



# Guidance on applications made under the Tenant Fees Act 2019.

## General information about the process

This guidance is intended to help parties understand what happens when taking part in an application or an appeal under the Tenant Fees Act.

Applications for recovery are usually made where a landlord, letting agent, or a third party, receives a prohibited payment or a holding deposit from a relevant person and all or part of that payment or deposit has not been repaid. For advice on how to present your case, or if you need to understand more about the law, you may wish to consult Citizen's Advice or a solicitor.

The Government has produced guidance on the implementation of the Tenant Fees Act 2019. This is the link to the guidance on GOV.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-fees-act-2019-guidance>

This is the link to the Act itself.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/4/contents/enacted>

We try to avoid using jargon but if there is anything about our procedures you do not understand please contact the regional office. The tribunal's procedures are governed by statutory regulations called the **Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013** which can be found on the internet.

## Who does what?

**Tribunal members** are appointed by the Lord Chancellor. There are two types of member:

- (a) the chairman, who will usually be a judge or surveyor, is responsible for the conduct of the case and writes the reasons for the tribunal's decision;
- (b) other members who may be judges, surveyors, other professional people or lay people.

When a tribunal is set up to consider the application, there may be two or three members including the chairman, although non-complex cases will usually be decided by a chairman sitting alone.

**Case officers** are the administrative staff who manage the process from start to finish and deal with correspondence. When an application is received, it is the case officer who will register the case and deal with the paperwork and correspondence until the parties have received the final decision. The case officers are able to speak to parties about the procedures relating to the application, but they cannot give legal advice.

## Applications

An **application form** must be completed by the applicant in almost all cases. Forms can be obtained from [www.gov.uk/housing-tribunals/apply-to-the-tribunal](http://www.gov.uk/housing-tribunals/apply-to-the-tribunal), or if you do not have access to a computer, you can ask a case officer to send you a form.

Once an application is received, it will be checked by a case officer for completeness and the applicant will be sent an acknowledgement. A copy will be sent to the other party (the respondent) and any person the tribunal thinks might be affected by the application.

## Paper determinations

The parties may request, or the tribunal may suggest, that the case can be dealt with by considering the written evidence and the parties' written representations only (without the need for an oral hearing). This is referred to as a **paper determination**. However, any party who so wishes has the right to request a hearing (see below for hearings). Once the tribunal's decision is made it will be sent to the parties in writing with reasons for the decision.

## Case preparation

In cases where the issues are clearly identified, a tribunal chairman may issue written **procedural directions** requesting particular actions from one or both parties before the hearing. The procedural directions document will sometimes set out what the issues are and say when the parties need to send each other copies of documents. If a party or another person is going to say something to the tribunal at a hearing, they may be required to prepare a **witness statement**.

## The hearing and decision

In London, **oral hearings** are held at the London office. In other regions, the oral hearing can take place in a hearing room at the regional office but will often take place at a venue as near to the property as is practical.

A party can speak for themselves or through a representative (whether professionally qualified or not). It is usually the applicant's responsibility to present his or her case first, but the tribunal chairman will provide guidance about the appropriate order of proceedings at the beginning of the hearing. Each party will be able to put relevant questions to the other party. The members of the tribunal will try to put people at their ease and will also ask some questions. If anything is unclear during the hearing, parties are encouraged to ask the tribunal for clarification.

The tribunal's **decision** will be made after the hearing and the decision or order will be sent to the parties in writing as soon as possible and usually within six weeks of the hearing.

## Inspections

The tribunal may exceptionally inspect the property if requested by either party or if the tribunal considers it necessary. However, a visit is not usually considered necessary in this type of case.

## Variation and postponement applications

Parties may ask the tribunal to vary the directions or to postpone a listed hearing. All such requests must be made in writing to the tribunal with full reasons and must be copied to the other parties. The tribunal is unlikely to postpone a hearing unless there are good reasons which have arisen since the hearing date was fixed. Even good reasons will require some kind of evidence in order to prove that an expensive postponement is justified.

## Withdrawal

Most withdrawals are made by parties after a negotiated agreement. An applicant who wishes to withdraw all or part of their case must notify the tribunal and the other party in writing. If the other party has consented in writing, this must be included with the applicant's notice to the tribunal. The applicant's notice of withdrawal will not take effect until the tribunal consents to the withdrawal, and the tribunal may make directions or impose conditions on the withdrawal as it considers appropriate.

## **Costs**

The tribunal does not usually award costs against the losing side. However, if a party does not comply with the procedural directions or otherwise behaves unreasonably in connection with the proceedings, there could be serious consequences. Firstly, the tribunal may decide to stop the application going ahead. Secondly, if one party has incurred costs as a result of (a) another party's failure to comply with directions or (b) another party's unreasonable behaviour, the tribunal may order the defaulting or unreasonable party to pay costs.

## **Special requirements**

The tribunal seeks to make itself as accessible as possible to all parties. If you have a particular requirement, for example because of a disability or other need, please discuss this with the case officer when you make your application.

## Use of emails

The following rules are designed to minimise the impact that emails can have on the efficient running of the tribunal office. Parties who wish to use emails are requested to:

- prepare a letter to the tribunal in Word format and attach it to the email (maximum of five pages – longer documents should be sent by post);
- as case officers are sometimes absent, always send or copy the email to the regional office email address;
- always copy any email to the other parties, either by email or by post, and confirm in the email/letter that this has been done;
- always quote the reference number or case officer's name in the email.

Email chains, email 'conversations' about the case and bundles attached to emails will not be accepted.

## Appeals and re-hearings

In most cases where a party does not agree with the decision of the tribunal and wants it to be changed, an **appeal** will have to be made to the Upper Tribunal.

In that case, the first thing for that party to do is make an application to the tribunal for **permission to appeal**. The application for permission, which must be made within 28 days after the date when the written reasons for the decision were sent to the parties, must be in writing giving the reasons why the applicant believes the decision was wrong. The tribunal will then decide whether permission should be granted for the appeal to proceed. The parties will be notified of that decision in writing. A dissatisfied party will then be able to re-apply for permission direct to the Upper Tribunal.

If the tribunal realises that a clerical mistake has been made it can issue a **correction certificate**.

Finally, if for a reason beyond the tribunal's control, there has been a serious procedural error (for example, if the documents provided by one party were not seen by the tribunal) and the tribunal considers it to be in the interests of justice to do so, it can **set aside** its decision and re-determine the case. Any application to set aside on this basis should be made within 28 days after the decision was sent to the parties.

## Case closure

Following either a withdrawal or determination of all applications (including any appeal), the tribunal will close its case file.

## **Tribunal booklets/leaflets code description**

T540 Guidance on Rent Cases

T541 Guidance on Service Charges, Administration Charges and other Management Issues

T542 Guidance on Enfranchisement

T543 Guidance on Housing Act Cases

T544 Guidance on Park Homes Cases

T545 Guidance on Tenants Associations

T546 Guidance on Right to Buy Cases

TFA3 Guidance on Tenant Fees Act 2019

T609 Guidance on Appeal

# Tribunal Regional Office details

## Northern Region

**Regional Judge:** Simon Duffy

**Regional Manager:** Alison Lomax

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property 1st Floor

Piccadilly Exchange

Piccadilly Plaza

Manchester M1 4AH

Tel: 0161 237 9491 Fax: 01264 785 128

**This office covers the following Metropolitan districts:** Barnsley, Bolton, Bradford,

Bury, Calderdale, Doncaster, Gateshead, Kirklees, Knowsley, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Oldham, Rochdale, Rotherham, St. Helens, Salford, Sefton, Sheffield, Stockport, Sunderland, Tameside, Trafford, Tyneside (North & South), Wakefield, Wigan and Wirral.

**It also covers the following unitary authorities:** Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Darlington, Halton, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Kingston-upon-Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, Northeast Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Stockton-on-Tees, Warrington and York.

**It also covers the following counties:** Cumbria, Durham, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and North Yorkshire.

## Midland Region

**Regional Judge:** David Jackson

**Regional Manager:** Claire Jones

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property 15th Floor

Centre City Tower

5-7 Hill Street

Birmingham B5 4UU

Tel: 0121 600 7888 Fax: 01264 785 122

**This office covers the following Metropolitan districts:** Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

**It also covers the following unitary authorities:** Derby, Leicester, Rutland, Nottingham, Herefordshire, Telford and Wrekin and Stoke-on-Trent.

**It also covers the following counties:** Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

## Eastern Region

**Regional Judge:** Bruce Edgington

**Regional Manager:** Jo Hart

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property, Cambridge County Court,

197 East Road

Cambridge, CB1 1BA

Tel: 01223 841 524 Fax: 01264 785 129

DX 97650 Cambridge 3

**This office covers the following unitary authorities:** Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Reading, Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Luton, Peterborough, Milton Keynes, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

**It also covers the following counties:** Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Suffolk.



## London Region

**Regional Judge:** Tim Powell

**Regional Manager:** Peter Frost

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property 1st Floor

10 Alfred Place

London WC1E 7LR

Tel: 020 7446 7700

Fax: 01264 785 060

**This office covers all the London boroughs.**

## Southern Region

**Regional Judge:** Michael Tildesley

**Regional Manager:** Jim May

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property Havant Justice Centre

The Court House

Elmleigh Road

Havant

Hants

PO9 2AL

Tel: 01243 779394 Fax: 0870 7395 900

**This office covers the following unitary authorities:** Bath and Northeast Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Torbay, Poole, Swindon, Medway, Brighton and Hove, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight.

**It also covers the following counties:** Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Dorset, East Sussex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Kent, Somerset, Surrey, West Sussex, Wiltshire.