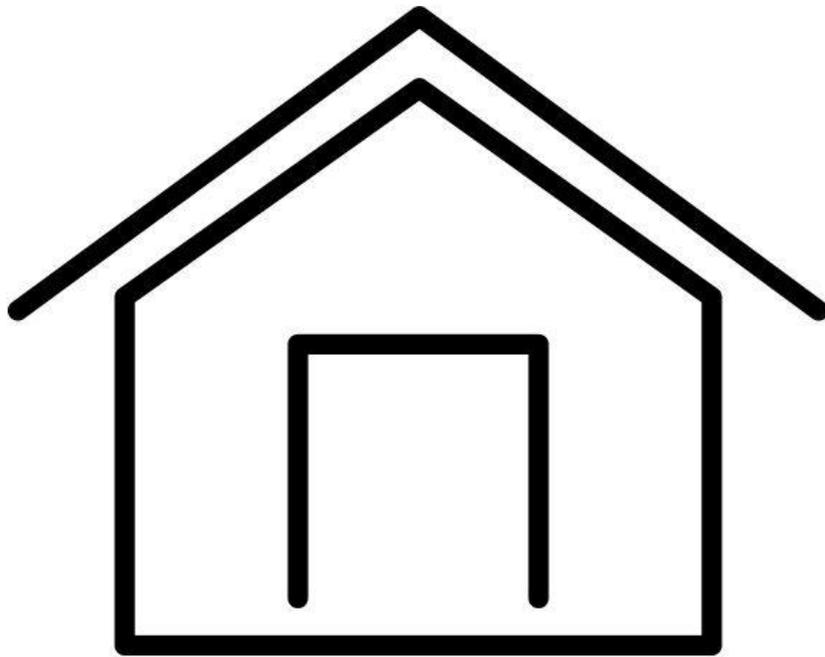




Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe
Galway City Council



Tenant Handbook
Draft Version

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Welcome

Galway City Council would like to welcome you as a tenant and is pleased to provide you with a copy of the Tenant Handbook.

This handbook provides you with the basic information you need as a tenant, including the responsibilities of Galway City Council as the landlord and you as the tenant.

The handbook is intended as a guide and does not go into detail about every aspect of Galway City Council housing services. Additional information is available on the website www.galwaycity.ie.

For your convenience, a list of contact telephone numbers, including emergency numbers, are included on page 33.

The Housing Department is located at:

Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe, Halla na Cathrach, Bóthar an Choláiste, Gaillimhe
Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway H91 X4K8.

You can call, without appointment, to the Housing Department. It is open to the public from Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 1 pm. Interview rooms are available where matters of a confidential nature may be discussed with experienced housing staff.

The Housing Department can also be contacted by phone or by email.

Telephone: (091) 536400

Email: housing@galwaycity.ie

Website: www.galwaycity.ie

Please keep this document in a safe place in your home as you may need to refer to it in the future.

Tenancy Conditions

Every tenant of Galway City Council signs a Tenancy Agreement. This document establishes a legal relationship between you and the Local Authority. The conditions of your tenancy are set out in detail in your Tenancy Agreement. By signing the agreement, you are agreeing to all of the conditions set out in the agreement.

The main points are summarised below.

How does my tenancy operate?

- You must live in the house as your main home and nowhere else.
- You must not use the house, garden or shed for business purposes of any kind.
- You must get written permission from the Council if you intend to be absent from the house for six weeks or more in any one year.
- Rent must be paid in full every week.
- You must give the Council full and accurate details of everyone living in your household and of your household's income.
- You must not take in lodgers or sub-tenants. All occupants of the property must be declared.
- The tenancy cannot be transferred to anyone else without the permission of Galway City Council.
- You must give the Council four weeks' notice if you wish to surrender your house.
- You must look after and maintain the dwelling properly.
- You must not make alterations to the property without prior written consent from the Council.
- Authorised officers of the Council must be allowed to enter and inspect the dwelling at reasonable times or carry out necessary work.
- Pets can only be kept with the Council's permission. Pets must be kept under control.
- You and your household, including visitors, shall not cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to neighbours.

The breach of any one or more of the conditions of your tenancy places your tenancy with Galway City Council at risk.

Community

When you are allocated a dwelling by Galway City Council, you become more than just a tenant, you become a member of the community in which you live. Living as part of a community means creating a social network amongst you and your neighbours. It involves helping one another out and looking out for those that are elderly and vulnerable. Galway City Council encourages all tenants to become active participants in their community and to take part in events and activities that allow you to meet and socialise with your neighbours.

Please be respectful, polite and considerate towards others.

Anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. Offending tenants and their families may have their homes repossessed.

Environmental Protection

Please respect the environment. Dispose of your waste correctly and do not litter. Try to reduce the amount of waste you produce and the energy and water you use. Get involved in local environmental initiatives. Small changes can make a big difference.

Equality and Diversity

Galway City Council is committed to implementing our public sector duty by having regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights. This commitment is motivated by the values of dignity, autonomy, participation, inclusion, social justice and environmental justice, as outlined in the Human Rights and Equality Statement developed by Galway City's Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The Housing Department is fully supportive of this Statement. Everyone who comes in contact with the Housing Department of Galway City Council can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. All will be treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity.

Protecting Our Staff

Galway City Council is committed to customer care but is also concerned about the safety and wellbeing of our staff. Tenants must treat Galway City Council staff, or anyone working on the Council's behalf, with dignity and respect. Inappropriate behaviour, including abusive language, will not be tolerated and will be treated as a breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

Confidentiality

Galway City Council is committed to treating information about you in confidence. We try to ensure that information we hold is accurate and up-to-date. If any of your details change, please let us know.

Living in Your Home

When you become a tenant of Galway City Council, we give you the right to occupy the property as your home, subject to the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement.

Moving In

When your property is ready to let, Galway City Council will make an appointment to meet with you so that you can sign your Tenancy Agreement. You will also be given the keys to your property.

The property will have been inspected and be in a good state of repair. Further decoration of the property is the tenant's responsibility. Furniture and white goods do not form part of the tenancy. If you need financial assistance purchasing essential items for your new home, you should contact the Department of Social Protection for further information on eligibility criteria. You must set up your utility bills so you will need to notify the relevant utility companies.

Your Household

Can I add another person to my household/tenancy?

If another person wishes to become part of your household, you must seek written permission from Galway City Council. If the request is approved and the person is granted permission to reside at your property, they will be included on your rent account. No person can reside at the property until formal, written permission has been granted by Galway City Council.

Can I take in a lodger or sub-tenant?

No. This would be a breach of your tenancy conditions.

Can I operate a business from my house?

No. This would be a breach of your tenancy conditions. You must not use the house, garden or shed for business purposes of any kind.

Pets

Can I keep pets in the house?

You must get written permission from the Council prior to getting a pet. You may keep domestic pets, such as cats and dogs, as long as they don't become a nuisance to your

neighbours. Generally, permission will only be given for one domestic pet per household.

Dogs must be micro-chipped and have an up-to-date dog licence. Licences must be renewed annually and they are available from your local Post Office. Restricted breed dogs are not permitted. Dogs should not be allowed to roam free around housing estates. It is the responsibility of the pet owner to clean up after their pet. Your pets are your responsibility.

You are not permitted to keep non-domestic animals at your property. Non-domestic animals, including horses, chickens, roosters, pigs or goats, will be removed. Poisonous and dangerous animals are strictly prohibited.

Horses are not permitted in or around any council property or on public lands in the city. Any horse found in an estate or public place will be impounded.

What are Restricted or Controlled Dog Breeds?

Certain types/breeds of dog are not allowed in Council property. These dogs as defined as 'Controlled Breeds' under the 'Control of Dogs Regulations 1998'. These include: American Pit Bull Terrier, Bull Mastiff, Doberman Pinscher, English Bull Terrier, German Shepherd (Alsation), Japanese Akita, Japanese Tosa, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Rottweiler, Staffordshire Bull Terrier and strains and crosses of these breeds.

If you have a problem with stray dogs, please contact the Dog Warden on (091) 757094.

Garden

Am I responsible for the garden or just the house itself?

You are responsible for both. It is part of your agreement with Galway City Council that you will keep your house and gardens in a clean and tidy condition and not allow them to become an eyesore. You are required to maintain your front and back gardens, boundaries and any laneway adjoining your house. You must keep them tidy by keeping them clear of rubbish, maintaining fences, hedges and walls, cutting the grass and ensuring that plants, shrubs and trees do not become over-grown. You are expected to keep the footpath adjoining your property, including road gutters, free from litter.

Vehicles and Parking

Please be considerate when parking at your dwelling. This applies to all household

members and visitors to the dwelling.

- Obey the rules of the road at all times.
- Do not park or drive on open/green public spaces, footpaths or grass verges.
- Do not park unroadworthy or illegal vehicles within the boundary or general vicinity of your home.
- Occupied caravans and motorhomes are strictly prohibited within the boundary or general vicinity of your home.
- Please contact your local Garda station if you suspect a car has been abandoned in the vicinity of your home.
- Do not cause an obstruction that could affect access of emergency services.
- Do not block anyone's gate or driveway.
- Tenants do not have designated parking spaces and must not appropriate communal parking areas for their own use. Trailers or horse boxes should not be stored in parking spaces.

Can I park a caravan or mobile home at my house?

A caravan, mobile home or camper van must not be placed or kept within the curtilage of the dwelling, otherwise than in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the regulations made thereunder. Permission must be sought from Galway City Council. Unauthorised caravans can be impounded and the cost of removing and storing the caravan is charged to the tenant.

CCTV

If you wish to install CCTV at the property, you must request permission from Galway City Council stating the reason CCTV is required. Before approving the request, the Council must be satisfied that:

- The CCTV system covers just the property you are residing in and no other property or communal area.
- Installation of the CCTV system will not cause damage to any property.
- Suitable signage is installed.
- Galway City Council is able to view the cameras once fitted, at installation or at a later time, if requested.
- The CCTV system complies with relevant Irish and European law.

CCTV installed on any residence is the responsibility of the residents in that dwelling. Galway City Council is not the data controller of this data. If cameras are clearly focused

on areas other than your own property, this will be deemed as behaviour causing nuisance and is a breach of your tenancy agreement. Galway City Council can request that CCTV equipment is removed from your property. We reserve the right to take legal action to remove it, if necessary.

Rent

You must pay your rent and any other charges when due. You must give Galway City Council full details of all household income. For more information on rent, see page 11.

Maintenance and repairs

In order to maintain your rented dwelling in good condition, repairs and maintenance are necessary. As the tenant, you share responsibility for these repairs and maintenance with the Council.

The Council is generally responsible for the structural elements of the dwelling while the Tenant is responsible for day-to-day maintenance and general upkeep of the dwelling. For more information, see page 13.

You must get the Council's written agreement before starting any improvements, alterations or additions to your home.

Breach of Tenancy

Breach of tenancy is the term used when you fail to keep to the terms and conditions of your Tenancy Agreement. The Tenancy Agreement is a legally binding contract between you and the Council. A breach of one or more of the conditions of your tenancy places your tenancy at risk and can result in the repossession of your home by the Council.

Where a breach of tenancy is confirmed, Galway City Council will issue a statutory Tenancy Warning. If the breach continues following the statutory Tenancy Warning, Galway City Council can commence proceedings to obtain a Possession Order for the property through the courts.

Behaviour that may result in the Council taking legal action against you includes:

- Rent Arrears
- Damage to property
- Arrestable criminal offences, such as drug dealing
- Engagement in serious and/or persistent anti-social behaviour
- Continuing to break the rules of the Tenancy Agreement, despite warnings asking you to stop

If you are evicted from your home for a breach of your tenancy, the Council will deem

that you have made yourself intentionally homeless as a direct result of your own actions. If this occurs, you may not be re-housed by the local authority.

Neighbourhood Nuisance

A range of things can cause neighbourhood problems resulting in minor disputes. Neighbourhood nuisance problems are common. However, most can be resolved quickly and easily without causing undue distress or upset. Galway City Council will not generally become involved in neighbourhood nuisance problems. If the first your neighbour hears of your problem is from us, it can make matters worse.

What is Nuisance?

A nuisance is inconsiderate behavior that causes others to suffer; it is not usually aimed at one person. The term is applied to various types of conduct which are considered to be less serious than anti-social behaviour. Examples of nuisance might be failing to adequately control a pet, a poorly maintained garden, the accumulation of litter, minor noise pollution, family arguments affecting neighbours and minor verbal harassment.

What can I do if I am having problems with my neighbours?

The first thing to consider is that your neighbour may not be aware that their actions are causing a nuisance. If this is the case, you may be able to resolve the problem by simply speaking to your neighbour and drawing their attention to the matter in a tactful manner. Generally, this is the best approach to neighbourhood nuisance as the problem can be quickly resolved and you still maintain a good relationship with your neighbour.

If you are unable to resolve the issue, you can contact the Housing Estate Liaison Officer for your area who will advise you how best to deal with the problem. If you wish to complain about nuisance, it is recommended that you keep a diary of the dates, times and details of any alleged incidences. In the case of excessive noise, you can take legal action through the District Court under the Environmental Protection Act 1992.

For information on anti-social behavior, see page 24.

How to be a good neighbour

Getting along with your neighbours is an important part of community living. You should try to always respect your neighbour's privacy and not intrude on their property. You should also try to look out for your neighbours, in particular older residents. If you think any of your neighbours are in need of help or support, contact the Housing Department.

How to be a good neighbour

- Welcome new neighbours and say hello to them.
- Respect your neighbours right to live peacefully.
- Do not engage in behaviour that offends or upsets others.
- Maintain your house and gardens.
- Make sure you and your visitors park cars safely and in a way that doesn't create difficulties for others.
- Take responsibility for your pets.
- Dispose of your waste correctly and do not let refuse build up in your house or garden.
- Warn neighbours when you are going to do something particularly noisy: drilling, hammering or having a party.
- Keep noise, in or near your home, right down from 10pm to 8am.
- If you have a dog, do not leave it barking constantly in the home, or in the garden, and clear up any mess it makes.
- Make sure your children think about how their playing habits might affect neighbours.

Moving Out

Can I pass on my tenancy to someone else?

No. However, if there are others living with you for a period of at least 2 years, they may be entitled to succeed the tenancy. Each case will be examined on its own merits.

What if I want to give up the tenancy of my house?

You may decide you wish to end your tenancy with Galway City Council. Before you do end your tenancy, it is important to speak to a member of staff in the Housing Department who can give you all the information you need to make a final decision. In deciding to leave a council property, you are giving up all rights and entitlements to the property and any future housing needs will not be the responsibility of the Council.

If you decide to surrender your tenancy, you must give us four weeks' notice. When you leave the house all furniture and white goods must be removed or a charge will apply.

Costs incurred by the Council in relation to works to a vacated house will be deemed to be the responsibility of the previous tenant where the works are not attributed to normal wear and tear. The Council will seek to recoup these costs.

Rent

The Housing Rents Section will assess your rent and deal with any queries you may have about your account, method of payment or problems with rent arrears.

How is my rent calculated?

Your rent is calculated using the Council's Differential Rent Scheme. Rents are assessed on total household income and taking into consideration details of all household members, including dependents. It is important that you provide Galway City Council with full details of household composition and income so that your rent can be calculated accurately.

The Council reviews the Differential Rent Scheme every year and it is subject to change. A copy of the current Rent Scheme is available on request.

When is my rent due?

Your rent falls due on the Monday of each week.

How can I pay my rent?

The Council provides a range of payment methods:

Standing Order: Payment through your bank

Household Budget Scheme: Deductions from social welfare

An Post: Payment at any Post Office using a Billpay card.

Pay Online: at www.galwaycity.ie

In person: at the Cash Office in City Hall. (Mon – Fri 9.00am – 4.00pm)

What if my circumstances change?

You should keep the Council informed of any change in your household income or those living in the house. For example, you should let us know when:

- A person in your household gets a job
- A person in your household becomes unemployed
- A person joins the household
- A person in the household starts claiming social welfare
- A student continues or commences 3rd level education
- There is a birth in the household
- There is a death in the household

What if I don't tell the Council about a change in circumstances?

When we discover that you have not notified us of a change in your circumstances, your rent will be reassessed and your account backdated. This could result in significant arrears on your account.

Can I get a statement of my rent account?

Yes. Statements of Account are sent to all tenants during the year. The statement shows details of the rent charges, payments and adjustments made to the account. It also shows the balance on your account. You can request a statement of your rent account at any time.

What if I have difficulties paying my rent?

If you are unable to pay your rent, please inform Galway City Council immediately. It is in your interest to inform us of your difficulties at the outset and to try to avoid your rent account falling into arrears.

You should contact Galway City Council's Debt Management Unit and they will help you in any way they can. A payment plan can be arranged to allow you to clear your rent arrears over time. If you are in arrears, the sooner you tackle the problem the better the outcome. You may also wish to contact the local Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

The relevant contact details are on page 34.

Will the Council take me to court for rent arrears?

Yes. If you refuse to come to a reasonable agreement or if you do not keep to the agreed plan, the Council will serve the appropriate warning letters and can institute legal proceedings to recover vacant possession of the property. If you are evicted for rent arrears, you are still responsible for the arrears and the legal costs.

Tenants who have arrears on their account will not be eligible to apply for a transfer to another Council dwelling. In addition, rent arrears may affect your eligibility to purchase the property under the Tenant Purchase Scheme.

With the exception of essential repairs, maintenance work may not be carried out where rent accounts are in arrears. This will be dealt with on a case by-case basis at the discretion of the Council.

Maintenance and Repairs

It is a condition of your tenancy that your property is kept in good order and state of repair. If you have any queries about repairs and maintenance, you should contact the Housing Maintenance Section of Galway City Council.

Will the Council carry out any repair I want?

No. Galway City Council is responsible for many repairs but it is not responsible for all repairs at your house. There is a clear division of what repairs are your responsibility and what repairs are the Council's responsibility. In general terms, the Local Authority is responsible for most structural repairs and repairs due to fair wear and tear.

The tenant is responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage and damage caused by negligence. There are some repairs which the Council will consider carrying out if the tenant pays the necessary charge.

A list of the Council's responsibilities and the tenant's responsibilities in relation to maintenance and repairs is found in the Appendix on page 35.

What repairs am I responsible for?

A list of the Council's responsibilities and the tenant's responsibilities in relation to maintenance and repairs is found in the Appendix on page 35.

Will the Council make an exception?

The Council considers requests to carry out repairs which are the tenant's responsibility only in exceptional circumstances, such as old age where it is impossible for the tenant to carry out the repairs. If you feel you are unable to look after your house, you should contact the Housing Estate Liaison Officer in your area for advice.

How do I make a repair request?

It is your responsibility as the tenant to notify the Council of any maintenance faults. You can contact the Council:

by telephone: 091 536400

by email: housing@galwaycity.ie

in writing: Housing Maintenance, Housing Department, Galway City Council, City hall, College Road, Galway

in person: The Housing Counter is open to the public Mon-Fri from 9.30 am to 1 pm.

The Council will investigate your report and advise who is responsible for the repair. Where the Council is deemed to be responsible, you will be given an indication of when

the repair will be carried out.

Respect for Galway City Council and Contracted Staff

It is a condition of your Tenancy Agreement that you do not threaten or abuse Council staff or anyone working on the Council's behalf. Inappropriate or threatening behavior will not be tolerated. It will put your tenancy at risk and may result in works not being carried out at your property.

Tenants should not call to the housing office whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

How long will it take for repairs to be carried out?

The Council categorises maintenance complaints under four headings:

Emergency	Repairs carried out where there is a possible danger to human life.	1-3 working days	Examples include: Electrical problem with fuseboard, faulty socket, tiles falling off the roof
Urgent	Repairs carried out quickly to avoid damage to the house in cases where the tenant has not caused the problem.	10 working days	Examples include: Leaking water pipe, no water in the tap, burst pipe
Routine	These are medium priority repairs.	12 weeks	Examples include: Replace fire backs, faulty heating system
Cyclical	These are low priority works, such as planned maintenance and upgrades.	Cyclical maintenance programme every 5-7 years.	Examples include: Leaking gutters, rotting fascia board

It is the aim of Galway City Council to respond to maintenance requests within the above time scales, subject to available resources and the co-operation of the tenant.

What should I do if the repair team call to my house when I'm not there?

If the repair team calls to your house and cannot gain access, they will leave a card with a contact number. You should telephone and leave details of the best day/time to call again and a contact telephone number. If you are not at the property during normal working hours, you should arrange with a neighbour or friend to be present to allow the repair team to gain access to the property.

Who carries out repairs caused by malicious damage?

You are responsible for repairs arising from all deliberate or malicious damage to Galway City Council property, no matter who causes it. Galway City Council will not carry out these repairs.

Can I make alterations to my house?

You must get the Council's written agreement before starting any improvements, alterations or additions to your home. We are usually happy to agree to alterations, once an approved contractor carries them out, but we must check them out first.

You must also get the Council's written agreement to do any of the following;

- put up any type of shed
- erect fencing or gates in the front or rear of the house
- erect any aerial, satellite dish or any fitting or fixture to the outside of the house
- install a patio/paving/decking/pond
- paper the internal walls of the house
- paint any external walls, woodwork, cement, gates or fencing.

You may need planning permission for certain works. All such alterations become the property of the Council. They are not removable by the tenant if the tenancy is terminated nor is any compensation allowable in respect of them.

In the case of unauthorised alterations carried out, the Council may require you to fully reinstate the property to the original condition.

Your responsibility under Health & Safety

Please note that the Health, Safety & Welfare at Work Act 2007 & Construction Regulations 2013 apply to construction works at domestic dwellings, including local authority tenants who undertake construction works at their rented dwelling. Certain maintenance and repair works may be covered by this legislation. Where such works are not being carried out personally by the tenant, the regulations require appointment of competent contractors and may, depending on circumstances, carry other liabilities and/or responsibilities. Compliance is the responsibility of the tenant.

Is my house insured by the Council?

The Council insures the structure of all rented houses. It does not insure the contents. As a tenant, you are advised to insure the contents of your dwelling, as this is your responsibility.

Will the Council call to inspect my house?

Yes. Council employees may call to carry out an inspection of the property or to carry out necessary repairs. You must allow employees of the Council to enter & inspect the property. Gas, water and electricity supply authorities or any contractor employed by the Council must also be allowed to enter the property to carry out inspections or

necessary works.

Am I responsible for pest control?

Yes. While Council officials will be available to provide advice and assistance, as the tenant, you are responsible for arranging pest control services in your home. You can help deter mice and other rodents from your house by not storing waste in or around your house and by not leaving food out in your garden for pets or other animals.

What about maintenance in the case of transfer of tenancy?

Where a transfer from one Council house to another takes place, the tenant has responsibility to ensure that the property being vacated is left in excellent condition. The Council will not allow transfers to proceed if the condition of the primary property is unacceptable at the time of inspection prior to transfer. Also, if fixed items such as kitchen units, fireplaces or wardrobes are removed by the tenant from the property being vacated, the tenant will be charged for the replacement of these items and the cost may be added to the tenant's rent account. If the vacated property has to be cleaned up by the Council, the tenant will be liable for all clean-up costs incurred.

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Safety in your Home

Home security

There are some very simple steps you can take to help improve the physical security of your home:

- Always close your windows and lock the doors when you go out, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- Don't forget to secure any side doors or gates.
- Make sure that you do not leave tools, bicycles or other items lying about in the garden of your home.
- If you have to go out at night time, consider leaving a light on in the bedroom or living room. You might consider fitting an automatic control which turns a light on at dusk.
- Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries when you go on holiday and tell someone trustworthy and known to you to keep an eye on your house for you.
- Never leave valuables lying around. Limit the amount of cash kept in the home.
- Do not leave keys on a string behind the letterbox, hidden under the doormat or in other "hiding" places.
- Pull curtains at night.
- Make sure you lock your shed.
- Photograph and mark all valuable property.
- If you have an alarm fitted, use it.
- Consider fitting a good quality door chain and use it when strangers call.
- Do not let anyone in to your property until you are satisfied you know who they are and what they want.

Advice on home security is available from your local Crime Prevention Officer. Contact your local Garda Station for more information. The contact details are available on page 34.

Electricity

- Know the location of the fuseboard so that circuits or power can be switched off in the case of an emergency.
- Do not overload electric sockets with appliances.
- Use properly sized fuses on all electrical appliances.
- Do not tamper with wall sockets, wall switches, the fuse board, or any part of the electric installation in the house.

- Switch off isolator switches (disconnect switch) before moving any electrical appliance, such as a fridge or washing machine.
- Make sure that electrical plugs of all appliances are removed from wall sockets before going to bed at night.

Where it is the tenant's responsibility to repair an electrical fitting or installation, (other than the replacement of bulbs or fuses), the work should be carried out by a qualified and competent electrical contractor. Where such a contractor carries out electrical work in a Council dwelling, the name and the business address of the contractor must be sent to the Housing Maintenance Section with a brief description of the work carried out.

Gas

- Know the location of the shut off valve for the gas supply to the boiler and cooker.
- Do not tamper in any way with gas boiler or any gas appliances.
- Make sure that wall vents are fully open at all times in rooms with open gas fires.
- IF YOU SMELL GAS IN YOUR HOUSE
 - Ensure gas appliances haven't been left on and unlit.
 - Don't smoke or use a naked flame.
 - Don't unplug or switch anything electrical on or off.
 - Open windows or doors.
 - If the appliances are off but the smell persists, turn off the gas supply at the meter and contact Bord Gais.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS FOR BORD GAIS 1850 20 50 50 (24 HOUR LINE). IF YOU CAN'T GET THROUGH, DIAL 999.

Do not use a phone in the immediate area of the leak, either call from outside of the property or use a neighbour's phone, if necessary.

Plumbing

- Know the location of the stopcock in the kitchen (usually beneath the kitchen sink) and know how to turn off the water supply in the case of an emergency, such as a burst pipe.
- In the case of a burst pipe, once you have turned the water off, the next thing is to try to prevent further damage to the house and your belongings. If leaking water might threaten the property's wiring, turn off your electricity at the fuse board. To reduce water damage, use the simple solution – grab a bucket and put it under the leak.
- If you are going on holidays, make sure that stopcock in the kitchen is turned off

before leaving the house.

- When the house is unoccupied in very cold weather, you can leave background heat on (or set the timer to come on for a few hours each day and night) to prevent pipes freezing.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that has no colour, taste or smell. It is produced when any fossil fuel such as gas, coal, oil or wood is burnt without enough oxygen.

To prevent carbon monoxide building up in your home,

- Ensure that any new appliance fitted by an approved installer is serviced at least once a year.
- Ensure that flues and chimneys are checked and swept to remove any blockages.
- Ensure that permanent ventilation openings are kept clear
- If you do not have a carbon monoxide alarm in your house, contact the Housing Department of Galway City Council to request one.

Fire Safety

Fire is a danger in every home. In the event of a fire, get out, stay out and dial 999 or 112 immediately.

Fire prevention

Prevention is the best firefighter. Check for fire dangers in your home and correct them.

X DO NOT X	√ DO √
X DO NOT Smoke when you are in bed, tired or if you have consumed alcohol or are on medication	√ DO Put a fire blanket and working fire extinguisher within easy reach in the kitchen and learn how to use them.
X DO NOT Leave the room when there are candles burning	√ DO Use a proper fitting spark guard and fireguard with open fires.
X DO NOT Leave young children alone near an open fire or cooker	√ DO Turn off your cooker when not in use and keep clean & free from grease.
X DO NOT Leave matches and lighters where children can reach	√ DO Keep your gas cylinder outside, on solid ground and away from anything hot
X DO NOT Leave the room when a chip pan or frying pan is on, even for a minute	√ DO Use a proper holder for candles and keep away from items that may catch fire.

X DO NOT Overload electrical sockets as it is a major fire risk – one socket, one plug	✓ DO Repair or replace faulty electrical appliances immediately
X DO NOT Use electrical appliances that don't work, If electrical cables or plugs are damaged, worn or frayed, contact a qualified electrician.	✓ DO Check your electric blanket regularly for damage and do not use if you are in any doubt. Unplug your electric blanket before you go to bed.
X DO NOT Run electrical appliances from a light socket	✓ DO Empty ashtrays before you go to bed. Run the contents under the tap before you bin them.
X DO NOT Use a heater or the cooker to dry clothes. Never place clothes to dry on a fireguard or in front of an open fire.	✓ DO a fire safety check before you go to bed.
X DO NOT Use petrol or paraffin to light a solid fuel stove	✓ DO Close all doors at night
X DO NOT Store items like paper, magazines, clothing or combustible items near a fire	✓ DO Practice extreme care when using portable heaters and ensure they are switched off and/or plugged out before you leave the house or going to bed.
X DO NOT Burn waste in your open fire or stove	✓ DO Clean your chimney regularly
X DO NOT Leave your mobile phone charger plugged in at night time or when leaving the house	

Fire detection

- Install smoke alarms and ensure they are in good working order.
- Check your smoke alarms regularly, at least once a week.
- Replace the batteries every year and immediately when you hear the warning beep.
- Vacuum your alarm casing to remove dust every six months.

Plan for escape

Make a Fire Escape Plan and practice it often:

- Keep escape routes clear at all times.
- Whether you or your smoke alarm have discovered the fire, 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 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. (This is usually by the front door).
- Do not investigate the fire.
- Once everyone is out of the house, call the Fire Service at 999 or 112.
- Do not go back in until the Fire Service tells you it is safe.

Fire safety checks

Every night:

- ✓ Switch off all appliances not in use at night
- ✓ Ensure fires are well down and place a spark guard in front of open fires
- ✓ Extinguish all candles
- ✓ Empty all ash trays
- ✓ Keep your way out completely clear
- ✓ Close all doors

For further information on fire safety, you can contact Galway Fire Authority. The contact details are available on Page 34.

Condensation

To avoid mould forming in your home and affecting your belongings, you need to avoid creating condensation. Condensation is created when the moisture in the air from everyday living, such as cooking, washing, hot baths and drying clothes, reaches a cold surface (such as a wall or window) and some of the water in the air is left behind. This dampness encourages mould to grow.

To control condensation in your home, remember the key points:

- Reduce the amount of moisture you produce and try to limit it to certain areas of the house. Dry clothes outdoors, when possible.
- Reduce the number of surfaces in your home and keep it free from clutter.

- Improve the ventilation. Open windows for a short while when cooking/bathing to allow the moisture to escape.
- Maintain an adequate room temperature. It is better to turn your heat on low for a long time rather than on high for a short time.

An information leaflet on Controlling Condensation and Mould is available on the website www.galwaycity.ie.

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Tenant Participation

Galway City Council recognises the importance of resident and tenant participation in estate management and is committed to working in partnership with residents and tenants to promote estate management in their estates.

Engaging with communities

We encourage you to become actively involved in your estate and we are eager to hear your views and suggestions on how your estate can be improved.

To help you to become involved, Galway City Council has employed Housing Estate Liaison Officers (HELOs). Each HELO is designated to a group of estates across the city and provide a high profile presence on the estates. They will deal individually with any query you have on your tenancy and will deal regularly with the local resident association or representative group for your area. Contact details for the HELOs are provided on page 34.

If there is no Residents' Association operating in your area and you and your neighbours are interested in establishing one, Galway City Council can assist you. Grants are available for community activities and for establishing Residents' Associations. Training and information is also available to assist your group participate in estate management.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Galway City Council is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour in our estates to create safer and better communities for our tenants.

Galway City Council expects all its tenants to show consideration and respect towards their neighbours.

It is recognised that the vast majority of Council tenants live in, and wish to enjoy, the peaceful occupation of their dwellings and that only a very small number of tenants are involved in anti-social behaviour. The Council will not allow a minority to spoil it for the majority.

We need your help in order to succeed in tackling anti-social behaviour in your area. Please report any incidences of anti-social behavior to the Council. All information will be kept in the strictest confidence.

- All anti-social behaviour should be reported to the Council. The Council will deal with any such behaviour in the strongest possible manner.
- It is important that complaints of a criminal nature are also reported to An Garda Síochána for investigation

Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour

The legal definition of anti-social behaviour is as follows:

(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 1997 to 2007)

(b) Any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, 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 1966-2014 of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 or a Housing Estate in which the house is situate 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 or defacement by writing or other marks of any property, including a person's home.

Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2014

What can I do if I am a victim of anti-social behavior?

If your neighbours are causing problems for you and other neighbours and they are tenants of the Council, do not assume that we already know about it. You should contact the Housing Estate Liaison Officer for your area either by telephone, by email or by letter. It will be helpful if you keep a record of the dates and times when incidents occur and the names of the person involved, if known.

What should I do if I witness anti-social behavior?

Take note of any incidents you witness and record the date, time and persons involved. Report it to the Housing Estate Liaison Officer for your area and to your Local Garda Station. Do not wait for someone else to report it.

What if I am afraid to report anti-social behavior?

This is understandable. However, the names and addresses of complainants will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to the person against whom a complaint is made.

What happens when a complaint is made?

The Council will respond to complaints by initially seeking to agree a resolution between the parties informally. This may involve a meeting with the Housing Estate Liaison Officer, mediation or other forms of voluntary dispute resolution. The Council liaises with An Garda Síochána and other agencies in the city when investigating complaints.

Please note that, on receipt of a complaint, preliminary enquiries may be made to confirm its validity and to ensure that the complaint is not being made maliciously or in order to cause annoyance.

If an informal resolution is not possible, the Council will undertake the following actions and will escalate them, when required, if the offending behaviour does not cease.

- Formal meeting with senior housing staff
- Statutory Tenancy Warning
- Application for Possession Order (eviction proceedings) and/or Excluding Order

A statutory Tenancy Warning is designed to prevent and prohibit anti-social behaviour. However, in serious cases, housing authorities can bypass this process and proceed directly to the Courts to recover possession of a dwelling involved in anti-social behaviour.

The Housing Department's approach is to try and maintain people in their tenancies, unless the circumstances are so severe as to merit enforcement action. A copy of Galway City Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is available on request.

What if a complaint is made against me?

If a complaint is made against you, we will arrange to meet with you. You will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint and you will be treated in a fair and impartial manner. The Council will consider all relevant matters and any representations or observations made by you in deciding on the appropriate course of action.

There is an obligation on you, the tenant, to ensure that neither you, nor any member of your household engages in anti-social behaviour of any kind.

- If you, or any member of your household, engages in anti-social behaviour, it can seriously affect you and your tenancy.
- Tenants and their families who engage in anti-social behaviour may face eviction or be excluded from the dwelling and the surrounding area.
- Galway City Council may refuse to sell a dwelling to a tenant where it considers that the tenant is or has been engaged in anti-social behaviour.
- Galway City Council may refuse a transfer to an alternative property to a tenant where it considers that the tenant is or has been engaged in anti-social behaviour.

What is an Excluding Order?

An Excluding Order is an order issued by the court which prohibits a person from entering a dwelling and can also prohibit a person from entering the surrounding area of the dwelling. These orders can be sought against a member of a tenant's household who is engaging in anti-social behaviour. This targeted approach avoids the possible eviction of an entire household.

If the tenant chooses not to apply for the Excluding Order through violence, threat or fear, or for any other reason, the Council has the authority to apply for the Excluding Order in the interests of good estate management.

When the court grants an Excluding Order, it is an offence for the person against whom the order has been made to breach that order.

All tenants are responsible for their behavior, the behavior of any visitors and the behavior of their children and pets.

Your Housing Options

Galway City Council provides suitable accommodation to qualified applicants, in accordance with its Scheme of Letting Priorities. We allocate dwellings in a fair and reasonable manner. In doing so, we hope we have satisfied your housing need.

Future changes in your household circumstance may mean you need to review your housing situation and, therefore, we would like to make you aware of all the housing options available to you as our tenant.

Can I apply for a transfer to another property?

Yes, council tenants can apply to transfer to alternative accommodation for reasons of overcrowding, downsizing, medical/compassionate grounds or exceptional circumstances. Maintenance issues or anti-social behavior are not grounds for transfer and will only be considered in exceptional cases.

To qualify for a transfer, you must meet the following conditions:

- Hold a tenancy in the present property for a period of at least 2 years
- Have a clear rent account
- Have kept the dwelling in a satisfactory condition, subject to inspection
- Have no record of anti-social behaviour

How soon can I apply for a transfer?

Council tenants who have been a tenant in their present dwelling for a period of at least two years can apply.

How do I apply for a transfer?

You must complete a transfer application form, which is available from the Housing Department.

When I am applying for a transfer, can I choose the area?

Yes. It is reasonable to express a preference for a general area (East or West of the city). You will be placed on the transfer list for that area. However, it is not appropriate to specify individual estates or houses.

If I am approved for a transfer, what happens next?

You will be added to the transfer list for the area of your choice. It is not possible to give an indication of how long it will take before you are transferred, as it will depend on the area you choose and the availability of houses in that area.

Costs incurred by the Council in relation to works to a vacated house will be deemed the responsibility of the previous tenant where works are not attributed to normal wear and

tear. The Council will seek to recoup these costs.

Can the Council refuse to make a transfer?

Yes. The Council will refuse to make a transfer offer in the following cases:

- There are arrears on your rent account. Transfers may be considered in cases where there is an accepted arrangement in place to clear the arrears and it has been kept for at least 6 months
- You have not complied satisfactorily with your Tenancy Agreement
- You or members of your household have engaged in nuisance or anti-social behaviour
- Your present dwelling is not being kept in a satisfactory condition
- Non-disclosure of information. The Council may refuse a transfer if false or misleading information is furnished to GCC or information requested is not given.

The Council will not consider transferring a tenant because of unsatisfactory relations with a neighbouring tenant or because of dissatisfaction in general with the estate or neighbourhood.

Can I add someone to my tenancy?

A joint tenancy is a tenancy where more than one tenant signs the Tenancy Agreement. If a sole tenant wishes to add someone to their tenancy (for example, a partner or spouse), they can apply to Galway City Council for a joint tenancy. Each case will be considered on its merits and a new Tenancy Agreement will have to be signed.

Can I remove someone from my joint tenancy?

Sometimes due to a breakdown of a relationship, you may wish to change your joint tenancy to a sole tenancy. This change can only happen when both tenants put a request in writing to Galway City Council. All tenants requesting a change to the tenancy will receive relevant information to ensure they understand the implications of their actions. They will be advised to take legal advice and make independent informed decisions.

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 Local Authority will normally facilitate the continuation of tenancy by a family member, provided that he/she has been living in the dwelling for at least two years immediately prior to the death or departure of the tenant and had been declared for rent assessment. The person must qualify for social housing support and the property must satisfy their housing need. If the person will be

over-accommodated in the property, they may be transferred to a smaller property. Each case will be examined on its own merits.

Can I buy my dwelling?

There is a national Tenant Purchase Scheme whereby Council tenants can apply to purchase the property they are residing in. The terms and conditions of the scheme, including the eligibility criteria and the properties available for sale, are subject to change. Not all Council houses are deemed eligible for purchase. You are advised to contact the Housing Department if you are considering purchasing your council house.

Can the Council provide me with a mortgage to purchase a property?

Local Authorities can provide finance for house purchases. The terms and conditions are subject to change and you should make contact with the Housing Loans Section for more information.

Will the Council assist me in carrying out improvements to my rented dwelling?

Where you are a tenant applying for medical reasons, the Council may consider carrying out improvements or alterations to your house. Full details of these schemes are available from the Housing Department.

My house is over-crowded, is there anything I can do?

Yes. You can apply for a transfer to more suitable accommodation. In exceptional circumstances, the Council may consider carrying out alterations to your existing house.

Climate Action and the Environment

We all have a part to play in keeping our community clean and in protecting our local environment.

Waste Management

Galway City Council tenants are responsible for disposing of their own waste in an appropriate manner.

Tenants are obliged to have a three-bin system, provided by a licensed waste collector, in place for the management of their waste. It is a breach of your Tenancy Agreement if you do not.

Waste is separated as follows:

- Compost bin for organic waste
- Recycling bin for recyclable materials
- Waste bin for non-organic waste and non-recyclable waste only.

Your waste collector is required to offer advice on what goes in which bin and inform you of the correct collections day/s for your area. For further information, contact your waste collector directly.

Put your wheelie bin neatly on the footpath or designated collection point on bin collection day and don't overfill your bins.

Galway City Council may periodically request written records from you to ensure that you are managing your waste in an appropriate manner.

It is illegal to burn waste.

Burning of waste is strictly prohibited in appliances or on your property. Uncontrolled burning of waste is illegal and can cause air pollution which may lead to serious health and safety issues.

Galway City Council promotes positive action for the environment.

You can help in the following way:

- ✓ Keep your house and surrounding area clean and litter free
- ✓ Adopt a reduce - reuse - repair - recycle approach to managing your waste
- ✓ Choose low-energy rated appliances
- ✓ Turn off appliances when not in use
- ✓ Use sustainable modes of transport

- ✓ Conserve water
- ✓ Do not put nappies, sanitary towels, kitchen cloths or paper other than toilet paper into toilets or drains

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Tenant Welfare

Galway City Council provide a range of supports and interventions to assist tenants sustain and gain value from their tenancies.

Tenancy Training

All tenants are required to attend pre-tenancy training prior to moving in to their properties. At this training, the wide range of services available to Galway City Council tenants is outlined.

Post-tenancy supports are also available, including training on topics such as committee skills, parenting skills, budget management and drug awareness.

Social Work Service

The Housing Estate Liaison Officers are available to assist and offer advice to all of our tenants. In addition, the Housing Department provides a social work service. If you wish to discuss issues relating to your tenancy with a member of the social work team, please contact the Housing Department for more information. Referrals are accepted from support agencies, as well as through self-referral.

Look after your mental health

It is important to Galway City Council that tenants are safe, well and happy in their home and environment. However, from time to time, there are things that can get on top of you and make life that little more difficult.

There are few things you can do to help lift your mood:

- ✓ Eat well
- ✓ Keep in touch with friends and family
- ✓ Take a break
- ✓ Keep active
- ✓ Drink sensibly
- ✓ Ask for help
- ✓ Do something you're good at
- ✓ Talk about how you feel

Emergencies

Galway City Council has an out-of-hours emergency call service. If an emergency should arise outside normal working hours, tenants can call (091) 536400. They will arrange for the correct emergency service in response to the request. Situations will only be attended to where the required work cannot wait until the next working day. The Housing Department 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, DIAL 999 OR 112 yourself. DO NOT WAIT for a member of the Council's staff.

If you have a GAS LEAK, phone Bord Gais IMMEDIATELY at 1850 20 50 50

Examples of an Emergency:

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

If staff are called out where there is not an emergency, the tenant will be charged the full cost of the call-out.

If the problem does not fall into the examples above, report the problem as soon as possible on the next working day.

Useful Telephone Numbers

To follow.....

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APPENDIX 1

Housing Maintenance – Tenant and Council Responsibilities

Tenant responsibilities

The following are examples of the types of repairs for which you are responsible:

Internal Repairs:

- ✓ Internal plaster cracks.
- ✓ Repairs to or replacement of cupboards, wardrobes, kitchen units and their doors, hinges, handles, locks, catches and drawers.
- ✓ Curtain rails and window boards.
- ✓ Chimney sweeping.
- ✓ Repairs arising from condensation damage.
- ✓ Wall and floor tiles.
- ✓ Internal woodwork such as floors, doors and skirting boards.
- ✓ Ventilator covers.

Doors and Windows:

- ✓ External and internal locks and handles.
- ✓ Window stays, catches and restrictors.
- ✓ Draught proofing of doors and windows.
- ✓ Replacement of broken glass.
- ✓ Permavents where fitted.
- ✓ Internal tiles on window sills and window boards.
- ✓ Letter boxes.
- ✓ Timberwork on windows, internally & externally, should be painted/varnished by the tenant on a regular basis (maximum interval of five years).

External Repairs:

- ✓ Maintenance of gardens and hedges in tidy conditions.
- ✓ Repairs to, or replacement of fences and garden boundary walls erected by Council and by tenant.
- ✓ Repairs to, replacement of and re-erection of front gates, side gates or doors leading to garden areas.
- ✓ Fuel sheds or outhouses.
- ✓ Cleaning of silt, leaves or other deposits from gutters & gulleys.

Electrical Repairs:

- ✓ Ceiling roses, lamp holders and plugs.
- ✓ Fuses, except main fuses.

- ✓ Elements for electric fires. All repairs to electric appliances, fires and heaters not installed by the Council.
- ✓ Replacement of light bulbs and any bulbs that may be required for pilot lights.

Plumbing Repairs:

- ✓ Cleaning of gully traps.
- ✓ Cost of clearing of blocked house drain where a single drain serves a dwelling and the apportioned cost of clearing a combined drain.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of waste pipes inside the dwelling.
- ✓ Clearing air locks in pipes.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of taps on sink unit and wash-hand basins including leaking and dripping taps.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of toilet bowl.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of wash-hand basin.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of bath.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of toilet cistern and cover.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of ball-cock in toilet or other water flotation control unit within the toilet unit.
- ✓ Replacement or repair of toilet seat, chains and handles.

Cooking and Heating Appliances:

- ✓ Solid fuel, gas or other heating or cooking appliances installed by the tenant(s).
- ✓ The basket / grate in all fireplaces and the replacement of glass panels in doors of room heaters. A replacement range will not normally be considered
- ✓ Repair and replacement of tiles on fireplace / hearth. A replacement fireplace/hearth will not be considered.

General:

You are responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage. If the Council undertakes repairs resulting from such damages, the cost of such repairs will be charged to the tenant(s).

You are responsible for repairs to doors, windows, fixtures and fittings in the dwelling caused by destruction or damage by burglary, housebreaking, larceny or theft.

Council responsibilities

The local authority may at their discretion carry out repairs and maintenance resulting from normal wear and tear without removing the responsibilities you have in relation to the maintenance of the property.

The Council is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the following items

Structure of the Dwelling.

- ✓ Structural repairs of walls
- ✓ Structural repairs of ceilings
- ✓ Structural repairs of floors
- ✓ Structural repairs of skirting
- ✓ Structural repairs of staircases
- ✓ Structural repairs of the roof (including tiles/slates, ridge cappings and barges)
- ✓ Structural repairs of chimneys (external parts)
- ✓ External repairs to airbricks and ventilators
- ✓ Repairs due to damage caused by wet and dry rot
- ✓ Fire damage repairs (except redecoration)
- ✓ Replacement/repairs of fascia board and soffit

External Repairs

- ✓ Communal amenity areas
- ✓ Lighting in communal areas
- ✓ Communal stairs, paths, ramps and drives built by the Council
- ✓ Maintenance (not cleaning) of gutters and downpipes
- ✓ Replacing external doors and frames and weatherboards, where needed and identified by the Council.
- ✓ Replacing window frames and sashes, where needed and identified by the Council.
- u Replacement of fences, where necessary and identified by the Council

Electrical Repairs

- ✓ Repairs and renewal of electrical wiring
- ✓ Repair/Replacement of sockets
- ✓ Repairs/Replacement of ceiling roses
- ✓ Repairs/replacement of lamp holders, light switches, immersion heaters
- ✓ Wired mains smoke detectors installed by Galway City Council

Plumbing Repairs

- ✓ Cistern and Water Storage tanks (cracked and leaking through wear and tear)

- ✓ Stopcocks, back boilers and hot water cylinders
- ✓ Toilet cisterns, basins, taps, toilet bowls cracked or leaking (through normal wear and tear)
- ✓ External wastepipes and drains – not blockages

Cooking and Heating Appliances

- ✓ Defective fireplaces where fire risk exists
- ✓ Defective solid fuel heaters
- ✓ Fire cheeks, immersion heaters

Exceptional Circumstances

The Council will consider requests for repairs, which are your responsibility only in exceptional circumstances where it is impossible for you to do so. In these instances, work will be carried out on a chargeable basis.

Note: The Council shall ensure that, any project/works/construction/maintenance/repairs to the dwelling, which arise in accordance with its responsibilities under the Letting Agreement, and performed upon its direction, are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013.