Compensation for home improvements

Advice for council tenants at the end of their tenancy

St Albans City & District Council

Housing Management

If your council housing tenancy is ending, you may be able to get compensation for money you have spent improving your home.

Eligibility for compensation

The right to compensation applies to nearly all council tenants. The exception is people who are buying their home through the right-to-buy or rent-to-mortgage schemes. This is because improvements made are not included in the purchase price for such properties.

Permission for improvements

You **must** get written permission before you make any improvements to your home. If you do not get written permission, not only will you be in breach of your tenancy, you will not be able to claim compensation for improvements made.

Improvements that you can you get compensation for

The right to compensation applies to improvements which were started on or after 1 April 1994. The scheme applies to the following improvements:

- bath or shower, wash-hand basin and toilet;
- kitchen sink and work surfaces for preparing food;
- permanent fitted storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen;
- certified central heating, hot water boilers and other types of heating;

- thermostatic radiator valves;
- pipe, water tank or cylinder insulation;
- double-glazing or other window replacement or secondary glazing;
- certified rewiring, or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors);
- security measures (excluding burglar alarms).

Any areas which fall under your responsibility, do not qualify for compensation, e.g. interior decoration (painting and wallpapering), fencing etc.

You can claim for the cost of materials, but not for appliances such as cookers or fridges. You can also claim for labour costs, but not for your own labour.

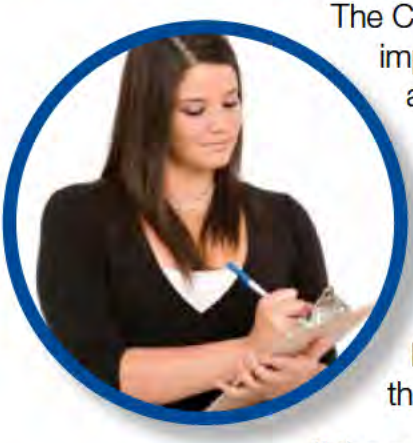
If there are any reinstatement conditions relating to the permission you obtained to do the works, you may not be able to claim for compensation.

How to apply for compensation

You have up to 14 days after your tenancy ends to make a claim. An application form is available on request. The Council will need the following information:

- your name and address;
- what improvements you have made;
- how much each improvement cost;
- the date the improvements began and finished;
- copies of any receipts.

How compensation is worked out



The Council will look at the cost of your improvements. If you received financial assistance, such as a grant, we will take this amount off your final compensation figure.

The value of any improvements will go down ('depreciate') as they get older. The compensation you will be offered will depend on how old the improvement is when you claim.

If the cost of the improvement is considered to be excessive, or if the specification is higher than would have been provided by the Council had we done the work ourselves, this will affect the level of compensation you will be offered.

We may also adjust the level of compensation up or down depending on the condition of the improvement when you claim. The Council may have to undertake works to bring the property up to an acceptable standard to be rented to someone else.

We will also take off any money you owe the Council when your tenancy ends.

You can get up to a total of £3,000 for any one improvement. We do not provide compensation payments if the amount identified is below £50.

What paperwork you will need to show

The Council will need to see dated invoices and receipts to show how much your improvements cost you. You may not be able to claim compensation if you do not have this paperwork.

Right to appeal

If the Council refuses permission for improvements, you have the right to appeal to the County Court to make the changes you want to make. However, you cannot get compensation for improvements at the end of your tenancy if the Council refuses permission.

If the Council decides to refuse a claim for compensation, you have the right to challenge the decision by taking legal action through the courts. Before taking legal action, it's wise to get advice from a solicitor or your local Citizens Advice Bureau. You may be able to apply for legal aid.

If you make a false claim (for example, if you claim for an improvement you have not made, or if you claim for more than the amount due), the Council can take legal action to recover the money.

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St Peter's Street
St Albans AL1 3JE

Telephone: **01727 866100**

Email: **housing@stalbans.gov.uk**

If you need this information in an alternative format, such as Braille or in another language, please call **01727 819494.**

The Council's textphone number is **01727 819570.**
This service is for people with a hearing impairment.

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www.stalbans.gov.uk