

RENTERS' RIGHTS

What Happens at the Tribunal

From filing to decision – and what if your landlord says nothing



What Happens at the Tribunal

From filing to decision – and what if your landlord says nothing

You've filed your Rent Repayment Order application. Here's exactly what happens next, whether your landlord fights it, ignores it, or something in between.

Directions and case management

Filing your RRO1 doesn't put you straight in front of a judge. The tribunal first issues directions — a written timetable telling both you and your landlord what to submit and by when.

1 Your evidence bundle goes in first

Your application, witness statement, and supporting documents, by the tribunal's deadline.

2 Your landlord gets a chance to respond

They can submit their own statement disputing the offence, the amount, or both — by their own deadline.

3 A hearing date is set

Usually once both sides have had their say on paper, though the tribunal can decide some cases without an oral hearing at all.

Keep to the dates

Missing your own deadline can weaken your case even if your evidence is strong. Diarise every date in the directions the moment you receive them.

If your landlord says nothing

Silence is common — and it is not a shield. Landlords sometimes ignore tribunal correspondence hoping the problem disappears. It doesn't.

The tribunal can proceed without them.

If your landlord doesn't respond to directions or doesn't attend the hearing, the tribunal can decide the case on your evidence alone. Your job doesn't get easier — you still need to satisfy the tribunal beyond reasonable doubt on what you've submitted.

Non-engagement can itself count against them.

A landlord who never disputes the offence, never explains their conduct, and never turns up gives the tribunal little reason to find mitigating factors in their favour.

Don't assume silence means an easy win.

Keep your bundle as thorough as if you expected a full fight. A tribunal deciding on the papers still has to be persuaded by what's in front of it.

If they suddenly engage late

A landlord who ignores directions for months and then submits a defence days before the hearing doesn't automatically get it excluded — but the tribunal can, and often does, take the delay into account.

If your landlord disputes it

A defence typically argues one of three things — know which one you're facing so you can respond to the actual point, not a general sense of unfairness.

“It didn’t happen”

Disputing the offence itself. Your independent evidence — the council record, the licensing search — matters most here.

“It wasn’t that serious, or that long”

Disputing the amount, not the offence. This is where your dated rent records and timeline carry the argument.

“There were mitigating circumstances”

Genuine mistake, prompt correction, no prior history. You don't need to disprove this — the tribunal weighs it against the offence itself.

You'll usually get the chance to respond in writing before the hearing. Address the specific point raised — don't re-argue your whole case from scratch each time.

The hearing, the decision, and getting paid

The hearing itself: a tribunal judge, sometimes with a valuer member, in a less formal setting than a court. Bring three copies of your bundle. You'll be asked to explain your evidence and answer questions — the tribunal is testing what you've submitted, not looking for a performance.

The decision: usually written and sent to both sides within a few weeks. It sets out the ground found (or not) and the amount awarded, with the tribunal's reasoning.

If your landlord doesn't pay: a Rent Repayment Order is enforceable in the county court the same way as any other unpaid judgment — the same enforcement routes used for a small claims judgment debt.

Ready to file?

Start My Claim's RRO Application Pack

£269, one-off. Builds your RRO1 form, witness statement and evidence bundle from your case details, plus a limitation clock and offence-grounds wizard. startmyclaim.ai/renters-rights.

This mini-guide is general information about First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) procedure, not legal advice about your individual case. Start My Claim is self-service software from Vindivo Limited — not a law firm, not solicitors, not a regulated claims management company.