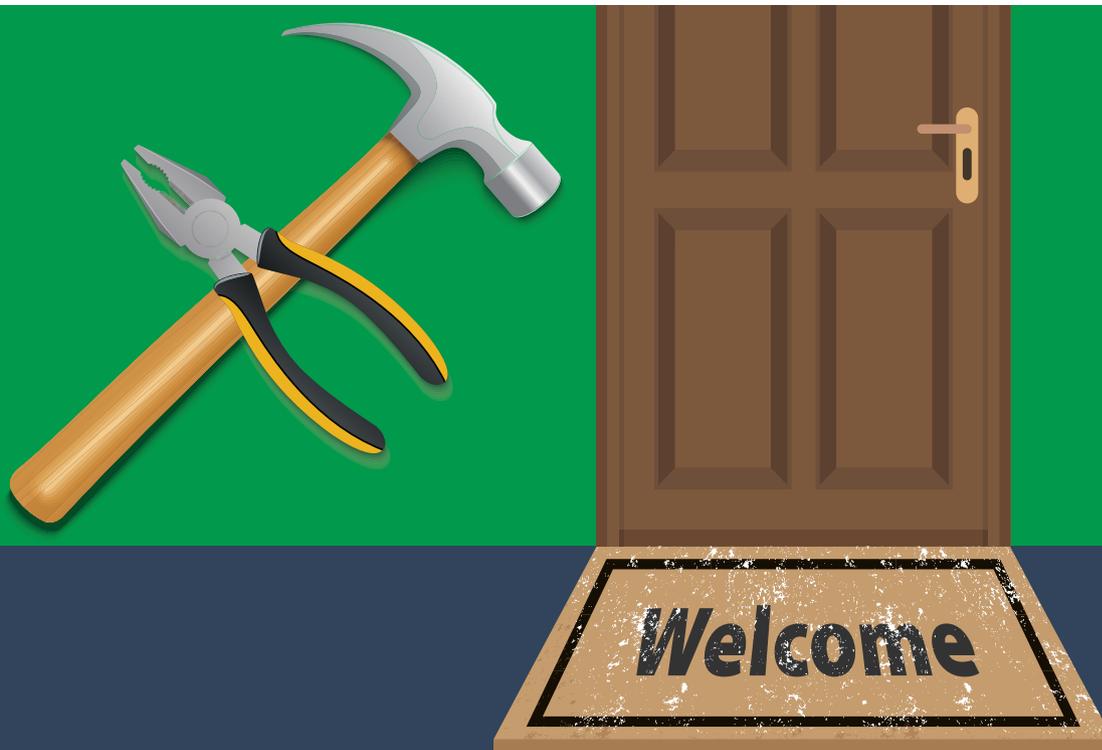




Wicklow County Council Handbook for Tenants



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INTRODUCTION

In this tenant handbook, printed in 2023, Wicklow County Council, as Landlord, would like to highlight the range of services available to you as our tenant. This handbook is an important element in the flow of information between the Council and its tenants.

It will allow the Council to convey more and better information on the role of the Council and the structures within which that role is exercised. We also wish to clarify your obligations as a tenant. Updates are regularly available on our website at www.wicklowcoco.ie

All information in this booklet is correct at time of going to press.

How can I contact the Council?

You can write to us at:

- Housing Section
Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Wicklow.
- Telephone 0404-20100
- Housing@wicklowcoco.ie
- HousingRents@wicklowcoco.ie

You can call without appointment to our public housing counters at Bray Municipal District and Wicklow County Council, County Buildings where matters concerning you may be discussed with experienced housing staff.

We want to make sure that there is a two-way flow of information, and we provide comprehensive customer service for this purpose. If you have something to say, we want to listen.

The public opening hours are as follows:

| | |
|--|--|
| Customer Care Counter, Wicklow Town, County Buildings | 9.00 am – 5.00 pm |
| Arklow Municipal District..... | 9.00 am – 4.00 pm |
| Baltinglass Municipal District... | 9.00 am – 1.00 pm 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm |
| Bray Municipal District..... | 9.00 am – 1.00 pm 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm |
| Greystones Municipal District.. | 9.00 am – 1.00 pm 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm |
| Wicklow Municipal District | 9.00 am – 1.00 pm 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm |
| Tinahely Area Office | 9.00 am – 1.00 pm 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm |

Please note that these times are subject to change.

You may require an appointment if you wish to see a particular member of staff.

For your added convenience, a list of contact telephone numbers including emergency numbers is included in this handbook.



TENANCY CONDITIONS

The conditions of your tenancy are set out in detail in your Tenancy Agreement. For your convenience, the main points are summarised below:

- Rent must be paid in full every week
- Any staff member or Contractor authorised by Wicklow County Council has the right to enter and inspect the dwelling (during normal working hours), including taking photographs of our property
- The tenant shall pay all other bills in respect of the premises during the tenancy
- You must not take in lodgers or sub-tenants unless this is fully in accordance with your tenancy agreement and a government scheme
- The dwelling must be used as your main place of residence
- You must not, save with the consent of the Council, cease to reside in your dwelling for more than six weeks in any one year
- The dwelling must not be used for business purposes of any kind
- You must look after the dwelling properly
- You must not make structural alterations to it without prior written permission from the Council
- You and your household including visitors shall not cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to neighbours
- If permitted, only domestic pets may be kept and these must be kept under control (max 2 dogs)
- You must submit full details of income and household circumstances of every occupant of the dwelling
- You must return your Differential Rent Form when requested
- You must give 4 weeks' notice when surrendering the tenancy
- You must insure all contents of the house
- On termination/surrendering of tenancy vacant possession of property must be given to the Council

Tenants evicted for breach of tenancy agreement will be regarded as having deliberately rendered themselves homeless and will not be eligible for social housing support for a minimum of 12 months from the date the house is re-possessed.

The description of the Tenancy conditions above is not a legal interpretation. If you have any

questions on the Tenancy conditions you should feel free to contact the Council. You are also advised to seek independent legal advice in matters relating to Surrender of Tenancy etc

You must abide by the terms of the Tenancy Agreement



RENT

Your rent will be assessed in accordance with the Differential (Income Related) Rent Scheme. The Housing Section will deal with any queries, which you may have about your account, methods of payment, etc. Some general questions are answered below, but you can call the Housing Department at any time to make more specific queries in relation to your account. It is important that you know your account number before calling us.

How can I pay my rent?

It is the Council's policy to provide its tenants with as broad a range of payment methods as possible. Payments can currently be made by the following methods:

- Revenue Collector
- In person at the Council's Customer Care Hub
- Standing Order
- Postal System (Please do not send cash by post unless it is registered post)

- Credit transfer
- Wage deductions
- Household Budget Scheme (details from Housing Section)
- Credit Union (account operated by MABS)

Please ensure that your rent account is clearly written on any correspondence.

How is my rent calculated?

Your rent is calculated based on the Council's Differential Rent Scheme which is income related.

Rents are based on household income in a manner which ensures that the amount of your income charged as rent is reasonable and does not lead to undue financial difficulties.

What if my circumstances change?

You should keep the Housing Section informed of any change in household circumstances. For example, you should submit a revised Differential Rent Form should any of the following occur:

- A person in your household gets a job

- A person with an income joins the household
- A person in the household starts claiming Social Welfare
- There is a death in the household
- There is a birth in the household

You can notify us of these changes by contacting the Housing Section. Your new rent will be assessed from the date of receipt of the revised Differential Rent Form.

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

Failure to furnish this information will result in you becoming liable for the full rent back dated to when the change took place.

What if I don't return my Rent Assessment form?

Your rent will automatically increase by a penalty rent which will be determined by the Council.

What if my rent falls into arrears?

If you have missed payments, you should contact us immediately before the situation gets out of hand. You can clear your arrears over an agreed period provided you adhere to the agreement.

In the majority of cases such arrangements take the form of the weekly or monthly payment plus an agreed contribution towards the arrears. You will be required to commit yourself to such agreements by signing undertakings to meet the agreed payments. It is imperative that you enter an agreement to clear your account immediately.

Will the Council take me to Court?

Yes, if you refuse to come to a reasonable agreement or if you do not adhere to a payment plan, the Council will serve a Tenancy Warning Letter. If the Tenancy Warning Letter is not complied with, the Council will then proceed to legal action

What happens if I breach my Tenancy Agreement?

The Council can proceed with legal action and we will actively seek a Possession Order from the Court. This action will lead to your eviction from the property and may result in significant costs including legal fees, for which you also will be liable.

HOUSING REPAIRS

The Housing Section is responsible for the management and control of the Council's Housing Estates including structural repairs to rented dwellings. The administration of the maintenance function is conducted from the Housing Section at Headquarters and Bray Municipal District. The Municipal Districts only deal with minor repairs and any large scale repairs must go through the Housing Section of either Bray Municipal District or Wicklow County Council

Replacement windows/doors/gutters and energy upgrade works are done through the Housing Section and are dependent on funding

If applicable - all furniture or flooring must be moved by the tenant before works will be carried out (e.g. wardrobe to be moved to fix radiator) in order for sufficient working space to be provided to carry out the repair.

Please note an adult must be present during maintenance or repair works at all times, if the adult leaves, the Contractor will have to immediately vacate the property.

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

All maintenance requests and queries are categorised as:

- (i) Emergency - These are repairs carried out where there is a possible danger to human life
- (ii) Urgent - These are repairs carried out quickly to avoid damage to the house
- (iii) Low - These are low priority repairs

The following are examples of the types of repair in each category as demonstrated below:

EMERGENCY

- Smoking fuse board and faulty sockets
- Burst pipe

URGENT

- Leak under sink unit
- Tiles falling off roof
- Fuses constantly tripping

Please note that the Council cannot guarantee the designated repair will be completed within 24 hours. Please be patient as our staff has a large volume of repairs to get through on a daily basis. The Council will endeavour to carry out works within a short a time frame as possible.

OIL INSTALLATIONS:

Tenants shall not disconnect their tanks and use oil drums or 20L containers to supply the boiler/burner as this removes important safety devices. Tenants shall not raise the oil tank at one end to get the last drop of oil - it will result in water entering the oil pump which will damage it.

Tenants must only use 28 Second Class C 2 Kerosene to run the boiler - Marked Gas Oil

(Green Diesel) must not be used - it will result in thick black smoke.

Tenants shall not relocate oil tanks without permission. Tenants shall not place timber fencing or trellises around oil storage tanks. Tanks may not be put inside timber sheds.

Flammable materials such as paint, petrol, coal, logs, gas bottles etc shall not be stored on or around boilers in boiler houses or on or around boilers outdoors, as these are fire hazards.

What should I do if the repairs team call to my house while 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 for the Municipal District. You should telephone the Municipal District and leave details of the most appropriate day/time to call again.

Will the Council carry out any repair I want?

No. A clear division of repair responsibility between the Council and its tenants has been defined.

What type of repairs am I responsible for?

Each tenant, on the signing of his/her tenancy

agreement, assumes responsibility for repairs of a non-structural nature.

Will I be responsible for servicing my heating system?

No. The Council will carry out an annual inspection and works to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the system.

Can I erect a garden shed?

Yes. You can install a wooden garden shed to a maximum floor area of 4m² and to a maximum height of 2m. The erection of any other structure should have the prior written approval of the Council. Any grassed areas are to be kept in and maintained by you unless written permission is granted by the Council for the removal of same.

Can I install CCTV?

Yes, but you should note that if you are considering installing CCTV that a domestic CCTV system should only operate in a way that captures images of people within the perimeter/curtilage of the CCTV operator's property which includes the garden or driveway. Systems operated in this way are not subject to Data Protection law due to the personal or household exemption in that law. Further advice may be obtained from Data

Protection Commission.

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

INTERNAL REPAIRS

- (a) Internal plaster cracks including ceilings
- (b) Repairs to or replacement of cupboards, kitchen units and other doors, hinges, handles, locks, catches and drawers
- (c) Curtain rails and window sills boards
- (d) Chimney sweeping – to be done on an annual basis – proof will be sought if issue arises
- (e) Repairs arising from condensation damage
- (f) Wall and floor tiles
- (g) Internal woodwork such as floors, doors and skirting boards, architraves and panelling
- (h) Ventilator covers
- (i) Replacing broken windowpanes
- (j) Blocked toilets
- (k) Pest Control
- (l) Fixtures and fittings including rails, holders, knobs, handles, sanitary ware, appliances
- (m) Bannisters, spindles

DOORS AND WINDOWS

- (a) External and internal locks and handles
- (b) Hinges
- (c) Patio sliding door rollers
- (d) Replacement keys
- (e) Doorbells
- (f) Window stays, catches and restrictors.
- (g) Draught proofing of doors and windows
- (h) Replacement of broken glass
- (i) Permavents where fitted
- (j) Letter boxes
- (k) Timberwork on windows and doors should be painted by the tenant on a regular basis (maximum interval of 2 years)

EXTERNAL REPAIRS

- (a) Maintaining gardens and hedges in a tidy condition and any trees on all boundaries
- (b) Repairs to or replacement of fences and garden boundary walls erected by Council and by tenant
- (c) Repairs to, replacement of, and re-erection of front gates, side gates or doors leading to garden areas
- (d) Fuel sheds or outhouses
- (e) Annual cleaning of silt, leaves or other deposits from gutters – proof will be

sought if issue arises

- (f) Pest Control
- (g) Any grassed areas are to be kept in and maintained by you unless written permission is granted by the Council for the removal of same. Do not concrete or tarmac the whole garden as this causes drainage issues and is not good practice with Wicklow County Council Climate Action Plan
- (h) No change of colour to exterior of dwelling or to windows and doors without prior permission. Keep external paint work in good order
- (i) Boundary walls and fences
- (j) Repairs/replacement or removal of satellite dishes
- (k) Binbays repairs
- (l) Internal and external painting
- (m) Side gate, locks, latches, handles and hinges

ELECTRICAL REPAIRS

- (a) Fuses, except main fuse
- (b) Repairs to all appliances
- (c) Replacement of light bulbs
- (d) Replacement batteries to any smoke or carbon monoxide alarms that aren't connected to the mains
- (e) Repair/replacement of external light

bulbs and shades
(f) Disposal/replacement of broken appliances

improper use as opposed to normal wear and tear
(h) Seals on all sanitary ware

N.B. Please note all electrical repairs to be carried out by a qualified/competent electrician (other than the replacement of bulbs and fuses). Where such a Contractor carries out electrical work in a Council dwelling, you are required to submit the Certification to the Housing Section from that work. The Contractor must be RECI registered if not, you the tenant will be held responsible for any damage caused.

N.B. All plumbing repairs to be carried out by a qualified/competent Plumber. This is essential as there is potential to cause further damage during repairs. Where such a Contractor carries out plumbing work in a Council dwelling, you are required to submit the Certification from that work. The tenant will be held responsible for any damage caused by not using a qualified plumber.

PLUMBING REPAIRS

- (a) Cleaning of gully traps
- (b) Clearing of blocked house drain where a dwelling is served by a single drain
- (c) Repair of waste pipes inside the dwelling
- (d) Replacement or repair of toilet seat, mechanism, cistern, ball and handles
- (e) Blocked toilets
- (f) Sinks, toilets, shower, bath & associated fixtures and fittings (including but not limited to rails, holders, trays, screens, tiles, seals, heads etc)
- (g) Repair and replacement of sanitary ware, where damage has been caused by

Please be advised that you are responsible for what goes down toilet sewer line.

Think Before You Flush is an environmental awareness campaign with a simple message: only flush the 3 Ps down the toilet, that is pee, poo and paper (toilet paper ONLY)...everything else goes in the bin.

Some of the common items known as the Dirty Dozen are flushed down the toilet in error:

1. Wipes
2. Cotton bud sticks
3. Cotton wool
4. Prescription medicine
5. Cigarette butts
6. Sanitary products

7. Condoms
8. Plasters
9. Dental floss
10. Hair
11. Disposable nappies
12. Contact lenses

See <https://thinkbeforeyouflush.org/the-issue/> for more information.

Any blockages in an individual properties sewer line caused by improper use, in which the Council has to clean out, the cost will be incurred by the tenant.

COOKING AND HEATING APPLIANCES

- (a) Solid fuel, gas or other heating or cooking appliances.
- (b) The basket/grate in all fireplaces and the replacement of glass panels in doors of room heaters and stoves
- (c) Damage caused to room heater by improper use
- (d) Pay As You Go heating and electrical meters already installed – the Council will not be responsible in any way
- (e) Ensure there is oil/fuel in the tank for the heating system to work and avoid unnecessary callouts/services
- (f) If applicable ensure that there is enough credit in the Pay As You Go meter for the

heating/electricity to work and avoid unnecessary callouts/services

SECONDARY ENERGY SOURCES

Wicklow County Council will not carry out repairs to alternative energy sources (e.g. open fire/stove/solar panels) where there is Gas, Oil or Air To Water Systems already installed in the house.

FIREPLACES, BACK BOILERS AND STOVES

The tenant must clean their chimney and stove once a year. If the fireplace or flue is damaged, the Council reserves the right not to repair the fireplace or flue, provided the resident has an alternative heat source. In addition we do not install or repair/replace stoves. We do not install or repair back boilers, if required these will be replaced with a standard boiler.

AIR TO WATER SYSTEMS

The tenant shall not allow any member of the household, or any other person, to change the settings or interfere with heating/water equipment (internal and external). If the settings are adjusted or the equipment interfered with, the tenant will be liable for any costs incurred by the Council for call out charges and or repair or reset costs.

Please note Heat Pumps require a constant supply of electricity to operate efficiently and to avoid faults. Pre-pay power meters are not suitable if your house or apartment has a Heat Pump.

As Wicklow County Council are proactive in climate change measures, Wicklow County Council may need to change or alter the heat sources in the property, including blocking up fireplaces and removing back boilers.

GENERAL

You are responsible for removing and returning any furniture or flooring that needs to be moved to gain access for repairs. All furniture must be moved before the employee/contractor calls out.

You must engage the services of a registered waste contractor to collect your household rubbish/recycling/bio-degradeables in accordance with current regulations. Please note that you are liable for prosecution if you do not employ a registered waste contractor

You are responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage and 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.

You are responsible for any pest control issues – this includes wasps/bees, rats, mice, silver fish etc



REQUESTS FOR REPAIRS

If you have any queries about maintenance you should contact the Municipal District Office directly. The telephone numbers are given at back of handbook.

Please quote your rent account number when ringing for repairs.

The Council will examine the position of your rent account on the receipt of a maintenance request

and the Council will undertake to carry out those repairs for which it has responsibility, only when you have a clear rent account or are in a working payment agreement with the Rent Section.

IMPROVEMENT WORKS

Improvement works such as Energy Efficiency Schemes, backboiler upgrade scheme and proactive maintenance works will only be carried out on properties that have a clear rent account.



DAMP AND CONDENSATION IN HOUSES

Heating helps 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 short periods. Flats and houses left unoccupied and unheated during the day get very cold in winter.

Whenever possible try to provide a small amount of heating at all times. Damp and condensation is generally caused by a lack of ventilation in a house. Wicklow County Council generally do not maintain damp problems, except where such issues have been caused by a structural defect. Unblocking vents, cleaning the damp and using anti-damp paints and sprays usually solves these issues

How to Prevent Condensation Occurring.

- Minimise moisture production within the house and try to confine it to specific

areas, e.g. kitchen, bathroom, showering, scullery

- Prevent the moist air spreading to other rooms by closing the door when bathing, showering, cooking or drying clothes
- Open windows when cooking/bathing is complete and allow moisture to escape for short periods
- Provide some level of constant heating
- Dry clothes outdoors where possible
- If using a clothes dryer, provide venting to the outside
- Limit the use of movable gas/paraffin heaters as these types of heaters release large amounts of water vapour into the air and greatly increase the risk of condensation
- Reduce cooking steam as far as possible by keeping lids on saucepans. Do not leave kettles etc. boiling for long periods
- Use mechanical ventilation in kitchen and bathroom where provided
- Use anti mould sprays and paint, these are particularly effective

Most importantly do not block vents with clothing, newspapers or duct tape under any circumstances as this will definitely lead to damp and mould issues.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Wicklow County Council adopted a Policy Document on “Combating Anti-Social Behaviour” on 12th January, 2010 and any subsequent documents, a copy of which can be obtained from the Housing Department. All Acts, Amendments and alterations are correct at time of print.

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2014 defines Anti-Social Behaviour as either or both of the following:-

- a. The manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purpose of sale or supply, or distribution of a controlled drug (within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Acts, 1977 and 1984)
- b. Any behaviour which causes or is likely

to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority, or a housing estate in which the house is situated and includes violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person

Where acts of Anti-Social Behaviour are proven, and offending tenants and their families will have their home re-possessed. These tenants will not be re-housed by the Council. The Council also has the option of excluding an individual member of the family from the house depending on the circumstances.

How do I report Anti-Social Behaviour?

If you are experiencing Anti-Social Behaviour, you may contact the Housing Section and an Anti-social Complaint Form will be sent out to you to complete and return. All information received/ submitted will be treated in strict confidence. Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour will not be tolerated by Wicklow County Council and will be

dealt with swiftly.

Anonymous complaints regarding Anti-Social Behaviour will not be accepted.

All information received regarding Anti-Social Behaviour will be treated in the strictest confidence.

VACANT HOUSES

Vacant houses in an estate can become a target for Anti-Social Behaviour. If you intend surrendering your house, you must give us four weeks' notice.

If there is a vacant house in your estate, don't assume that we know about it. Please let us know immediately. You can contact the Housing Section with the details. The sooner you do the sooner we can arrange to have it re-let.



HOUSING OPTIONS

The Council aims to provide suitable accommodation to qualified applicants in accordance with the Council's Current Scheme of Letting Priorities. We allocate dwellings in a fair and reasonable manner. In doing so, we hope we have satisfied your housing need.

Changes in your circumstances may require you to review your needs and you should advise the staff of the Housing Department where there is a change in circumstances. Your housing needs may need to be reviewed and you should, therefore, be aware of all the housing options open to you. As your needs change you may be offered alternative accommodation

Can I transfer to another Council house?

Yes: Where you have been a tenant of your present dwelling for at least two years. You will be considered on your individual merits, having regard to the availability of vacant dwellings, the numbers on the housing lists and the numbers of applicants categorised as

emergency applicants in accordance with the 1988 Housing Act.

The rent account must be clear or you must be in a regular payment plan in order to be considered for a housing transfer. Your existing property will be assessed before you are transferred, you may be requested to repair items in the property or remove waste. In addition you may be asked to remove pay as you go meters at your own expense.

If on the day you are to receive the keys to your new property, the measures agreed are not done or if any additional damage or waste is left behind, this will result in you being refused the transfer or the cost of alleviating these issues being added to your rent account.

Mutual Transfer

Wicklow County Council may be agreeable to accommodate applications for mutual exchanges between two tenants (including exchanges from one Local

Authority area/Approved Housing Body/Leasing Initiatives to another) provided the following conditions are met in the case of each tenant:

- Compliance with the terms of tenancy was satisfactory during their previous tenancy
- Satisfactory tenancy record with no arrears or other charges
- No record of Anti-Social Behaviour
- House maintained in a satisfactory condition in accordance with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Hand Book
- Transfer dwelling is suitable to applicants needs
- Acceptance of both parties to occupy dwellings in existing condition.

Wicklow County Council will not be responsible for any works done by the previous tenant.

Can I transfer with a tenant of another Local Authority?

Yes: This is possible, assuming consideration is also being given by the second Local Authority and that both properties meet the applicants housing needs.

Can I change the name on my tenancy?

Yes of course you can. If you want to do so, for example, in the case of a death, legal separation, etc., you should contact the Housing Department, Wicklow County Council or Bray Municipal District.

In the case of a Joint Tenancy whereby one tenant wishes to have their name removed this will require that person to present themselves to the Housing Department with official documentation of the new address (lease agreement/utility bill), photographic id., and complete a "Surrender of Tenancy" form which will be witnessed by a member of the housing staff and it will be necessary for the remaining tenant to sign a new Tenancy Agreement.

Please note Bray Municipal District do not witness signatures to these forms, this is done by either by a Solicitor/Commissioner of Oaths. Details of the new address will also be required. In the event of rent arrears on a joint tenancy these will need to be addressed before surrender of tenancy process can be finalised. The person surrendering the tenancy is advised to seek independent legal advice in advance.

We will consider any of the above if your house is in good condition and your rent payment record is satisfactory and that there has been no Anti-Social Behaviour.

In the case of a Transfer/Surrender of Tenancies all fixtures, even those installed by the tenant are to remain in the property i.e. shower units, fireplaces, fitted kitchens, radiators etc.

Can I buy my house?

You may buy your dwelling under the Council's Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme depending on your income. The house is valued by an independent Estate Agent.

Not all properties are included in the scheme e.g. one bedroomed dwellings intended for Senior Citizens or in a flat accommodation, any property that has had accessible works undertaken. You should contact the Housing Section if you are thinking of applying to purchase under this scheme to check if your particular property is one that can be sold. The sale of the property is at the discretion of the Director of Housing.

Can I surrender my house and buy a private house?

Yes: The Mortgage Allowance Scheme is designed to assist you should you wish to acquire a private house and surrender your existing house to the Local Authority. The allowance is paid to the lending agent over a five year period and

reduces the mortgage repayments each year on a sliding scale. Please ask for details at the Housing Section.

Can I build my own house?

Yes, this is possible, if you wish to give back your own existing Council house subject to normal Terms and Conditions.

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

Yes. Where you are a tenant applying for medical reasons, the Council may consider carrying out improvements or alterations to your house. You may be offered a transfer to meet your current and future needs. Full details of these schemes are available from the Housing Section. Please note that all works are dependent on funding available within the Housing Section. Extensions will not be considered.

Can I get a loan from the Council to buy or build my own house?

Yes. Income limits and other eligibility criteria apply. Full details are available from the Housing Section.

TENANT PARTICIPATION - ESTATE MANAGEMENT

When you were allocated your house by the Council you became more than just a tenant. You became a member of the Community in which you live. As such, the Council encourages you to become actively involved in your estate, and is eager to hear your views and suggestions on how it can be improved.

Some of the Municipal Districts have a Tenant Participation programme in some estates improving, fostering and developing the local community and estate in which the Council is working hand in hand with residents to give them

a greater say in how their estates are run. We are listening to what you have to say. It is your estate and it is hoped that through your involvement both the Council and the residents can gain, by making it a better place in which to live.

It is widely recognised that tenants themselves know better than anyone the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and problems that exist in their estates. The involvement of tenants in the management of their estate can lead to improvements in the standard of an estate, can help to prevent the deterioration of an estate, and can assist in 'turning around' a problem estate. Please check the newspapers, social media and the Council's own website for further information.

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INSURANCE

Is my house insured by the Council?

The Council insures the structure of all rented houses against fire, flood and storm damage.

The Council does not insure the contents of your home, you are required to have contents insurance as part of your tenancy agreement.

It is a condition of your tenancy agreement that you insure the contents of the property. **In the case of fire, flood or storm damage the Council will replace the structure but not the contents.**

Should you decide to buy your house, or if your house is a “vested cottage”, you then become responsible for both **structural** and **contents** insurance.



WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

1. Water Leak.

Turn off the water supply under the kitchen sink and turn on all taps in order that the system may drain out. If this does not work, turn off the water supply at the stopcock on the road and contact the Council. You should contact Irish Water if there are any leaks outside the property/on the main road/footpath. The contact number for Irish Water is 1800 278 278

2. Electrical.

Turn off the E.S.B. supply on the fuse board and contact the Council.

3. Gas Leak.

Turn off the gas supply at the meter and do not light matches etc., or use any electrical appliance even a light switch. Open all windows and doors. Contact Bord Gais immediately at telephone number 1800 20 50 50.

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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS

You must adhere to your Tenancy Agreement. Please read it carefully.

It is your responsibility to insure the contents of your home.

It is your responsibility to keep the chimney and stove cleaned yearly.

It is your responsibility to keep your rent account up to date.

It is your responsibility if any malicious damage occurs to the house.

It is your responsibility to check your CO and Smoke Alarms monthly. If not working, contact your MD immediately.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The conditions of your tenancy are set out in detail in your Tenancy Agreement. For your convenience, these are summarised below in question and answer format.

1. 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
- Only the Council can create a Tenancy Agreement, you should not advise any occupant that they will succeed to the tenancy of your property
- A caravan or mobile home must not be placed within the curtilage of the house
- You must give the Council four weeks' notice if you wish to surrender your house

2. What are my responsibilities in relation to rent?

- You must pay your rent and any other charges when they are due
- You must give the Council full details of all household income
- You must return your rent assessment form when requested and any other time there is a change of income

3. Can I take in Lodgers and Sub-tenants?

- You must not take in lodgers or sub-tenants unless this is fully in accordance with your tenancy agreement and a government scheme

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

- You are responsible for both. You must make sure that you, other people living with you including children, and any visitors to your home, look after your home and your garden in a reasonable manner. This also includes maintenance of walls, hedges, lawn, gates or fences
- Each householder is obliged to keep the footpath free of litter or pavement adjoining their property and also any road gutter on or at the side of the pavement. Refuse should be left for collection in a manner, which ensures that it, does not become litter and attract vermin and other pests
- Any laneway/walkway adjoining your house should be kept in a clean condition and should not be used for dumping

5. What happens if my home becomes cluttered?

- You or other people living with you must not hoard or excessively acquire and store items which result in unmanageable amounts of clutter in your home. You are responsible for the removal of clutter and you will be asked to remove any items which may cause obstruction or are a risk to the health and safety of yourself or others. Wicklow County Council will not carry out any repairs if the property is cluttered or considered a health and safety risk for our crew

6. Must I carry out all repairs?

- You are responsible for maintenance and repairing your boundary fences
- You are responsible for redecorating the inside of your house
- You are also responsible for any breakage of glass in the windows and any damage to the fixtures, fittings or structure of the dwelling
- You must also carry out any minor repairs necessary including those works mentioned previously
- You are responsible for keeping your gutters cleaned – to be done on an annual basis – proof will be sought if issues arise. The Council will not replace broken or

fallen gutters where annual maintenance has not been carried out

7. Can I make alterations to my house?

- You must get our agreement in writing before starting any improvements, alterations or additions
- You may also need planning permission for certain works

8. What happens if I disturb my neighbours?

- If neighbours are being disturbed by activities in your house you should respond to them immediately. If you are unable to overcome your problems you should bring the matter to the attention of Wicklow County Council rather than letting the problem continue
- In particular this means:

NO DRUGS

NO CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

NO VIOLENCE OR THREATS OF VIOLENCE

NO HARASSMENT OR ABUSE

9. Can I keep pets in the house?

- You may keep domestic pets, such as cats or certain dogs (see list) to a maximum of two, as long as they do not become a nuisance to your neighbours
- Particular care should be taken with regard

to the noise nuisance of constantly barking dogs

- The following breeds of dog are not allowed to be kept: American Pit Bull Terriers, Bulldogs, Bull Mastiff, Doberman Pinscher, English Bull Terrier, German Shepherd, Japanese Akita, Japanese Tosca, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Rottweiler's, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or any type of dog known as a "Ban Dog" (or Bandog) or any strain or crosses of those breeds described above
- The Council reserves the right to request that any particular dog be removed

permanently from the premises for any such reasons that the Council deem warranted

- Horses, poultry, pigs and birds are not domestic animals. Keeping any of these is a serious breach of your tenancy agreement
- Under the Control of Dogs Act 1986, every dog should be licensed. A licence is available from any Post Office or the Environmental Section of Wicklow County Council. Since March 2016 all dogs must now be micro-chipped



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SAFETY IN THE HOME

As part of the minimum rental regulations you are required to have the following safety equipment in your home:

- Minimum of two (one in the hall and one in the landing) 10 year battery smoke alarms or a mains alarm system. A bungalow should still have two
- A fire blanket hung up within reach of the cooker
- CO alarms in every room with a fuel burning appliance
- Window restrictors (non-lockable) in every habitable room 1.4m above ground level

Check your smoke alarms and CO alarms monthly by pressing the test button. Replace batteries as required. If you do not have these items in your home or if they are not working please contact your MD office immediately and they will arrange to replace them.

Your home is at risk of fire from:

- Unattended cookers (particularly at night)
- Cigarette smoking
- Matches, open fires, candles, heaters, stoves, faulty electrical appliances
- Be sure to keep matches, candles and lighters out of reach of children, and do not leave children alone in the dwelling
- Always use secure fireguards with open fires
- NEVER, NEVER smoke in bed
- Switch off and unplug all appliances not in use at night
- Install a smoke alarm, and replace batteries regularly
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm and replace batteries regularly
- It is preferable to have a smoke alarm and carbon monoxide upstairs and downstairs
- Never overload electric sockets – only one electrical appliance should be plugged into any outlet
- At night you should close the doors to all rooms
- Unplug all chargers when not in use

- All gas and electrical appliances should be used and serviced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- At Christmas time it is very important that particular care is taken with Christmas tree lights and any lighted decorations
- Do not store petrol or any other highly flammable liquids indoors

What should I do if fire breaks out in my dwelling?

- Your first priority is to vacate the house and call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 or 112
- If the escape route is blocked by smoke/ fire, go in to a room, close the door and stuff a blanket at the bottom of the door to keep out the smoke
- Call for help from a window and await the arrival of the fire brigade
- Do not evacuate from an upstairs window except as a last resort
- You should plan and practice your evacuation drill from the home to deal with any emergency arising in the home. Do not re-enter the building once you have vacated it
- Please notify your Municipal District as soon as possible so a structural check can be made

What do I do if the chimney goes on fire?

- Call the fire brigade immediately. Close all doors and windows to reduce draught. If possible move carpets and furniture away from the fireplace. Get the chimney cleaned at least once a year

What is the advice about open fires?

- Use a fireguard and always check that it is in position before going to bed. Never carry hot coals from one fireplace to another. Avoid banking fires too high

Take special care with gas cylinders

- Always keep cylinders upright and switch off at the regulator when not in use
- Never store cylinders indoors
- Check flexible hoses regularly for signs of wear
- Never seal ventilators as it is important that each room with a gas heater has adequate ventilation
- **Chip Pans Care: Never leave a chip pan unattended. If a chip pan catches fire, use a fire blanket or smother the flames with a lid or large plate or a well dampened towel. DO NOT USE WATER TO PUT OUT THE FIRE. You should contact the Fire Prevention Officer if you need further advice in relation to any aspect of fire safety in the home**

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Causes of CO Poisoning

You can be in danger of Carbon Monoxide poisoning at home if dangerous amounts of Carbon Monoxide accumulate in the home. This can happen as a result of any or a combination of the following:

- Faulty or damaged heating appliances
- Heating appliance not maintained or serviced
- Rooms not properly ventilated
- Blocked chimneys or flues
- Indoor use of a barbecue grill or outdoor heater
- Poor installation of heating appliances
- Improper operation of heating appliances
- Property alterations or home improvements, which reduce ventilation
- Running engines such as vehicles or lawnmowers in garages
- Using cooking appliances for heating purposes

Symptoms of CO Poisoning

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning can be similar to those caused by other illnesses such as a cold or flu. They include:

- Unexplained headaches, chest pains or muscular weakness
- Sickness, diarrhoea or stomach pains
- Sudden dizziness when standing up
- General lethargy

What to do?

If anyone in your house has any of the symptoms outlined above get fresh air immediately, then go to your doctor and ask him/her to check for Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

Stop using the appliance immediately and do not use it again until it has been checked by a registered installer or a qualified service agent.

The amount of CO which the blood absorbs depends chiefly on two things: how much CO is in the air and the time of the exposure.

Adverse effects of CO on humans are reduced by periods of breathing fresh air. The degree of recovery depends on the number and length of those periods. The general state of health and degree of physical activity of a person exposed to CO are other factors involved in the effects of Carbon Monoxide on the body.

If you or your family experience symptoms and you believe CO may be involved you should seek urgent medical advice. Inform your doctor of your concerns. CO will leave the blood when you go out into the fresh air and tests for CO may be inaccurate if taken hours after the exposure has ceased.

Again, if you find a person ill or unconscious near any fuel burning appliance, be careful in case you also become a casualty. Get fresh air immediately by opening windows and doors.



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PROTECTING YOUR HOME

Garda Statistics indicate that most home break-ins are carried out on the spur of the moment. There are a few simple steps that you can take to prevent a break-in. Always close your windows and lock the doors when you go out even if it's only for a few minutes. Never leave tools or ladders lying around in the garden. Don't leave keys on a string behind the letter box, hidden under a doormat or in other secret places. If you go out at night time consider leaving a light on inside that can be spotted from the outside.

If you are on holidays, tell a neighbour that you will be away and cancel all deliveries. Never leave valuables lying around where they can be seen through a window. Consider installing a burglar alarm. Thieves often try to gain entry posing as officials or workmen. Never let a stranger into your home unless you are sure of his/her identity. Telephone the Gardaí if you are suspicious.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

| Contact | Telephone Number |
|---|--|
| EMERGENCY - Garda, Fire Brigade, Ambulance | 999/112 |
| Housing Department - Direct Line | 0404 20100 |
| Arklow Municipal District | 0402 42700 |
| Baltinglass Municipal District | 045 891222 |
| Tinahely Area Office | 0402 38174 |
| Bray Municipal District | 01 2744900 |
| Greystones Municipal District | 01 2876694 |
| Wicklow Municipal District | 0404 20173 |
| Wicklow County Council | 0404 20100 |
| Out of Hours Emergency Calls Only | 01 2916117 |
| Website for all Wicklow County Council business | www.wicklowcoco.ie |

Wicklow County Council Handbook for Tenants

