

Improving Your Home

Like many other tenants, you may wish to improve your home. We are quite happy to agree to you making changes, but you should get our permission before making any changes to your home. We will usually impose some conditions before agreeing. The types of conditions, which apply, are discussed below.

Your tenancy agreement gives you the right to apply to make alterations or improvements. We cannot unreasonably refuse consent and if we fail to reply within a month, we are deemed to have consented. If you do carry out an alteration or improvement, it will not affect the rent charged for your property.

An alteration may include any addition or alteration to the structure of your home or to any of OTHA's fittings. The most common alterations are adding patio doors, an electric shower or extra kitchen units or the erection of a satellite dish. You also may wish to put up a shed or garage and/or decorate the outside of your home.

If you want to carry out an improvement to make your home more suitable to you or a family member because of an illness or disability, you should speak to your housing officer first. We may be able to carry out works for you at no cost to you if you are referred by one of the occupational therapy team at Inverclyde Council.

To apply for our permission, you should submit your request in writing or ask your Maintenance/Housing Officer for a copy of our application form. For more complicated works, we will ask for plans.

Laminate Flooring

Many tenants wish to install laminate flooring and this raises some very real concerns. It costs much more to carry out basic repairs or improvements (such as lifting the floor to repair a leak or to fit new central heating) when laminate flooring is involved. Because of the extra costs involved, we only consent to the click type flooring which is easier to take up and replace if necessary. We do not take responsibility for the costs of lifting or re-laying a laminate floor if this is needed - this cost will be down to you. You should bear this in mind when considering putting one in.

Conditions

A number of standard conditions will generally apply to any alteration:

- your improvements must be of a good safe and workmanlike standard carried out by competent tradesmen;
- you must agree to leave them behind if you move or to remove them and reinstate the damage as agreed at the end of your tenancy;

- you will be asked to obtain planning permission/building control permission if required. For example, a satellite dish may require planning permission.

Refusing Permission

We will only refuse permission if there is a good reason; for example: -

- The alteration would make the building unsafe
- The alteration would make your home less usable for the purpose for which it is provided, such as knocking two rooms into one
- You are not willing to comply with any conditions imposed
- The alteration would make the future maintenance of your home more expensive

Compensation For Improvements

If you carry out improvements with our permission, you may be entitled to compensation at the end of your tenancy. The scheme is a statutory one with the rules laid down by the Scottish Executive. More details and an explanatory leaflet are available from your Maintenance/Housing Officer. You can get compensation for more than one improvement.

The scheme does not apply if your home is repossessed, you buy your home or you transfer to another property owned by OTHA. The list of improvements for which you can get compensation is as follows:

- installing, replacing or fitting of a bath or shower,
- cavity wall insulation,
- sound insulation,
- double glazing, replacing external windows or fitting secondary glazing,
- draught proofing external doors or windows,
- pipes, water tanks or cylinders,
- a kitchen sink,
- loft insulation,
- rewiring or adding other electrical fixtures such as smoke detectors,
- security measures other than burglar alarms,
- space or water heating,
- storage cupboards in a kitchen or bathroom,
- thermostatic radiator valves,
- a wash hand basin,
- a toilet,
- a work surface for preparing food
- mechanical ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens

Decoration does not qualify for the scheme.

How To Claim

To make a claim you must provide us with details of the improvements you have made, including how much they cost and the date they were started and finished. You must do this within the period starting 28 days before your tenancy ends and 21 days after it finished. You can receive a maximum of £4,000 for each improvement, but if the compensation were less than £100, you would get nothing.

The calculation of the value of the compensation takes into account the age of the improvement, any grants you received to carry out the work, and the condition at the time of application. Any money you owe us at the end of your tenancy will be taken from any amount to be paid. There is a right of appeal if you do not agree with our assessment.

If you have carried out works to a much higher specification than OTHA would have put in, we can reduce the compensation.



OTHA Tenant Information Leaflet

Alterations To Your Home

This leaflet tells you about your rights to make alterations to your home and to compensation at the end of your tenancy.

This leaflet can be made available in large print, on tape or in an alternative language or format on request.