TENANT HANDBOOK
Galway City Council is pleased to provide you with a copy of the tenant handbook. As your landlord we are taking this opportunity to introduce you to, or remind you of, the wide range of services available to our tenants. The handbook is also intended to clarify the responsibilities both 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 the services available. In addition to the handbook, there are a range of leaflets and annual publications available for your information.

For your convenience I have provided a list of contact telephone numbers, including emergency numbers, which are included at the back of this handbook.

Please keep this copy in a safe place in your home as you may be asked to refer to it when making enquiries with the Housing Department.

Galway City Council welcomes you as a tenant and wishes you and your family well in your home.

Ciarán Hayes,
Director of Services,
Housing, Economic Development & Planning

November 2006
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Galway City Council would like to welcome you as a tenant and are pleased to be able to give you this copy of the Tenant Handbook. This handbook will inform you in a general way about the various services provided and matters relating to your tenancy with us.

For your convenience we are including a list of useful contact telephone numbers at the back of this handbook.

In addition to this handbook, there are a range of information leaflets on various housing options available from the Housing Department or on our website www.galwaycity.ie.

It is our function to provide you with the best possible housing service in an efficient and effective manner. If we are to deliver a quality service we need to know what you think about the services provided so do not hesitate to contact us and let us have your views. We may not always be in a position to meet all of our tenants’ requests, but we make every effort to provide a quality housing service.

HOW CAN I CONTACT THE COUNCIL?

We are located at:
Galway City Council,
City Hall,
College Road,
Galway.

You can call, without appointment, to the Housing Department, which is open to the public Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 4.00pm each day. Interview rooms are available where matters of a confidential nature may be discussed with experienced housing staff.

You can telephone us at (091) 536590. You will hear a recorded message that will prompt you to pick the service you require. You will then get through to the staff member who can deal with your query.

You can email us at housing@galwaycity.ie
The Tenancy Agreement you signed when you were allocated the house contains the conditions of your tenancy. Every tenant of the Council signs a Tenancy Agreement. When you sign this agreement you are agreeing to all the conditions set out in the agreement. If you breach any of these conditions you are breaching your tenancy agreement.

**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.
- You must not pass the tenancy of your home to anyone without the Council’s permission.
- You must give the Council four weeks notice if you wish to surrender your house.
- 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.

**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 annually and at any other time there is a change of income in the household.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I BREACH THE CONDITIONS OF MY TENANCY?**

The breach of any one or more of the conditions of your tenancy places your tenancy at risk and can result in the termination of your tenancy by the Council.

**WHAT IS MEANT BY A JOINT TENANCY?**

A joint tenancy is where more than one tenant signs the Tenancy Agreement. If a dwelling is allocated to a household that includes a husband and wife, a joint tenancy will be put
in place unless the Council decides otherwise. In cases other than husband and wife, joint tenancies may be put in place where it is considered appropriate by the Council.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF A JOINT TENANT DIES OR LEAVES?**
In this case, the tenancy will normally be assigned to the surviving tenant.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF MY PARENTS ARE THE TENANTS AND THEY DIE?**
The tenancy will normally be assigned to the eldest member of the family provided he/she has lived in the house throughout his/her lifetime or provided he/she has been living in the dwelling for at least one-year immediately prior to the death of the tenant(s). Each case however will be examined on its merits.

**CAN I PASS THE TENANCY ON TO SOMEONE ELSE BEFORE I DIE?**
No, but if there are others living with you for a period of at least one year they may be entitled to succession of the tenancy.

**WHAT IF, AS A SINGLE PERSON, I LIVE ALONE AS THE TENANT OF MY HOUSE?**
Should you die, no other person shall be entitled to claim the tenancy of the house by succession.

**WHAT IF I WANT SOMEONE TO MOVE IN TO MY HOUSE WITH ME AFTER I HAVE MOVED IN?**
You need to apply to the Council for permission for that person to move in with you. That person cannot move in until such time as the Council give written permission.
**CAN I CHARGE SOMEONE TO LIVE IN MY HOUSE WITH MY FAMILY AND ME?**

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

**AM I RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GARDEN OR JUST THE HOUSE ITSELF?**

You are responsible for both. You must make sure that you, others living with you including your children and any visitors to your home, look after your home and your garden in a reasonable manner. This also includes maintenance of walls, gates or fences. You are expected to keep free of litter the footpath or pavement adjoining your property and also any road gutter on or at the side of such pavements.

**MUST I CARRY OUT ALL REPAIRS?**

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 on pages 16 - 21.

**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 get the Council’s written agreement also to do any of the following:
• 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
• paper the internal walls of the house
• paint any external walls, woodwork, cement, gates, fencing etc of the house

You may also need planning permission for certain works. All such alterations become the property of the Council, and 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 re-instate the property to the original condition.

**CAN I KEEP PETS IN THE HOUSE?**
You may keep domestic pets, such as cats or dogs, as long as they don’t become a nuisance to your neighbours. Horses, poultry, pigs and birds are not domestic animals. Keeping any of these is a serious breach of your tenancy agreement.

**CAN I PARK A CARAVAN OR MOBILE HOME AT MY HOUSE?**
No. You cannot park or allow to be parked, any caravan, mobile home or other form of temporary dwelling within the curtilage of the house or on the road outside of your house. Caravans etc. can be impounded and the cost of removing and storing the caravan etc. is charged to the tenant.
• You must get the written permission of the Council prior to getting a pet. Generally, permission will only be given for one pet per household.
• Under the Control of Dogs Act, 1986, every dog should be licensed. A licence is available from any Post Office.
• Failure to have a dog licensed or to keep it under proper control, will result in an on-the-spot fine.
• Dogs should not be allowed to roam freely around housing estates. It is the responsibility of the pet owner to clean up after their dog/pet. Under the Litter Pollution Act 1997, it is an offence for a dog to foul in public spaces.

Remember your pets are your responsibility!

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

The following breeds of dogs are not permitted:

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- Bull Mastiff
- Doberman Pinscher
- English Bull Terrier
- German Shepherd (Alsation)
- Japanese Akita
- Japanese Tosa
- Rhodesian Ridgeback
- Rottweiler
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier
- Bandog

Any cross breed of the above

MUST I INSURE THE HOUSE?

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.

WHAT IF I WANT TO GIVE UP THE TENANCY OF MY HOUSE?

You must give us four weeks notice. We can then make arrangements to have it re-let, so that it is does not remain vacant for any length of time. When you leave the house all dishwashers, fridges, washing machines, furniture etc. must be removed or a charge will apply.
The Housing Rents Section assesses your rent each year and deals with any query that you may have about your account, methods of payment, arrears etc. A Differential Rent Scheme is prepared each year and the rent you pay is calculated based on this scheme taking into account the household income and household composition. A copy of the Differential Rent Scheme is available from the Rents Section on request.

**WHAT IS DIFFERENTIAL RENT?**
This means that your rent is based on your ability to pay so if your income is low your rent will be low. If your income increases so will your rent. The income of all members of your household is taken into account when your rent is being calculated.

**WHEN IS MY RENT DUE?**
The payment day for your rent falls due on the Monday of each week.

**HOW CAN I PAY MY RENT?**
The Council provides a broad range of payment methods:

**Billpay:** You can pay your rent at any Post Office by using your Rent Payment Card. Rent Payment Cards can be ordered from the Rents Section.

**Household Budget Scheme:** You sign a form, which allows Social Welfare to deduct your rent from your weekly payment. They then forward it to the Council where it is credited to your account.

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

**Cheques, Postal Orders** through the post. (Please do not send cash by post). Cheques should be made payable to Galway City Council.

**Wage Deduction** if you are employed by Galway City Council.

**Standing Order / Bank Giro** at your local bank branch.
HOW IS MY RENT CALCULATED?
Your rent is calculated based on the Council’s Differential Rent Scheme. All rents are reviewed on an annual basis. All tenants must complete an Income Return Form each year. On this form you must give details of the household i.e. details of all who live in the house; details of whether they are in school, working or receiving payment from Social Welfare and details of each person’s income. Every income coming into a household is assessable for rent purposes.

WHAT IF MY CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE?
You should keep the City 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
- There is a birth in the household
- There is a death in the household

WHAT IF I DON’T NOTIFY THE COUNCIL WHEN MY CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE?
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 serious 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 AM HAVING PROBLEMS PAYING MY RENT?**

Always try to avoid letting your rent account fall into arrears. If you are experiencing difficulties, contact the Arrears Controller for your area immediately and they will help you in any way they can. You may also wish to contact the local Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) see page 39 for their phone number.

**WHAT IF MY RENT FALLS INTO ARREARS?**

If you have missed payments, you should contact us immediately. The sooner you tackle the problem the better, before the situation gets out of hand. You can clear rent arrears bit by bit provided you make an arrangement and keep to it. In most cases you make an arrangement to pay your weekly rent and a contribution towards the arrears. You will be expected to commit yourself to this arrangement and meet the agreed payments.

**WILL THE COUNCIL TAKE ME TO COURT FOR RENT ARREARS?**

Yes. If we take you to Court, we will seek an eviction order. Evictions are traumatic for any family and can be avoided by keeping a clear rent account or by contacting us and making an arrangement to clear your arrears. If you are evicted for rent arrears you are still responsible for the arrears and the legal costs.
(4) RESIDENT PARTICIPATION in ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Estate Management is all about creating vibrant communities, sustainable neighbourhoods, and the encouragement of pride of place for all living there. It is your estate and it is hoped that through your involvement both the Council and the residents can benefit, by making it a better place in which to live.

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. We aim to improve the overall co-ordination of services in estates, while also improving communications between tenants and the Council.

To help you to become involved Galway City Council has employed Housing Estate Liaison Officers. 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.

We want you as a tenant to participate and have a say in the day-to-day running of your estate. Join in by working through your resident association and help make your estate a better place to live. If there is no tenant/residents association operating in your area and you and your neighbours are interested in establishing one we will assist you. Grants are available for community activities such as setting up resident associations. Training and information is also available to assist your group to participate in Estate Management.
A range of things causes 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?
It is behaviour causing others to suffer through lack of consideration, not usually aimed at one person. The term "Nuisance" is applied to various types of conduct which are less serious than Anti Social Behaviour e.g. lack of control over pets, untidy gardens, litter, minor noise pollution, family arguments affecting neighbours, minor verbal harassment etc.

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 neighbour nuisance as the problem can be quickly resolved and you still maintain a good relationship with your neighbour.
Anti social behaviour is a term used to describe any behaviour, which is harmful to residents, residential amenities, play areas etc. Such behaviour includes:

- the sale and supply of a controlled drug
- possession of a controlled drug for sale or supply or distribution
- 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 the area
- violence
- threats
- intimidation
- coercion
- harassment
- serious obstruction of any person

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.

**ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CAN SERIOUSLY AFFECT YOU AND YOUR TENANCY.**

Any tenant who engages in anti-social behaviour may face eviction or any member of a tenant's household engaging in such behaviour may be excluded from both the dwelling and the surrounding area of that dwelling.

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, or that a sale to the tenant would not be in the best interest of existing tenants / residents in that area (i.e. on estate management grounds).

It is an offence for a person to cause any interference, including threats, intimidation, harassment or obstruction to any employee of Galway City Council, or a member of their family. The penalty on conviction is a fine not exceeding €1,905, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both.
WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM A VICTIM OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?
You should contact the Housing Estate Liaison Officer for your area either by telephone or by letter. It will be helpful if you keep a record of the dates and times when incidents occur and also the names of the person involved, if known.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I WITNESS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?
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 or your Local Garda Station. Do not wait for someone else to report it.

WHAT IF I AM AFRAID TO REPORT ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?
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?
A meeting will be arranged with you either at your home, City Hall or any other place where you feel more comfortable. You can have someone present with you if you wish e.g. friend, family member etc.

Preliminary enquiries may be made to ensure the reliability of complainants and to ensure that the complaint is not made maliciously or in order to cause annoyance. If the complaint has been made in good faith investigations will be made which will enable a decision to be made on the measures to be taken.

WHAT IF A COMPLAINT IS MADE AGAINST ME?
If a complaint is made against you we will arrange to meet with you. The complaint will be put to you and you will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint. You can have someone present with you at the meeting if you wish e.g. friend, family member etc. The City Council will consider all relevant matters and any representations or observations made to it by you in deciding on the appropriate course of action.
WHAT MEASURES WILL THE CITY COUNCIL TAKE?

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy the City Council can issue offending tenants with a series of warnings. Three warnings may be given: - (1) verbal warning (2) if the behaviour continues, a written warning (3) if the behaviour continues, a final written warning. When a tenant has received three warnings and the behaviour continues, the City Council will issue a Notice to Quit and bring the tenant to court to seek an eviction.

Where a complaint is considered to be of a serious nature or where a tenant or member of a tenants household is convicted of an offence, which is considered as anti-social behaviour the City Council will consider taking immediate action to seek an Excluding Order or an eviction from the court.

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 (e.g. son or daughter of a tenant) who is engaging in anti-social behaviour.

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. The penalty, on conviction, is a fine not exceeding €1,905, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both.

We need your help in order to succeed in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in your area.

REMEMBER:
All information is kept in the strictest confidence.
(7) REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE:

The City Council is responsible for many repairs but is not responsible for all repairs. If you have any queries about repairs & maintenance, you should contact the Maintenance Section.

All maintenance requests/complaints are categorised as:

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**Emergency**: These are repairs carried out where there is a possible danger to human life.

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**Urgent**: These are repairs carried out quickly to avoid damage to the house in cases where the tenant has not caused the problem.

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**Routine**: These are medium priority repairs.

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**Cyclical**: These are low priority works that are more efficiently dealt with during the cyclical maintenance programme every 5-7 years.

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

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**Emergency**: Smoking fuse board
Faulty socket
Tiles falling off the roof

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**Urgent**: Leaking water pipe
No water in the tap
Burst pipe

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**Routine**: Replace fire backs
Faulty heating system

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**Cyclical**: Leaking gutters
Rotting fascia board

If an item in your home is defective you should check whether it is your own or our responsibility by referring to the sections below. If the particular item is our responsibility then you should report it to the Maintenance Section. We will attend to your request as soon as possible, but you should remember that repairs we prioritise depend on how urgent the particular item of work is.
WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE REPAIR 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. 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.

IS MY HOUSE INSURED BY THE COUNCIL?

The Council insures the structure of all rented houses. It does not insure the contents.

WILL THE COUNCIL CARRY OUT ANY REPAIR I WANT?

No. There is a clear division of what repairs are your responsibilities and what repairs are the Council’s responsibility. There are some repairs which the Council will consider carry out if the tenant pays the necessary charge.

WHAT REPAIRS AM I RESPONSIBLE FOR?

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.
- Per mavents 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

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**N.B.** 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.
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.

- **Do not** put nappies, sanitary towels, kitchen cloths or paper other than toilet paper into toilets. If a toilet or sewer blockage is found to have been caused by foreign objects flushed down toilets a charge will apply.
- **Do not** fit your waste outlet pipe with a mesh filter.
- **Do not** put cooking oil, fat or motor oil down sinks, toilets or drains.

**KNOW THE LOCATION OF YOUR MAINS WATER STOPCOCK.**

**KNOW HOW TO SHUT OFF ELECTRICITY IN YOUR HOUSE.**

**FIT A LAGGING JACKET TO YOUR HOT WATER CYLINDER.**

**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 do so. If you are an old age pensioner, and you
are unable to look after your house, you should contact the Housing Maintenance section for more information and assistance.

NEW DWELLINGS
If you have moved into a newly built home, the Builders Guarantee will cover it, which is normally 12 months. Any defects should be notified to the Housing Department. It is very important that while your home is under guarantee no one else does any work, which will make the guarantee invalid. All problems must be referred to the Housing Department in order that the Builder can be given the opportunity to put them right.

WHO'S RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO FIX THE DEFECTS IN A NEW HOUSE?
The builder is responsible for any defects that may occur within the first 12 months of house being built.

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

WHAT ABOUT CONDENSATION?
Newly built homes can contain some of the water absorbed during the building process. Please refer to the section in this booklet on Ventilating Your Home, Page 36.

VACANT DWELLINGS:
Vacant dwellings in an estate can become a target for anti-social behaviour. If there is a vacant dwelling in your estate, don’t assume that we know about it. Tell us. You can contact the Housing Department with the details. The sooner you do, the sooner we can arrange to have it re-let.
The 1, 2, 3’s of Fire Safety in the home!

- Install working smoke alarms and test them regularly.
- Install smoke alarms today and ensure they are in good working order. Note: Your sense of smell does not work when you are asleep.
- Check the smoke alarm often by pressing the test button – How about checking them every Monday?
- Replace the batteries when they are not working and every year for the standard 1-year smoke alarm.
- If you have the 10-year smoke alarm, you need to replace the complete unit after ten years.
- At least 2 smoke alarms, properly located (one on each floor) should suit most homes. For maximum protection a smoke alarm should be fitted in every room except the kitchen. A heat detector is most appropriate in the kitchen.
- Smoke alarms should be fitted at the highest point and close to the centre of the ceiling as possible.
- Vacuum the smoke alarms regularly and wipe the casing and slots as they can get clogged with dust, which may prevent them from working properly. If you have a mains operated smoke alarm, ensure you switch off the smoke alarm at the mains before cleaning and remember to switch it on again.
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** from a call box, mobile phone or neighbour’s house.
- **Do not go back** in until the Fire Service tells you it is safe.

Check for fire dangers in your home and correct them:

**PREVENTION IS THE BEST FIREFIGHTER!**

Check room by room for dangers and correct them. Keep escape routes clear. Most fires in homes start in the living room and bedroom and at night when we are sleeping (75% of fires start in the living room and bedroom between 8pm and 8am). The kitchen is the next place they start from.

**KITCHEN:**

Put a fire blanket and working fire extinguisher within easy reach in the kitchen and learn how to use them.

**When cooking**, always use back rings first and turn in utensil handles, ensuring the handles are not over other rings.

- Keep cookers clean – grease is a fire risk
- Turn off cooker when not in use
- Never use a cooker for drying clothes
- Check cooker is switched off properly before going to bed
- Clean or replace filters in extractor fans on a regular basis
• Avoid using chip pans, as they are a major fire risk

Chip pans are a major fire risk so avoid using them or use them with extreme care
• Never fill the chip pan more than one third full of fat or oil
• Test the oil or fat temperature by placing a small piece of bread in the pan. If it crisps quickly, the oil or fat is ready
• If the oil or fat is smoking then it is too hot. Turn the heat off and let the oil or fat cool down before starting again
• Never leave a chip pan unattended
• Never move a hot chip pan

Electrical Items should be used carefully and stored properly when not in use
• Never overload sockets, as it is a major fire risk
• Never run electric cables across cookers
• Switch off and plug out electrical appliances when not in use
• If electrical cables or plugs are damaged, worn or frayed, contact a qualified electrician

LIVING ROOM:

Open Fires
• Always place a proper fitting spark guard and fireguard in front of an open fire. Never place anything to dry on a fireguard
• Don’t store items like paper, magazines, clothing or combustible items near a fire
• Never use an open fire to air clothes, as this is a major fire risk
• Ensure the spark and fireguards are positioned in front of the fire place when you are going out or going to bed

Chimney Cleaning

Get your chimney cleaned regularly – follow the recommended cleaning guide:

Wood burning fires
- 4 times a year when in use
Solid fuel fires
- Once a year if using smokeless fuel
- Twice a year if using coal

Oil fires
- Once a year

Gas fires
- Once a year if designed for sweeping

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

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

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

BEDROOM:
- Never, ever smoke in the bedroom
- Have a torch or flash lamp near your bed for emergency lighting
- Bring your portable or mobile phone to your bedroom for emergency use
- Never leave your mobile phone charger
plugged in at night time or when leaving the house

**Electric Blanket**
- Use electric blankets properly and follow the manufacturer’s instructions
- Check your electric blanket regularly for wear and damage
- When storing electric blankets, roll them instead of folding them
- Get your electric blanket checked regularly

**How to recognise a dangerous electric blanket:**
- The fabric or flex is worn or frayed
- There are scorch marks anywhere
- The tie-tapes (where originally fitted) are damaged or missing
- Any connections are loose
- You are in any doubt!
- The plug or mains lead is damaged. Make sure this is repaired before you use it. Remember older blankets are much more likely to have one or more of these faults

**Unplug your electric blanket before going to sleep!**

**Carry out a “last-thing-at-night” routine:**
- Ensure fires are well down and spark guards are in place in front of open fires
- Switch off and unplug electrical items. Never leave a washing machine, dryer, electrical heater, dishwasher, television, radio etc on when going out or going to bed (Some electrical items are designed to stay on all the time e.g. fridges, so it is important if you are in doubt to get your appliance checked by a qualified electrician)
- **Do not leave your television, radio or music system on standby** and ensure your remote control is visible to you before going to bed. If your remote control falls down the side of an armchair, sofa etc the buttons may press which can cause the remote to overheat and go on fire
- Plug out the mobile phone charger when
your mobile is charged and when you are going out or going to bed

- Check every room and close all doors when going to bed
- Switch off and plug out your electric blanket before going to sleep
- If your exit requires a key for opening, ensure the key is in the lock before going to bed
- Ensure all escape routes are clear before going to bed

For further information on fire safety you can contact:

**Galway Fire Authority,**
Fr. Griffin Road,
Galway,

Tel (091) 58 55 55
Fax (091) 58 83 42
There are some very simple steps you can take to help improve the security of your home:

- Always lock doors when you go out, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- Always close windows when going out, especially windows that are easily reached.
- Don’t forget to close & lock any side doors or gates.
- Never leave valuables lying around.
- Don’t leave tools, ladders, bicycles etc. lying about in the garden of your home.
- Never 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!

You should consider the following precautions:

- Fit a good quality door chain and use it when strangers call.
- Don’t leave strangers by an open door.
- Don’t let anyone in until you are satisfied you know who they are and what they want.
- If you let anyone in, stay with them all the time.
- Telephone the Gardaí if you are suspicious.

Given the increasing levels of identity theft, when you are disposing of documents which contain your personal details, ensure that you shred or tear them up so your details cannot be read.

For information on Neighbourhood Watch contact your local Garda Station. See page 39.
If an emergency should arise outside normal working hours, tenants can call (091) 536860. 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.
In accordance with our Scheme of Priorities for Letting of Dwellings Galway City Council allocates dwellings in a fair and reasonable manner. 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.

**HOUSING TRANSFER:**
Council tenants can apply to transfer to alternative accommodation.

The Council’s reason for having a transfer policy is:

- To make the best use of dwellings
- To eliminate overcrowding
- To satisfy the special needs of individual tenants where possible

Transfers are facilitated in the following cases:

- Your dwelling is overcrowded
- Medical reasons
- Exceptional circumstances

Transfers are facilitated for Estate Management/Emergency reasons only in exceptional cases.

**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 e.g. the 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.
How long will my transfer application take?
Your application will be processed and you will be notified whether you are approved for a transfer or not. 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.

If I am approved for a transfer, what happens next?
You will be added to the transfer list for the area of your choice.

Can the Council refuse to make a transfer?
Yes. The Council will refuse to make a transfer offer if:

- You have rent arrears. Your must have a clear rent account for at least 6 months.
- You have arrears of service charges
- You have not complied satisfactorily with your Tenancy Agreement
- You or members of your household have engaged in anti-social behaviour or nuisance behaviour
- Your present dwelling is not being kept in a satisfactory condition

CAN I BUY MY DWELLING?
Yes. You can apply to buy the dwelling under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. It depends on your income, the length of time you have been living in your house, and your family circumstances. You must be a tenant for a minimum of one year before you can buy your dwelling. You will receive a 3% reduction off the purchase price of your dwelling for each year you have been a tenant. There is a maximum reduction of 30%. You can contact the Housing Department for details of the purchase price of your dwelling and the loan options available to you.

If you are the tenant of a dwelling intended for Senior Citizens, specifically adapted for disabilities, or are living in a flat/apartment then you may not be able to buy your dwelling.
IF I SURRENDER MY DWELLING CAN THE COUNCIL ASSIST ME IN BUYING A PRIVATE DWELLING?

Yes. There are several ways you can achieve this:

*Mortgage Allowance Scheme* can help you if you wish to buy a private dwelling and surrender your existing dwelling to the Council. This Scheme gives a substantial subsidy towards the payment of interest on mortgage payments over the first five years of the mortgage.

You may be able to take out an *Annuity Loan* or avail of the *Affordable Housing* or *Shared Ownership* option to buy a dwelling.

**WHAT IS AN ANNUITY LOAN?**

If you cannot get a loan from a Bank or Building Society the Council can consider you for an annuity loan. This is a straightforward mortgage that the Council gives you to purchase a house of your choice. The loan is dependent on household income and rent payment record.

**WHAT IS THE SHARED OWNERSHIP OPTION?**

The Shared Ownership Option is designed to enable persons on low incomes, who would not otherwise qualify for a mortgage to buy a house of their choice. Under the scheme you begin by purchasing a share in the house and renting the remainder from the Council with an undertaking that you will buy the remaining share within a 25-year period.

*Mortgage Allowance Scheme* does not apply to loans under the Shared Ownership Scheme, however, you may qualify for a rent subsidy towards the rented share.

**WHAT IS THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME?**

It allows lower-income house buyers the chance to buy newly constructed houses and
apartments. The properties are offered for sale to eligible first-time purchasers at prices significantly lower than their actual market value.

**CAN I PURCHASE AN AFFORDABLE HOUSE?**

Yes. As a tenant of the Council, you automatically qualify to apply to be included on the Affordable Housing Waiting List. For further information contact our Affordable Housing Section.

**WILL THE COUNCIL ASSIST ME IN CARRYING OUT IMPROVEMENTS TO MY RENTED DWELLING?**

Yes. Where you require adaptations to accommodate a disabled person the Council may carry out the necessary works under the Disabled Person’s Grant Scheme.

**WHAT IS THE DISABLED PERSONS GRANT SCHEME?**

This scheme is available to carry out essential alterations to the house, which may become necessary due to the disability of a member of the household.

**WHAT IF 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.
Galway City Council provides a quality and reliable household waste collection service to the people of Galway City.

Householders are supplied with three bins:
1. brown for organic waste
2. green for recycling materials and
3. grey for landfill waste.

If you use the services of Galway City Council to collect your household waste please note the following:

- All householders must contact the Environment Department of Galway City Council and complete an application form in order to receive three bins. Householders with up to two persons in the family may apply for 120 litre bins (small bins) and all other householders will receive 240 litre bins (large bins).

- A Calendar detailing your correct collection day and bin collection is available from the Environment Department.

- Your bins must be available for collection from 8.00 a.m. on the morning of collection and must be left neatly on the footpath outside your house. After collection all bins must be removed from the footpath and stored to the rear of your dwelling house.

- The refuse collection will take place every week with the only disruption on Christmas week. Details of collections on Christmas Week will be published in local newspapers.

- A waiver scheme is available for households whose income is solely derived from social welfare or a pension. Details of the waiver scheme can be obtained by calling to the Environment Billing Department or by phone at 091-536511 or 536418.
OTHER DISPOSAL SERVICES:

- The Environment Department operates a “Bulky Goods Collection” service. If you have items of furniture or electric items that you wish to dispose of, the Environment Department will arrange to collect and dispose of them for a small charge. (All electronic items are free if included in a collection of furniture items).

- Householders can take glass for recycling to Galway City Council bottle banks, which are located in fourteen different sites around the City. In order to keep these facilities clean householders are asked to take boxes or bags home and not to leave bottles on the ground at the banks.

- Household hazardous waste which includes fluorescent lights, batteries, used engine oils are accepted free of charge at Galway City Council’s Depot at Lisbaun Industrial Estate on Saturday’s from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

You can contact the Environment Department at 091 536595 for further details of these and other services which are available. The range of services can also be viewed on our website at www.galwaycity.ie

PLEASE NOTE:

If you are using the services of a Private Waste Collector always check that they have a Waste Collectors Permit. You can check if a Waste Collectors Permit Number is valid by contacting the Environment Department or at www.connaughtwaste.ie

It is an offence for any household to give waste to collectors who do not have a collectors permit. You could end up before the courts and face a fine or even imprisonment if waste is traced back to you from illegal dumping.
Condensation is probably the main cause of dampness and mould growth in dwellings. As a result of continuing condensation, walls, ceilings and sometimes floors become damp, discoloured and unpleasant due to mould growing on them.

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface. The moistness of the air and the coldness of the surfaces depend on a range of factors, many of which are determined by the way the house is used.

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

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

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

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

You can minimise moisture by:

- Drying clothes externally where possible
- If you are using a clothes dryer, provide venting to the outside
- Limit the use of moveable gas or paraffin heaters as these types of heaters release large amounts of water vapour into the air and greatly increase the risk of condensation
- Reduce cooking steam as far as possible e.g. keep lids on saucepans, do not leave kettles boiling for long periods
You can prevent the spread of moist air by:

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

In older houses a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplaces and draughty windows. In many modern houses and flats sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or a ventilator is open for a reasonable time each day and for nearly all the time the room is in use.

Too much ventilation in cold weather is uncomfortable and wastes heat. All that is needed is a slightly open window or ventilator. If possible, open the top part of the window about 10mm (1/2").

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

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

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

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

**Mould Growth:**

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

The mould growth spots should be washed off and the affected areas sterilised. Mixing 1 part bleach with 4 parts water can make a suitable steriliser.

**New Buildings:**

New buildings can take a long time to dry out and during the first winter more heating and ventilation is necessary than in subsequent winters. Excessive temperatures should be avoided to prevent warping of new joinery.
(14) USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

GALWAY CITY COUNCIL
Reception (091) 536400
Community & Enterprise (091) 536573
Community Wardens (091) 536544
Corporate Services (091) 536597
Environment (091) 536595
Finance (091) 536592
**Housing Department** (091) 536590
Parks & Culture (091) 536548
Planning (091) 536599
Service Charges (091) 536593
Roads & Water Services (091) 536589
Traffic Fines (091) 536594
Galway Energy Agency (091) 536496

**Other useful numbers:**
Alcoholics Anonymous 091 562024
Bord Gais, Customer Service 1850 673 322
Childline 1800 66 66 66
Citizens’ Information Centre 091 563344
Community Welfare Offices 091 546315
Cura (unwanted pregnancy) 091 562558
Department of Social Welfare 091 500800
Dog Pound 091 757094
E.S.B., Domestic Account Enquiries 1850 372 372
FAS 091 706200
Galway Rape Crisis Centre 1850 355 355
Galway Refugee Support Group 091 779083
Galway Traveller Support Group 091 562530
Gamblers Anonymous 091 565207
GSPCA 091 563631
Health Service Executive West 091 751131
ISPCC 091 562229
Merlin Park Hospital 091 751131
Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS) 091 569349
Samaritans 1850 609 090
St. Vincent de Paul 091 563233
Threshold Ltd. 091 563080
University College Hospital 091 524222

**EMERGENCY**

**Gardai, Fire Brigade, Ambulance**
999 or 112

**Bord Gais Emergency Line** 1850 20 50 50
**Gardai Confidential Phone Line**
Freephone 1800 666 111
Crimestoppers 1800 250 025
Garda Siochana:
Millstreet (091) 538000
Salthill (091) 514720
Community Gardai (091) 768000
Crime Prevention Officer (091) 768001
Emergency Repairs (091) 536860

**Personal Telephone Numbers:**

Community Welfare Officer ______________
Local Garda Station ______________
Public Health Nurse ______________
Housing Estate Liaison Officer ______________