they are unaware of the problem. Always report disrepair in writing, as a record of your report may be needed in the future if repairs are not carried out.



A **letter should include** the following basics:

- The date of the letter
- The details of the landlord
- Your name and the address of the property
- A brief description of the disrepair and any relevant photos you have
- A reasonable timescale for the completion of the work (emergency repairs should be addressed in 24 hours; non-emergency can take few weeks to be addressed)
- A contact for you, so that the landlord/agency can arrange access to complete the repairs.

An **example template letter** for reporting disrepair can be found following this link: [Link to letter template](#).

Note: You should keep any relevant records of your contact with landlord, including any photos you have taken, phone calls, emails or letters you exchanged.

What timescales are reasonable for repairs?

It depends on variety of factors. For urgent problems (for instance broken toilet, broken boiler or no water), it is reasonable to expect the landlord to address it within 24 hours. If the problem is not urgent, the landlord will still need to prioritise fixing it but may need to wait for other tradespeople to become available.

What are landlord's rights to access property for repairs?

You should allow the property owner to access the property to carry out the necessary repairs. They should always give your 24 hours' notice (if you have an Assured Shorthold tenancy agreement) but may also have access without that notice in case of emergency (e.g., gas leak).

Disclaimer

Disclaimer: While care has been taken to ensure that information contained in The Advice Centre publications is true and correct at the time of writing, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of this information. The Advice Centre and SUSU cannot accept responsibility for any actions taken as a result of advice given in this publication.

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What to do if the property owner does not respond to requests for repairs?

You can seek help from the Southampton City Council's Contact Environmental Health for serious disrepair, or if you struggle to get your property owner to help and your property disrepair is causing you serious problems. You will find more details about the process and an online reporting tool: [Link to Southampton Council report a problem webpage.](#) The Council will respond to your report within 5 working days and will advise you of what steps they can take. In some cases, they may arrange an inspection to assess the issues. They will write to the property owner to advise them on what steps they must take to address the problems.

Can I ask for compensation for disrepair?

You can ask the property owner for a reduction in rent if the property was in poor condition, particularly if you suffered monetary loss or your belongings were destroyed because of the disrepair. If the property owner refuses, you may need to consider legal action. It is always good to start with a factual letter and requesting compensation from the property owner in writing, before starting legal action. For more information see this useful Shelter guide: [Link to Shelter guide.](#)

How to deal with damp and condensation?

Responsibility for damp can be a complex issue. For example, damp resulting from structural issues require action on the part of your property owner/letting agent. Condensation on the other hand may be a normal process occurring in the house where warm moist air meets cooler air, or a cold surface.

Often the steps for preventing condensation are simple:

- Close the bathroom door, open a window, and use an extractor fan
- Cover boiling pans, open a window, and use an extractor fan when cooking
- Dry clothes outside or in a room with an open window. Avoid drying clothes on radiators
- Keep your heating on a low temperature for a few hours a day
- Move bulky items away from walls to improve air circulation

If you have been following the above tips and the situation does not improve, you should write to the property owner reporting the issues (see section **How to report disrepair to the property owner?** above).