

Types of tenancies

This information is for people renting privately in Northern Ireland.

It's important to know what kind of tenancy you have. You have different rights depending on your tenancy type. Your tenancy type may change over time and not match what your agreement says. The terms of your agreement determine what kind of tenant you are, not the name of the agreement. [Speak to our advisers](#) if you're not sure what kind of tenant you are.

Fixed term or periodic tenancy

Fixed term tenancies have a start and end date. Check your tenancy agreement to see when your tenancy ends. You must keep to your agreement for the entire term. It's sometimes called a fixed term agreement.

Periodic tenancies do not have a set end date. If you pay a month's rent, that is how long your tenancy is for. It will continue until you or your landlord ends the tenancy. It's sometimes called a 'rolling' or 'month-to-month' tenancy. It's easier for your landlord to [evict you from a periodic tenancy](#).

Tenant, licensee or subtenant

Not everyone who pays rent to a landlord is a tenant. Tenants, licensees and subtenants all have different rights. Tenants have more rights than licensees and subtenants.

Tenants typically:

- pay rent to their landlord at regular times

- have a contract saying how long the tenancy will last
- are entitled to notice from their landlord to enter the tenant's home (or room)
- are entitled to written notice to quit from their landlord

Licensees typically:

- rent a room in their landlord's home
- get extra services from their landlord such as cleaning, cooking or laundry
- are not entitled to notice from their landlord to enter the tenant's home (or room)
- do not get a written notice to quit from their landlord
- cannot make changes to their space

Examples of licensees include, if you live:

- in student halls of residence
- in temporary housing, such as a hostel
- with friends or family and do not have a written agreement
- in housing your employer provides and you'll lose your home if you lose your job

A lodger rents a room in a property they share with their landlord. A lodger can be a tenant or a licensee. It depends on the practical arrangements in place, not only what is in the contract.

Make sure to check your agreement. Even if it's called a licence agreement, or refers to you as a licensee, what matters are the actual terms. You could be a tenant, which means you have more rights. [Speak to an adviser](#) if you're not sure whether you're a licensee or tenant.

Subtenants typically:

- rent from someone who is a tenant
- are in shared housing

For example, a landlord rents out a property to one person and that tenant sublets a room in the property to you.

As a subtenant, you have the same rights as the tenant. Your rights end when the tenant moves out. If you rent from a tenant, make sure they have permission from the landlord to rent to subtenants. If they do not have permission and the landlord evicts them, you'll be evicted too.

Protected tenancy

If you're a protected tenant, you:

- have a rent controlled tenancy
- cannot be evicted as easily as most tenants
- do not have implied terms

[Speak to our advisers](#) if your landlord is trying to evict you from a protected tenancy.

Most tenancies are not protected anymore and it's difficult to work out if you're a protected tenant. You're not a protected tenant if you moved into your private rental after 1 April 2007.

You may be a protected tenant if:

- you moved into the property before 1 April 2007
- your home was built or converted for letting before 1956
- your home was first rented out before 1978
- a tenant was living in the property in October 1978

You can [check the Rent Register](#) to see if you are in a protected tenancy. [Speak to our advisers](#) if your home is not on the Rent Register and you think it is a protected tenancy.

Inheriting a protected tenancy

If a protected tenant dies, they may be able to pass the tenancy on to a family member who was living with them. If you inherited a protected tenancy after 1 April 2007, this is a statutory tenancy. It means you cannot pass it on to another relative after you die.

If you are a protected tenant and your landlord is trying to evict you, [speak to our advisors](#) or a solicitor.

More advice

- [Finding a private rental](#)
- [Ending a private tenancy](#)
- [Deposits and fees](#)

Footnotes