



***Waterford
City Council
Tenants
Handbook***

30th September 2011

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Waterford City Council Tenants Handbook

Foreword by the Director of Services

Waterford City Council has for over a century been providing houses for people. The current rental stock is over 3,100 dwellings.

Being a tenant of a local authority dwelling brings with it certain responsibilities – to your family, your neighbours, your community and to the City Council. As Housing Authority City Council has responsibilities to you, your family, your neighbours and your community.

As a landlord, the City Council provides a range of housing services including housing maintenance, housing allocations and neighbourhood development. These services are in addition to the general services provided by Waterford City Council – e.g. roads, parks and open spaces, supply of water and sanitary services.

This Tenants Handbook has been produced in order to provide useful information on the housing services available and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the tenant and the City Council,

I hope that this handbook will serve as a practical guide and reference.

Lar Power, Director of Services

Introduction

Waterford City Council is pleased to be able to provide you with this copy of the Tenant Handbook. As your landlord Waterford City Council is taking this opportunity to remind you of the range of services available to you as one of our tenants and your responsibility as a tenant in a Waterford City Council house.

This handbook is an important element in the flow of information between Waterford City Council and you. It also allows us to give you useful information about Waterford City Council and its many services.

How can I contact Waterford City Council's Housing Department?

We can be contacted at:

The Housing Department, Waterford City Council, Bailey's New Street, Waterford.
Tel: 051 – 30 99 00

We can also be contacted through our email address, housing@waterfordcity.ie

Your Tenancy

Tenancy/Letting agreement

The conditions of your tenancy are set out in detail in your letting agreement. For your convenience, we have highlighted some of the main points:

Q: How does my tenancy operate?

- The dwelling must be used as your principal home.
- Rent is payable weekly and is calculated by reference to the Differential Rents Scheme and is based on household income and household circumstances. Any changes of circumstances in income of household must be reported to the City Council.
- You must not, unless with the consent in writing of Waterford City Council, cease to reside in the dwelling for more than six weeks in any period of fifty-two weeks.
- You must give Waterford City Council four weeks notice, in writing, if you are surrendering your tenancy.
- You must look after and keep your dwelling in good condition.
- You must not make any structural alterations to the dwelling without our written permission.
- You must not park or store any Caravan or Mobile Home in the driveway, or on any part of the premises, pathway, or roadway adjoining the premises without the prior consent of the Council.
- No member of your household including visitors is to be involved in Antisocial Behaviour - conduct likely to cause annoyance, fear or disturbance to your neighbours, including loud noise of any kind.

The breach of any one or more of the conditions of your tenancy places your tenancy at risk and can result in the termination of your tenancy by the City Council. Under the law if your tenancy is terminated, the housing authority is not required to provide rehousing to you.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Why do I need to know the details of the letting agreement?

The letting agreement is a legally binding document. If the agreement is not kept, it could result in action being taken by City Council which could lead to eviction. The terms of the letting agreement are explained at the pre tenancy course, but if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask us.

Q: What is meant by a joint tenancy?

A joint tenancy can be between any two adults that are permanently resident in the dwelling. The most common type of joint tenancies are signed by couples. Should the status of the couple be changed through separation, divorce or death, the letting agreement will be changed. Please contact the housing office for further information.

What if my partner joins me after I sign the Letting Agreement?

If your household income changes and/or another person moves in, you will need to inform us because it will have an impact on your household income and the amount of rent you pay. Any person who moves into the household must be declared as an occupant and must apply to us for permission to reside in the dwelling. You will need to speak to a Housing officer to discuss this matter. Please see our contact details above.

Q: What should I do if I have to live somewhere else for a few months?

Our property has been let to you to use as a home. If you must be absent for six weeks or more in any one year, please contact us immediately. It is very important that we know exactly when you will be coming back.

Q: Can I work from home?

The letting conditions of your Letting Agreements provide that you must use the property “only as a private residence” and that you must not operate a “business at the premises

Waterford City Council will take steps to prevent use of the property as a shop, workshop etc.

Q: What happens to the tenancy if my parents are the tenants and they die or leave?

On the death or departure of both parents, the tenancy will normally be given to the eldest son or daughter, irrespective of the number in the family, provided that he/she has been registered as living there for at least two years immediately prior to the death or departure of the tenant. In determining succession, Waterford City Council will have regard to the housing need and natural rights of surviving brothers, sisters, sons, daughters who have resided in the household for a period of two years or more. Each case will be examined on its merits.

Q What if I have been living with other relatives who are tenants and they die or leave?

A person other than a spouse, partner, son or daughter who having had permission to reside if required, and has resided in the dwelling for 5 years immediately prior to the death or departure of the tenant, other than departure by way of purchase or acquisition of own accommodation, and has been declared and assessed for rent purposes, and has a continuing housing need, may apply to succeed to the tenancy.

Q: Can I pass my tenancy on to someone else before I die?

No, but a joint tenancy may be created if the other person has lived in the house as a declared household member for 2 years or more.

Q: What if, as a single person, I live alone as the tenant of my house?

Should you die, no other person shall be entitled to claim the tenancy of the house by succession.

Q: Can I charge someone to live in my home with my family or me?

No – The letting conditions prohibit this.

Housing Services

Waterford City Council provides suitable accommodation to qualified applicants in accordance with its Scheme of Letting Priorities for housing accommodation. We allocate dwellings in a fair and reasonable manner and we hope we have satisfied your housing needs. Changes in your household circumstances, however, may mean you have to review your housing needs and you should, therefore, be aware of all the housing options open to you.

Housing Transfers

Transfer applications from existing tenants will be considered in accordance with Waterford City Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities where existing accommodation is not adequate to meet the needs of the tenant or where there are other appropriate circumstances, such as the dwelling being no longer large enough for your needs or not suitable on the basis of a medical condition or disability.

First priority for housing transfers will be given to households where there is serious overcrowding and/or on medical grounds where the allocation of alternative social housing support would materially improve the person's medical condition or would materially improve living conditions for that person or persons.

Applicants will not normally be placed on the Transfer List unless they have been tenants of their existing dwelling for at least two years.

Some of the issues that will be taken into consideration by the Housing Department are:

- You need to have a Clear Rent Account.
- You have complied with all the conditions of the Letting Agreement.
- There is no record of serious anti-social behaviour in your present dwelling.
- You have been a tenant in the present dwelling for at two years.

Inter-Transfers

Tenants can apply in writing to Waterford City Council if they wish to exchange their dwellings. Conditions apply and the written consent of the Council is needed.

Transfers between tenants of different local authorities are permitted in exceptional circumstances, provided all the conditions as agreed between the two Authorities and the conditions of this scheme for such transfers are fully met.

Non-Disclosure of Information

The City Council may refuse to offer a transfer:

- Where a transfer applicant refuses to disclose any information, which is requested either for the purpose of assessing the application or for estate management purposes.
- Where a transfer applicant will not authorise the release of data/information about the applicant by other agencies where it is required for estate management purposes.
- Where a transfer applicant provides false or misleading information, either on the application form or at a subsequent interview.

Your Home

Repairs and Maintenance

Waterford City Council manages and maintains over 3,100 dwellings in Waterford City.

Q: Who is responsible for maintenance repairs?

Waterford City Council is responsible for many repairs but is not responsible for all repairs. Practical guidelines regarding repairs on some of the most common issues are listed below.

Q: How do we carry out our responsibilities?

We divide repairs and maintenance into two different categories:

1. Response maintenance
2. Planned maintenance

1. Response maintenance

If an item in your home is defective you should check whether it is your own or our responsibility by referring to the sections below, detailing the items that are the tenant's responsibility and Council's responsibility. If the particular item is our responsibility then you should report it to our Maintenance Department on (051) 849817. We will attend to your request as soon as possible, but you should remember that the repairs we prioritise depend on how urgent the particular item of work required is.

2. Planned maintenance

More general repairs, to ensure that the overall fabric of the house is kept in good structural repair are carried out on a programme basis. An example of this is a window and door replacement programme, which will identify what items of work or elements of the building are in need of replacement.

Q: How do I report repairs that need doing?

Any queries on repairs or reporting of repairs should be made to the housing maintenance section on (051) 84 9817. Repair requests are handled from 8.00am to 4.30pm Mon-Thur and 8.00am to 3.30 pm on Fridays.

Emergency calls only can be made to this number outside of the office hours above.

Waterford City Council's Responsibilities

Waterford City Council is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the items listed below when it is as a result of normal wear and tear.

- **Internal/ Structure of the Dwelling**

Waterford City Council is responsible for structural repairs of walls, ceilings, floors, staircases due to structural defects, damage caused by wet and dry rot, fire damage (except re-decoration).

- **External Repairs**

Waterford City Council is responsible for common shared amenity areas, lighting in communal laneways, stairs, paths, ramps and drives built by Waterford City Council and will repair damage caused by fair wear and tear. The Council is responsible for repairs/ replacement of front and side gates including frames, fuel sheds including repairs to roof or doors, the clearing of silt, leaf blockages from gutters/downpipes, any repairs due to storm damage, repairs to gutters, downpipes, fascia and soffits, repairs to roof and chimney, structural repairs of walls, ceilings, floors, fire damage, repairs to sewerage/main drain or blockages in same.

- **Electrical Repairs**

Waterford City Council is responsible for repairs to electric wiring and fittings provided by the Council including sockets, light switches, fuse board and cooker switch, ceiling roses, lamp holders and plugs, immersion heater repairs, showers (other than showers installed by the tenant), repairs to heat and smoke detectors (with the exception of batteries) and control panels.

- **Windows/ Doors and Locks**

The Council is responsible for the draught proofing of doors and windows and the replacement of windows and doors due to fair wear and tear. The Council is responsible for replacing external locks that are damaged due to fair wear and tear.

- **Plumbing Repairs**

Waterford City Council is responsible for venting air locks in central heating/water system, replacement or repair of the toilet bowl, wash hand basin, bath, toilet cistern and cover (only if damaged through fair wear and tear), dripping/leaking taps, replacement of tap washers from fair wear and tear, repair of ball cock from fair wear and tear, repairs to burst frozen pipes, attic tank replacement, servicing of gas or oil boilers installed by the Council, copper

cylinder replacement, repairs/replacement of waste pipes, sewerage/main drain repairs, replacement and repair of soil vent pipes

Repair to external wastepipes and drains.

- **Cooking and Heating Appliances & fireplaces**

The City Council is responsible for installation, replacement and repair to mechanical ventilation to cooking appliances only if installed by the Council. The Council is responsible provision of fire blankets. Fireplaces: the Council is responsible for the replacement of firebacks and fireplaces through normal wear and tear.

Waterford City Council is responsible for replacement of defective fireplaces where fire risk exists, replacement of defective solid fuel heaters in unfit condition, replacement of fire cheeks, immersion heaters.

Tenants Responsibilities

Tenants are responsible for the following, including alterations and additions made by themselves.

- **Structural & Internal Repairs**

The tenant is responsible for repairs arising from condensation damage if caused by ventilation/household management issues and only if City Council have adequate ventilation in place (i.e. extract vents if required)

Also, repairs to minor internal plaster cracks, repairs to cupboards, wardrobes, kitchen units and their doors, hinges, handles, catches, drawers, curtain rail and window boards, repair to floor coverings, repairs to wall tiles, all internal woodwork including doors, locks, handles, hinges, skirting, ventilator covers and permavents.

The tenant is responsible for arranging for chimney sweeping (every six months).

The tenant is responsible for all internal decoration.

- **External Repairs**

The tenant is responsible for maintenance and upkeep of gardens and hedges, T.V. aerials, and also repairs and maintenance of fences, gates and boundary walls.

- **Electrical Repair**

The tenant is responsible for elements of electric fires and all repairs to electric appliances and heaters, not installed by the council. The replacement and installation of light bulbs, repairs to any electrical alterations or additions undertaken by the tenant bulb replacement. The replacement of batteries in smoke and heat detectors. The installation, repair, replacement of doorbells. The replacement of fuses.

- **Windows, Doors and Locks**

The tenant is responsible for external door handles and internal window locks and handles which are damaged. The tenant is responsible for maintenance/replacement of window stays, catches and restrictors where damage is not caused due to fair wear and tear.

The tenant is responsible for the replacement of broken window glass. The tenant is also responsible for the internal painting of timber windows every 5 years.

The replacement of letter boxes is the tenant's responsibility.

- **Plumbing Repairs**

The tenant is responsible for cleaning of gully traps internally and externally. The replacement or repair of stopper and chains for baths, sinks, basins. The clearing of blocked house drains - sinks, bath, shower tray, toilet. The replacement of toilet seats. Damage caused to plumbing/central heating system by tenant.

The tenant is also responsible for the maintenance of the central heating system if installed by the tenant.

- **Cooking and Heating Appliances & Fireplaces**

The tenant is responsible for the ongoing and annual maintenance of solid fuel, gas and other heating/cooking appliances installed by the tenant, damage to room heaters by improper use and the replacement of glass panels to room heaters(unless installed by WCC).

The tenant is responsible for replacing filters in extract fans

The tenant is responsible for the provision of fire extinguishers.

Fireplaces: the tenant is responsible for the replacement of fire grates and fronts

- **General**

The tenant is responsible for repairs due to malicious damage, repairs due to burglary, the removal and disposal of rubbish, the control of rodents and pests and all damage not caused by fair wear and tear.

Special Notes

- When a tenant vacates their dwelling all dishwashers, fridges, washing machines, etc must be removed or a charge will apply.
- Keys will not be provided by Waterford City Council to lock windows.
- An information document on the control and management of condensation is available.
- The tenant is responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage by any person. The City Council will not undertake any repairs resulting from such damages.

- Any breach of tenancy (including rent arrears) may result in the withdrawal of maintenance services.
- The tenant shall be charged for unnecessary call-outs for inspection of items that are the tenant's responsibility.
- Waterford City Council may, from time to time in the interest of safety and for the protection of their property, repair an item that is the tenant's responsibility and shall charge the tenant the cost of the repair.

Health & Safety

We all have responsibilities to ensure a safe and tidy workplace, and you as the tenant are responsible for the following when routine repairs, maintenance works or remedial works are being undertaken

- The work area must be clean and tidy prior to repairs being undertaken
- Young children must not be allowed to access the work area or be left unattended in the property during repair works
- All pets must be controlled and kept clear of the works area
- You must comply with all reasonable instructions given by the Council or the repair team to maintain a safe environment for you and your family, the council staff and contractors during repair works
- All communication between you, your family members and Council staff or contractors must be conducted in a respectful and calm manner
- You must inform Council staff or contractors prior to commencement of repairs of any hidden hazard or risk which may exist and that you maybe aware of.
- Please advise Council staff at the earliest opportunity prior to repairs being undertaken of any medical conditions which may be aggravated due to the repair works being carried out

Alterations and improvements

You can make minor alterations, provided you get our written permission before you start. Whatever work you plan to do to your home, check if you need permission for the alteration. We will not refuse permission without a good reason, which we will explain to you. All alterations must be approved in advance by Waterford City Council.

Some examples of alterations/improvements

- Taking out or changing kitchen units or bathroom fittings, installing showers
- Moving radiators or installing your own central heating
- Painting the outside
- Putting up a garden shed or fence

If what you want to do will make the property less safe or reduce its value or would require planning permission in the normal course, we are unlikely to agree to the proposed alteration/work.

Remember that you are responsible for improvements to your dwelling. When you leave you may not be able to recover the cost of any improvements.

Adaptations for people with disabilities, mobility problems or elderly people

Waterford City Council will consider adaptations to your dwelling which will be required to allow you to continue to live independently in your home. Application must be made to Waterford City Council under the Housing Adaptation scheme which will be assessed on Medical Priority grounds. Full details are available on our website. www.waterfordcity.ie.

Maintenance Do's and Don'ts

- Don't put nappies, sanitary towels, kitchen cloths or paper other than toilet paper into toilets. If a toilet or sewer blockage is found to have been caused by foreign objects flushed down toilets a charge will apply.

- Do fit your waste outlet pipe with a mesh filter.

- Don't put cooking oil, fat or motor oil down sinks or toilets.

- Do know the location of your mains water stopcock.
- Do know how to shut off electricity in your house.
- Do fit a lagging jacket to your hot water cylinder.

New Dwelling Issues

If you have moved into a newly built home, it will be covered by a Builders Guarantee, which is normally 12 months. Any defects should be notified to Waterford City Council.

It is very important that while your home is under guarantee no one else does any work which will make the guarantee invalid. All problems must be referred to the Housing Department in order that the Builder can be given the opportunity to put them right.

Q: What about plaster cracks?

These are very common in new buildings and are due to the drying out process. Normally, they are nothing to worry about. Just fill them in when you decorate.

Q: What about condensation?

Newly built homes can contain some of the water absorbed during the building process. Please refer to the relevant leaflet attached to the rear of this document.

Emergencies

If an emergency repair should arise outside normal working hours, you can call our number (051) 84 9817. They will arrange for the correct emergency service in response to the request.

Examples of an Emergency:

- Serious risk to life or health.
- Imminent threat of the house being flooded by water or sewage.
- Total failure of the electricity supply or an electrical fault.
- A risk of significant damage to the property.

If the problem does not fall into the above categories, report the problem as soon as possible on the next working day. Remember that if Waterford City Council personnel are called out where there is not an emergency, the tenant will be charged the full cost of the call-out.

It should be noted that situations will only be attended to where the required work cannot wait until the next working day. Waterford City Council reserves the right to determine what constitutes an emergency that may be attended to outside of normal working hours.

If you need the FIRE BRIGADE, GARDAI or an AMBULANCE services, DIAL 112 or 999 yourself. DO NOT WAIT for a member of our staff.

If you have a GAS LEAK, phone the Gas Company IMMEDIATELY Tel: 1850 205050

Examples of an Emergency:

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If the problem does not fall into the above categories, report the problem as soon as possible on the next working day. Remember that if Waterford City Council personnel are called out where there is not an emergency, the tenant will be charged the full cost of the call-out.

Q: What if I lose my keys or lock myself out?

If you lock yourself out Housing Maintenance personnel will help you to get back in. However, we will have to charge for the service, including a charge for any damage that results. If you need extra keys you should arrange to have them cut yourself but you must hand them all in when you leave.

Q: Can I improve the security of my dwelling?

Yes, provided you do not interfere with the safety of the dwelling. Please note that only push button locks should be used on bedroom windows. We strongly recommend that you take professional and technical advice regarding your safety and security

Insurance

In the event of flooding or fire to your property, the City Council's insurance does not cover you for your damage to contents or personal possessions. We strongly advise you to take out your own household insurance (including cover for contents).

Fire Safety

The 4 Golden Rules of Fire Safety in the Home:

- Install working smoke alarms and test them regularly
- Make a fire escape plan and practise it often
- Check for fire dangers in your home and correct them
- Carry out a 'Last thing at night routine'

1 Install working smoke alarms and test them regularly

- Install smoke alarms today and ensure they are in good working order. Contact the Housing Maintenance Department to have a smoke alarm installed.

Note: Your sense of smell does not work when you are asleep.

- Check the smoke alarm once every week, by pressing the test button.
- Replace the batteries when they are not working and every year for the standard 1 year smoke alarm.
- If you have the 10 year smoke alarm, you need to replace the complete unit after 10 years.
- A minimum of 2 smoke alarms, properly located (one on each floor) should suit most homes. For maximum protection, a smoke alarm should be fitted in every room, except the bathroom, kitchen and garage.
- Smoke alarms should be fitted at the highest point and as close to the centre of the ceiling as possible.
- Vacuum the smoke alarms regularly and wipe the casing and slots as they can get clogged with dust which may prevent them from working properly. If you have a mains operated smoke alarm, ensure you switch off the smoke alarm at the mains before cleaning and remember to switch it on again.
- Install working smoke alarms and test them regularly

2 Make a Fire Escape Plan and Practice it Often

What to do in the event of a fire

- Keep escape routes clear at all times.
- Whether the fire has been discovered by you or your smoke alarm, stay calm and put your fire escape plan into action.
- Check doors with the back of your hand; if they are warm it means the fire is on the other side, so do not open them. Only open doors you need to escape through.
- If there is smoke, crawl along near to the floor where the air will be cleaner.

- Raise the alarm. Shout to wake everyone up, and make your way out by the quickest route.
- Do not investigate the fire.
- Go to an assembly point outside the home, where all occupants should meet.
- Once everyone is out of the house call the Fire Service at 999 or 112 from a call box, mobile phone or neighbour's house.
- Do not go back in until the Fire Service tells you it is safe.
- Make a fire escape plan and practise it often

3 Prevention is the Best Firefighter

- Check your home room by room for fire dangers and correct them.
- Remember: most domestic fires start in the living room, bedroom and kitchen at night while we are sleeping.

Kitchen

- Put a fire blanket and working fire extinguisher within easy reach in the kitchen and learn how to use them.
- When cooking, always use back rings first and turn in utensil handles, ensuring the handles are not over other rings.
- Keep cookers clean - grease is a fire risk.
- Turn off cooker when not in use.
- Never use a cooker for drying clothes.
- Check cooker is switched off properly before going to bed.
- Clean or replace filters in extractor fans on a regular basis.
- Avoid using chip pans as they are a major fire risk.

4 Check for fire dangers in your home and correct them

Kitchen

- Chip pans are a major fire risk so avoid using them or use them with extreme care.
- Never fill the chip pan more than one third full of oil or fat.
- Test the oil or fat temperature by placing a small piece of bread in the pan. If it crisps quickly, the oil or fat is ready.
- If the oil or fat is smoking then it is too hot. Turn the heat off and let the oil or fat cool down before starting again.
- Never leave a chip pan unattended.
- Never move a hot chip pan.
- Electrical items should be used carefully and stored properly when not in use.
- Never overload sockets as it is a major fire risk.
- Never run electric cables across cookers.
- Switch off and plug out electrical appliances when not in use.
- If electrical cables or plugs are damaged, worn or frayed, contact a qualified electrician.

Living Area

Open Fires

- Always place a proper fitting spark guard and fire guard in front of an open fire.
- Never place anything on the fire guard.
- Don't store items like papers, magazines, clothing or combustible items near a fire.
- Never use an open fire to air clothes as this is a major fire risk.

Chimney Cleaning

- Get your chimney cleaned regularly - follow this recommended cleaning guide:
 - Wood burning fires: 4 times a year when in use
 - Solid fuel fires: Once a year if using smokeless fuel
 - Solid fuel fires: Twice a year if using coal
 - Oil Fires: Once a year
 - Gas Fires: Once a year if designed for sweeping

Portable Heaters

- Use portable heaters with extreme care.
- Position portable heaters away from furniture, curtains and flammable items.
- Never move heaters when in use.
- Ensure portable heaters are switched off and/or plugged out before you leave the house or before going to bed.

Candles

- Never leave lit candles unattended and ensure candles are in their proper holders.
- Position candles away from draughts.
- Ensure candles are **NOT** near items that may catch fire such as curtains, clothing or bedding etc.
- Avoid moving a lit candle.
- Ensure all candles are **properly extinguished** before you leave the house or going to bed.

Smoking

- Never ever smoke when you are feeling tired, especially when you are in bed or relaxing in a chair.
- Remember: medication and alcohol can make you drowsy and smoking is a real fire risk when you are tired and drowsy.
- Always use an ashtray when smoking.
- Empty all ashtrays before going to bed. Ensure the ashtray contents are fully extinguished by running them under a tap before emptying.

Bedroom

- Never ever smoke in the bedroom.
- Have a torch or flash lamp near your bed for emergency lighting.
- Bring your portable or mobile phone to your bedroom for emergency use.

- Take extreme care when using electrical items, such as mobile phone chargers, irons and hair straighteners. Unplug and allow them to cool down completely before storage.

Electric Blanket

- Use electric blankets properly and follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Check your electric blanket regularly for wear and damage.
- When storing electric blankets, roll them instead of folding them.
- Get your electric blanket checked regularly.
 - **How to recognise a dangerous electric blanket?**
Have your blanket checked or replaced if:
 - the fabric or flex is worn or frayed;
 - there are scorch marks anywhere;
 - the tie-tapes (where originally fitted) are damaged or missing;
 - any connections are loose;
 - the plug or mains lead is damaged, make sure this is repaired before you use it. Remember, older blankets are much more likely to have one or more of these faults.
 - you are in any doubt!
 - **Always turn off and unplug your electric blanket before going to sleep.**

4 Carry out a “last thing at night routine”

- Ensure fires are well down and spark guards are in place in front of open fires.
- Do not leave your television, radio or music system on standby.
- Only appliances designed for 24 hour use should be left plugged in at night-time e.g. fridges, freezers etc.
- Plug out the mobile phone charger when your mobile phone is charged and when you are going out or going to bed.
- Check every room and close all doors when going to bed.
- Switch off and plug out your electric blanket before going to sleep.
- Empty ashtrays properly and extinguish candles, before going to bed.
- If your exits require keys for opening, ensure the keys are in the locks before going to bed.
- Ensure all escape routes are clear before going to bed.

Don’t Delay - Act Today!

It is important that you use this information now to promote fire safety in your home for you and your family.

Your Garden

In the interests of good Estate Management all gardens must be maintained in a neat and tidy condition.

You are responsible for the control of any plants or trees that are in your garden. Certain trees should not be planted in your garden. You are not permitted to plant leylandii trees in your garden. Leylandii is an evergreen conifer. You are not permitted to plant leylandii because of potential problems with overgrowth of this species.

No household or domestic rubbish must be allowed to build up in any part of your garden. If you have a car parking space, this does not mean that you can use it for car repairs. It is only for parking your car.

Waterford City Council's Environment Department operates a best kept gardens competitions each year.

Refuse Collection

Tenants are reminded of their responsibility regarding refuse collection. Your supplier will provide you with a calendar informing you of the dates of collection.

All suppliers operate a three bin system which is in operation in the City. An information pack will have been provided to you at your pretenancy meeting with your Neighbourhood Development Officers. The pack is also available by contacting Environmental Section at 051 30 99 00. Further information is also available on www.waterfordcity.ie.

Waterford City Council operate a waiver system (solely through Oxigen Environmental) whereby households on lower income or social welfare payments may qualify for reduced refuse charges. Further details from Finance Department on 051 309960. Waiver Forms are available from our website. (Download form).

Tenants should present their wheel bins at the kerbside, (or designated collection point if applicable) at the time specified by the supplier.

In areas serviced by wheel bins this is the ONLY method of collection of refuse. Tenants must present all their refuse in the wheel bin. The bin should not be overloaded. There shall be no additional refuse presented with the bin, whether in bags or otherwise. If a tenant has lost their bin, it is the tenant's responsibility to purchase a replacement bin. In the absence of a bin, refuse must not be presented for collection. The presentation of refuse in bags is a breach of the Waterford City Council bylaws and may result in a prosecution.

Non Domestic Rubbish

Proper disposal of these items is the responsibility of the tenant.

Vermin

You are responsible for the control of vermin in your dwelling and garden and should you experience a problem you need to make contact with a reputable pest control company to deal with the matter.

Your Neighbourhood

When you are allocated a dwelling by Waterford City Council you become more than just a tenant. You become a member of the community in which you live. Waterford City Council encourages you to become actively involved in your estate and is eager to hear your views and ideas on how your estate can be improved.

It is the goal of Waterford City Council “to create and maintain a quality living environment for our tenants”. Your co-operation and assistance is vital to ensure that together, we can build a safe and happy neighbourhood for you and your children.

The Sustainable Neighbourhood Unit (SNU) supports residents in local authority and private housing and encourages them to engage in the development of their neighbourhoods.

It aims to bring greater coherence to Waterford City Council’s services, delivering timely responses to neighbourhood concerns.

The city is split into seven neighbourhoods which are serviced by 4 Neighbourhood Development Officers:

Henry Moloney

Neighbourhood Development Officer for Ballybeg.

Ballybeg Office Tel : 051-378889

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Anti-Social Behaviour

Waterford City Council has adopted a strong position in relation to anti-social behaviour. The offending tenants and their families risk having their Tenancy agreement terminated. Anti-social behaviour is defined as:

(a) The manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purposes of sale or supply or distribution of a controlled drug (within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 and 1984),

Or

(b) any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, alarm, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority under the Housing Acts 1966 to 2002 or Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, or a housing estate in which the house is situate or a site and, without prejudice to the foregoing, includes;

- (i) violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person,
- (ii) behaviour which causes any significant or persistent impairment of a person's use or enjoyment of his or her home, or
- (iii) Damage to or defacement by writing or other marks of any property, including a person's home.

If a tenant is involved in the activities mentioned above, do not assume that we know about it. Make a complaint, giving full details of the nature of the complaint and any dates/times of the incidents concerned. The complaint should be forwarded to the Antisocial Behaviour Unit, Bailey's New Street. The Antisocial Behaviour Officer is Kevin Connolly, who is contactable at 051-849781 or by email at kconnolly@waterfordcity.ie

If you are the subject of a complaint, the matter will be fully investigated and if the complaints are found to be valid, action to institute legal proceedings will be taken. If you are involved in serious and persistent Antisocial Behaviour this could result in you or your family being evicted from your home.

It is important to note that any criminal activity should be reported to the Gardai.

Vacant Dwellings

Tenants are required to notify the Housing Department if they are vacating their dwelling.

Vacant dwellings in an estate can become a target for anti-social behaviour. If you intend surrendering your dwelling, you must give us four weeks notice. We can then make arrangements to have it re-let and avoid any problems associated with vacant units. If there is a vacant dwelling in your estate, don't assume that we know about it, tell us. Please contact us on 051 309900. The sooner we know, the sooner we can arrange to have it re-let.

Disposal of items from vacated dwellings

When a tenant vacates a house all property belonging to the tenant should be removed. In the event of a former tenant leaving property in the house, reasonable care will be taken not to let any of the property fall into other hands – however we do not undertake to defend the property against damage or wrongful removal by others, and do not accept any liability for loss of or damage to the property. On the expiry of 7 days following vacation of the property by the tenant, Waterford City Council will dispose of all contents and will not be responsible for any loss to the tenant as a result.

Your Rent

The Housing Department of Waterford City Council charge a Differential Rent for every tenancy. The amount of rent is assessed in accordance with the Differential Rents Scheme (the Scheme is reviewed annually) taking into account household income and household composition. A copy of the Differential Rents Scheme is available to all tenants. The rent must be paid every week or monthly in advance.

Methods of payment:

These include:

- In person at the Council's payments offices.
- On line payments – www.waterfordcity.ie
- Household Budget Scheme – deductions from Social Welfare (details from your local Post Office).
- Payment through rent payments card at local retail outlets and post Offices.
- Cheques, Postal Order (no cash) through the postal system.
- Credit Union.
- Standing Order. Forms are available at the Council's payments offices.
- Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

All household rents are reviewed on an annual basis where the tenants must supply details of household income and composition.

Every income coming into a household is assessable for rent purposes. You should keep Waterford City Council informed of any change in your household income or composition. For example, you should let us know when:

- A person in your household gains employment /changes employment or is made redundant.
- A person joins the household (complete a Permission to Reside form).
- /leaves the household
- A person in the household starts claiming Social Welfare payment.
- There is a birth in the household.
- There is a death in the household.

You should notify us of these changes by filling out a Change of Circumstance form which is available from the Housing Department or alternatively calling the Rent Office at 051 30 99 00 and a form will be posted to you. Upon receipt of your new details your rent will be reviewed. Any adjustments will be backdated accordingly.

It should be noted that failure to provide details when requested might result in the application of an estimated rent.

Q: What can I do if I am unable to pay my rent?

If you are unable to afford the weekly rent please inform the Housing Department immediately. For tenants who get into difficulties, Waterford City Council operates an Arrears Policy (copy available on www.waterfordcity.ie or in the Housing Office). Always try to avoid allowing your rent account fall into arrears. Should your account fall in to arrears, the sooner you tackle the problem the better.

Q: How do I make an arrangement to clear rent arrears?

Waterford City Council provides confidential help and advice to any tenant who has a difficulty paying their rent; you should contact the Housing Department as soon as possible. The next step is to work out a reasonable plan to clear off the arrears and agree this plan with the Housing Department. Once you make an agreement, it is imperative that you adhere to it.

Q: What if I don't notify the Council when my circumstances change?

When changes in your household circumstances come to light, your rent will be re assessed and your rent account backdated, which could lead to a debit/credit adjustment for rent account.

Q: Will I be taken to Court for rent arrears?

Yes, if you refuse to come to a reasonable agreement or if you do not keep to the agreed repayment plan, Waterford City Council will serve a Notice –to–Quit and seek repossession of the property.

Other Housing Services

Affordable Housing Scheme

Under this scheme new houses will be offered for sale to eligible persons at a subsidised cost. Eligibility is based on income grounds principally. The purchase of the dwelling would be outright, with the purchaser having full ownership of the house from the beginning. Loans can also be advanced from a Financial Institution or Waterford City Council – terms and conditions apply. (Over a 25-year period with the option of choosing either a fixed interest rate for 5 years or a variable interest rate). If the property is sold within 20 years from the date of purchase some or the entire initial discount must be repaid. Loan repayments can be subsidised in certain instances.

Housing Loans for House Purchases and Improvements

A person wishing to purchase a house, either new or second-hand or build a house or improve an existing house, who cannot get a loan from a financial institution, may be eligible for a Local Authority loan. In order to qualify, the applicant must meet an income eligibility test, which takes into account the income of the principal and subsidiary earner in the household.

Shared Ownership Scheme

This scheme offers home ownership in a number of steps to those who cannot afford full ownership in the traditional way. Initially, ownership of the house is shared between Waterford City Council and the purchaser. The successful applicants will initially acquire a minimum of 40% of the equity in the property by way of a Local Authority loan and rent the remaining equity. The main advantage of the scheme is that initial payments are lower than a mortgage. We encourage those who purchase by means of shared ownership to buy out the Council's share at an early stage.

Tenant Purchase Scheme.

Tenants of certain Local Authority houses for at least one year may apply to purchase their house. The price of the house is based on the market value less the stated discounts (presently the maximum discount is 45% available to tenants who are tenants 10 years or more). The purchase may be funded by way of a Local Authority loan or a loan from a financial institution. Certain categories of dwellings are excluded from the Tenant Purchase scheme. The application deadline for this scheme is the 31st of December 2011.

Alterations for people with disabilities or mobility problems

A scheme is available for carrying out essential adaptations in the instances above. Applications in this regard should be made to the Housing Grants Section on 051 309900. Further information is available on the website.

Mortgage Allowance Scheme

A Mortgage Subsidy over 5 years is available to tenants who surrender their dwelling and take out a mortgage to purchase a private dwelling. Certain other conditions apply.

Ventilating Your Home

Condensation in housing

Condensation is probably the main cause of dampness and mould growth in dwellings. As a result of continuing condensation walls, ceilings and sometimes floors become damp, discoloured and unpleasant due to mould growing on their surfaces. The following notes explain how condensation occurs and what YOU can do to prevent or cure serious outbreaks of it in your home.

Why Condensation Occurs

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface. The likelihood of condensation therefore depends on how moist the air and how cold the surfaces in the room are. The moistness of the air and the coldness of the surfaces depends on a range of factors, many of which are determined by the way the house is used.

When Condensation Occurs

Condensation usually occurs in winter. This is because the building surfaces are cold, more moisture is generated within the house and, because windows are opened less, the moist air cannot escape.

Where Condensation Occurs

Condensation, which you can see, occurs for short periods in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere. It also occurs for long periods in unheated bedrooms and sometimes in wardrobes, cupboards or corners of rooms where ventilation and air movement is restricted. Condensation can also occur on materials which are out of sight, for example in roofs.

What Is Important

In order to prevent or cure condensation problems the following four precautions are very important.

1. Minimise moisture production within the dwelling and confine it as far as possible to specific areas, e.g. kitchen, bathroom, scullery.
2. Prevent very moist air spreading to other rooms from the kitchen, bathroom or scullery or from where clothes are dried.
3. Provide some ventilation to all rooms so that moist air can escape.
4. Provide some level of heating.

Minimise Moisture Production

A. Dry clothes externally when possible.

- B. If using a clothes dryer, provide venting to the outside.
- C. Limit the use of moveable gas or paraffin heaters as these types of heaters release large amounts of water vapour into the air and greatly increase the risk of condensation.
- D. Reduce cooking steam as far as possible, e.g., keep lids on saucepans, do not leave kettles, etc., boiling for long periods.

Prevent spread of Moist Air

- A. Good ventilation of kitchen is essential when cooking or when washing clothes. If you have an extractor fan in your kitchen, use it when cooking, washing clothes and particularly when the windows mist up.
- B. If you do not have an extractor fan, open the kitchen windows and keep the doors between the kitchen and the rest of the house closed as much as possible.
- C. After taking a bath, keep the bathroom window open and the bathroom door shut until the bathroom dries off.
- D. Do not use unventilated cupboards for drying clothes.
- E. If you do dry clothes in the bathroom or kitchen run the extractor fan if you have one. Do not leave the door open or the moist air will spread to other parts of the house.
- F. If you have to use a moveable gas or paraffin heater make sure the room that the heater is in is well ventilated and sealed off from the rest of the house.

Provide some ventilation

The easiest method of reducing the moisture content of room air is to provide some ventilation. Ventilation removes the stale moist air and replaces it with fresh air which contains less moisture.

- A. In older houses a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplaces and draughty windows. However, in many modern houses and flats sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or a ventilator is open for a reasonable time each day and for nearly all the time the room is in use. Too much ventilation in cold weather is uncomfortable and wastes heat. All that is needed is a slightly open window or ventilator. Where you have a choice, open the top part of the window about 10mm (1/2"). If more than two people sleep in a bedroom the window should be opened wider, particularly during the night.
- B. If condensation occurs in a room where you have a heater connected to the chimney you should have the installation checked as the chimney may have become blocked.

Provide some heating

A. Try to make sure that all rooms are at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms. If you leave a room unheated you should keep the window open slightly and the door shut.

B. Heating helps to prevent condensation by warming the room surfaces. It takes a long time for the cold room surface to warm up so it is better to provide a small amount of heating for long periods than to provide a lot of heat for a short period. Houses and flats left unoccupied and unheated during the day get very cold so, whenever possible, try to provide a small amount of heating all the time.

C. In houses, the rooms above a heated living room benefit from the heat rising through the floor. In bungalows and some flats this does not happen. Some rooms are especially cold because they have large areas of outside walls. Such rooms are most likely to have condensation. Some heating is therefore necessary in these rooms. Condensation is likely if the rooms are not kept above 10°C. When living rooms are in use they should be heated to 20°C, if possible.

D. Insulation reduces the rate of heat loss and helps raise the temperature. However, even in a well insulated house, some heating may be necessary in cold rooms with no indirect heat input.

Mould Growth

If small black spots appear on the walls or other room surfaces, this is the start of mould growth. Any sign of mould growth indicates the presence of moisture. If the moisture is caused by condensation it is a sign that the level of moisture in the room needs to be reduced or that the heating, ventilation or structural insulation, or all three of them, need to be improved.

The mould growth spots should be washed off and the affected area sterilised. A suitable steriliser can be made by mixing 1 part bleach with 4 parts water. For example, a quarter of a litre of bleach should be mixed with 1 litre of water. Make sure that you then tackle the cause of the condensation as recommended under “What is Important”.

New Buildings

New buildings can take some time to dry out and during the first winter more heating and ventilation is necessary than in subsequent winters. Excessive temperature should be avoided to prevent warping of new joinery. With certain types of concrete roofs final drying may only be able to take place inwards. So, do not use waterproof decorations (such as vinyl papers) on the ceiling unless you have been given expert advice that this would not matter.

Effect of Extractor Ventilation on Fuel Burning Appliances

If you propose to fit an extractor fan or otherwise change the ventilation of a room which has a gas or solid fuel appliance connected to the chimney, you should get advice from the installer of the heating appliance. This is because there may be a risk of drawing toxic fumes back from the appliance into the room.