



Water charges – who pays?

This information sheet provides information about who is responsible for water charges in a residential tenancy

It is no longer necessary to record in the tenancy agreement that the tenant will pay for metered water. The tenant is responsible for outgoing charges that are exclusively attributable to that tenant. This includes electricity, gas, phone and metered water.

A metered water supply is how a supplier of water can issue a charge on the basis of someone's consumption.

There are several different ways that water suppliers charge for water around the country. For more specific information about water charges in your area, contact 0800 TENANCY.

Responsibility for a water supply

Landlords are responsible for ensuring there is an adequate supply of water to their rental properties. If the premises do not have a reticulated water supply, the landlord must provide adequate means for the collection and storage of water.

Where the water supplier contracts with the landlord, and the landlord passes the obligation to pay water charges onto the tenant, the tenant is obliged to pay the water charges. If the tenant pays the charges but the landlord does not pay the water supplier and the water is disconnected, the landlord may be held responsible to pay for the reconnection of the water supply.

If a tenant fails to pay the water charges the tenant may be in breach of their tenancy agreement and the landlord can issue the tenant with a 14 days' notice to remedy the breach. Refusal to remedy a breach of a tenancy agreement can result in a Tenancy Tribunal application.

Tank water – not metered

Where the water supply is from a tank, the landlord should provide a full tank at the start of a tenancy. The tenancy agreement should record that the tenant will arrange and pay for any tank refills required as a result of their water use.

Water tanks should be an appropriate size. For example, an average-sized house should have a tank of about 5000 gallons (22,500 litres). The tank needs to be properly connected by a guttering system to a roof of reasonable size so the tank will be topped up from time to time by rainwater. There should be no leaks or contamination.

The pump is an essential part of a tank water system. Provided the pump is subjected only to normal wear and tear, its maintenance is the responsibility of the landlord. If tenants cause damage to the pump, for example by letting the pump run when the tank is empty, they may be held responsible for this. It would be a useful precaution for the landlord to provide written instructions and explain how the water system works.

