



Co-operative  
**housing**  
Ireland

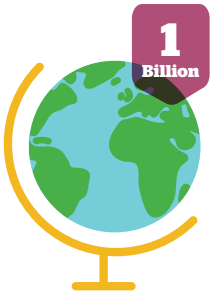
# Members Handbook





# Contents

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Section 1:	
<b>Our Co-operative Movement</b>	<b>00</b>

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Section 2:	
<b>Your Co-operative Membership</b>	<b>00</b>
Becoming a Co-operative Member and Tenant	00
Your Local Office	00
Management Committees	00
Local Area Boards	00

---



## Section 3:

### **Your Tenancy**

**00**

Vacancies	00
Transfers and Exchanges	00
Terms and Conditions	00
Rent Payments, Statements and Arrears	00
Termination of a Tenancy	00
Inheritance	00
Pets	00
Door Keys and Electronic Fobs	00
Structural Alterations & Aerials	00
Insurances	00

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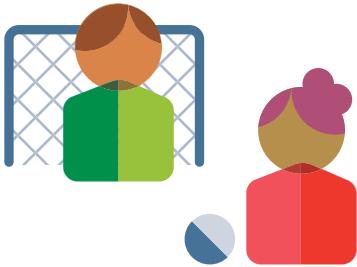
## Section 4:

### **Inside Your Home**

**00**

Members' Responsibilities	00
Repair Request Service	00
Safety Information	00

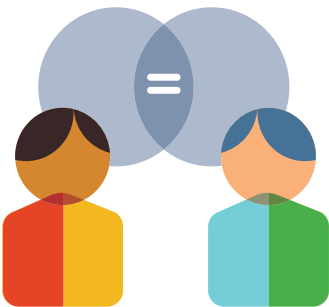
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## Section 5: **In Your Community**

**00**

Communal Areas	00
Waste Management	00
Pets	00
External Appearance	00



## Section 6: **Working Together**

**00**

Solving Problems	00
Complaints Procedure	00



## Section 7: **Useful Information**

**00**

Handy Hints	00
Condensation	00
Money Advice	00
Energy Saving Advice	00
Useful Contacts	00



Section 1:  
**Our  
Co-operative  
Movement**



## What are co-operatives?

Around the world, more than 1 billion people are members of co-operative organisations. Co-operatives operate in every area, from housing to agriculture, from medicine to public transport. By providing necessities such as food, shelter and water, the work of co-operatives secures the livelihoods of half the world's population.

Co-operatives developed as a distinct form of business in the nineteenth century as people looked for new ways to promote development while putting people before profit. In Ireland, co-operatives helped to develop the modern economy, particularly in the area of agriculture.

Today, most Irish people are members of a co-operative, whether through their local Credit Union, a Group Water Scheme or a co-operative business such as a dairy.

Co-operatives vary in terms of their size and the activities they undertake. However, all co-operatives are made up of people who voluntarily decide to work together to meet their own needs through a business that is jointly-owned and democratically-controlled.

# Co-operative Values and Principles

All co-operatives agree to the Statement of Co-operative Identity, which sets out the Values and Principles shared by co-operatives around the world.

## Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity** and **solidarity**. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

## Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

- **Voluntary and Open Membership**  
Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to anyone able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
- **Democratic Member Control**  
Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.



- **Member Economic Participation**  
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative.
- **Autonomy and Independence**  
Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.
- **Education, Training and Information**  
Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
- **Co-operation among Co-operatives**  
Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- **Concern for Community**  
Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

## Co-operative Housing Movement

Housing co-operatives are a worldwide movement of self-help, mutually owned associations working to relieve housing need in their communities.

The members of housing co-operatives are the people who use the services the co-operative provides. Members have the opportunity to become involved in the management of their co-operative and to vote on issues that are important to them.

Housing co-operatives can be involved in the building, management and maintenance of houses and apartments across various forms of tenure – rental and ownership.

Co-operative Housing Ireland is a member of a number of international organisations promoting housing and co-operatives including Housing Europe, Cooperatives Europe, Co-operative Housing International, and the International Co-operative Alliance.

## Co-operative Housing Ireland

The co-operative housing movement in Ireland has been represented, promoted and developed by Co-operative Housing Ireland since 1973. Since then, Co-operative Housing Ireland has helped to provide more than 5,000 homes across Ireland. These were a mix of homes for ownership, homes in shared ownership between the member and the co-operative, and homes for rent.

Co-operative Housing Ireland continues to develop new co-operative homes and provides a range of services to local co-operatives. These services include training, support in policies and procedures, and help in raising standards. Co-operative Housing Ireland is committed to continuous improvement and works closely with Local Offices to improve the quality of services provided to members.

*“The members of housing co-operatives are the people who use the services the co-operative provides. Members have the opportunity to become involved in the management of their co-operative and to vote on issues that are important to them.”*

The background features a stylized mountain range with three peaks. The mountains are rendered in shades of blue, with the foreground peaks in a darker blue and the background peaks in a lighter blue. The sky is a solid, bright blue.

Section 2:

**Your**

**Co-operative**

**Membership**



## Becoming a Co-operative Member and Tenant

If you wish to become a co-operative member and tenant, you must:-

- be in genuine need of housing or re-housing;
- be on the Local Authority housing waiting or transfer list;
- be high enough on the list to be nominated to us for our consideration;
- understand and be willing to accept the requirements for membership, including the purchase of shares;
- understand and be willing to accept the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement;
- attend and participate in a co-operative information and familiarisation programme.

### **Other matters taken into account are:**

- whether the dwelling meets your household needs in terms of size and location;
- your previous tenancy record, including rent arrears, upkeep of the dwelling etc;
- any previous record of anti-social behaviour by you or any of your household.

## Your Local Office

When you are allocated a home with the co-operative housing movement, you become both a member of the co-operative and a tenant. Details about your membership are found in this section and details about your tenancy are found in Section 3.

As a member of the co-operative, you will buy shares in your local organisation and have a say in decisions that affect you. The shares that you buy entitle you to participate in the running of your local co-operative as a member. Shares are returned to you if and when your membership ceases. They are not a security deposit for your home.

Every year your local office will organise an Annual General Meeting (AGM) that you will be invited to attend. At the AGM you will be able to stand for election to your local management committee. An AGM will also be held for the whole Local Office area to elect members of the local area board that oversees the work of the Local Office.

The AGM will also select a number of representatives to sit on the Board of Co-operative Housing Ireland. The Board of Co-operative Housing Ireland is responsible for setting the goals of the Association and for overseeing the work of Co-operative Housing Ireland staff. Most of the members of the Co-operative Housing Ireland Board are also members and tenants of local housing co-operatives.



## Management Committees

Each local co-operative has either a management committee elected from the members in the co-operative or at least two member representatives.

*The management committee is elected to represent the members and to monitor the caretaking and upkeep of their co-operative. The management committee, or its sub-committees, may also organise other services or activities for the benefit of the co-operative membership. Some co-operatives have laundries, or children's clubs, or have organised summer projects, community gardens etc.*

*All members are expected to support and assist the work of their co-operative's management committee.*

The management committee consists of not less than five and usually up to nine members. Any member of the co-operative may be elected (or co-opted) to the management committee, provided that he / she is willing to attend the regular meetings and share the work involved. This usually takes a couple of hours each month.

Either an Annual General Meeting or an estate meeting of the co-operative is held each year to elect members to the management committee or appoint member representatives. If vacancies in the committee occur during the year, these can be filled by the co-option of other interested members.

The management committee elects / appoints a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary from amongst their own number. They hold these offices until the first committee meeting after the Annual General Meeting in the following year (unless an officer resigns, in which case the management committee elects one of its members to fill this officer's position).

### **The management committee normally deals with**

- caretaking, cleaning and use of the communal facilities and meeting room, etc.,
- ensuring that open spaces, gardens, common areas, entrances and stairwells are kept free of rubbish and litter and that grass areas are cut when required, with the help of members,
- monitoring of repair and maintenance service requirements and complaints,
- promotion of good neighbourly relations, joint efforts and social activities / services for the benefit of their co-operative community.



## Local Area Boards

Each local management committee sends its chairperson and secretary to sit on the local area management board.

Area boards operate over the same geographical area as Co-operative Housing Ireland's network of Local Offices with boards of directors representing the local co-operatives and their members. Each Local Office will have a number of local co-operatives of various sizes in its network.

The local area boards works on behalf of their co-operative members to co-ordinate and monitor

- **housing management services for their co-operatives,**
- **caretaking, repairs and maintenance planning,**
- **tenancy agreements, rent collection and budgets for running costs,**
- **community activities and events,**
- **leadership training and other support services.**

*“All members are expected to support and assist the work of their co-operative's management committee.”*

The background features a series of overlapping, rounded shapes in various shades of green and yellow. The top is a light yellow-green, transitioning to a darker green, then a dark olive green, and finally a bright green at the bottom right. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement.

# Section 3: **Your Tenancy**



Each member signs a **Tenancy Agreement** which is a contract between a landlord and a tenant. The Tenancy Agreement sets out the rights and responsibilities to each other and to the dwelling. When you sign the agreement you are agreeing to keep or abide by those terms and conditions.

## Vacancies

The number of vacancies that occur in co-operative housing is quite small.

Vacancies that do occur in existing rental housing co-operatives are usually filled by:

- interested applicants from the relevant Local Authority Housing Waiting or Transfer list who are nominated for consideration for co-operative membership and a tenancy. They are required to complete a familiarisation programme concerning the requirements of co-operative membership and the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement
- existing co-operative members who have had a change in their household need or circumstances and are seeking to transfer to a more suitable dwelling or to improve the management of the estate

It is not possible to consider anyone under the age of 18 for co-operative membership and tenancy.

The Management Committees of the local housing co-operatives are advised of the names, current addresses and family size of applicants seeking accommodation in their co-operative.

When the allocation is completed the local committee is notified of the name of the new co-operative member.

## Transfers and Exchanges

Depending on their housing need and circumstances, members may be able to apply to the Local Authority for inclusion on their Housing Transfer List. A transfer may be arranged for an existing member to move to a vacant dwelling if it is more suited to their current housing needs in terms of size or location or to improve the management of a local co-operative.

Members wishing to transfer must complete a Transfer Application Form.

A member wishing to move to a different dwelling must be able to show that there is a genuine change in their family size or circumstances that makes a move necessary.

Members will also be considered for a move to a smaller dwelling if there is one available.

A transfer application will involve a review of the member's tenancy record including:

- their record of rent payments and arrears
- the good upkeep and care of their existing dwelling and garden area (if any);
- good neighbourly relations with other members;
- any nuisance and disturbance or anti-social behaviour;
- contribution to the overall upkeep of the co-operative and support for the work of the management committee.

A swap or exchange of dwellings may also be considered based on the same criteria as above.

Co-operative dwellings cannot be advertised anywhere in order to look for transfers or exchanges.

If a member is being considered for a transfer or exchange by a Local Authority, the Local Authority will contact the local area office for a report on the member's tenancy record.

*“When you sign the tenancy agreement you are agreeing to keep or abide by those terms and conditions.”*



## Terms and Conditions

A staff member will read through the agreement with you and answer any questions before you sign and accept the terms and conditions. Below is a summary of the key undertakings given by the member relating to:-

- the occupation of the dwelling as his / her main place of residence,
- payment of the rent in full and on time in the manner prescribed,
- provision of full and accurate information about the member's household circumstances and income when requested,
- seeking consent in advance for any other adult person to move into the dwelling (which may result in an adjustment of the rent),
- cleaning, care and repair of the dwelling allocated to the member,
- upkeep of gardens, grass verges, and keeping of same free of litter and rubbish, and the proper disposal of rubbish,
- upkeep of gates and fences and ensuring that they are in safe condition and good working order,
- the prohibition of businesses such as the sale, storage, repair and maintenance of cars and motor cycles in the dwelling, garden and adjoining estate areas,

- the prohibition of the parking of large vans or lorries in a co-operative estate,
- controls over the keeping and breeding of dogs, cats and birds, including pigeons, and avoidance of nuisances,
- controls over structural alterations and the erection of aerials or other equipment,
- sharing by the tenants / residents in a co-operative apartment block of the cleaning and upkeep of entrances, halls, landings and stairwells, including the keeping of the common yard and garden areas in good condition and free of litter and rubbish,
- prevention of damage to doors, walls, fences, trees or shrubs by members or their children and visitors,
- prohibitions on causing persistent noise, nuisance and disturbance and on anti-social behaviour by the member or members of her / his household, including children, or visitors,
- taking out of an appropriate level of contents insurance for your personal possessions,
- financial liability to pay for the cost of any repairs or replacements due to damage caused by the member, or member of her / his household, including children, or visitors.

## Rent Payments, Statements and Arrears

The rent amount payable by each member is based on her / his household income, family size and the cost of management, caretaking and maintenance of the co-operative dwellings. This is known as a differential rent.

Members are required to provide full and accurate details each year about their household's gross income and family size (including the income details of all adults over the age of 18 years residing in the dwelling). This information must be provided on request, usually during April of each year.

Members are required to pay the rent amount due for each month by the 14th day of the month.

Members in receipt of Welfare Income Allowances such as a One Parent Family Allowance or Jobseekers Allowance are required to pay the rent due by using An Post Household Budget Scheme. This means that the rent amount can be deducted from your payment in the Post Office.

**Note:** Members must claim their income payment within 10 days of the due date to activate the rent payment.

Members in receipt of other forms of income (wages, pensions, etc.) are required to pay the rent amount due on time into a designated bank account. This may be done by standing order, banking on line or by using the personalised Rent Card issued to each member.

### Rent Statements

A full Statement of each Rent Account is sent to members every three months. If there are arrears, the member will be contacted



earlier. Each Rent Account is regularly checked to prevent any build-up of arrears.

If you require information about your rent payments, you can contact your Local Office.

## Rent Arrears

Failure to pay the Rent due in full and on time is a serious breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

A member whose rent account shows arrears will initially be sent a reminder letter requesting immediate payment of the rent outstanding. If the rent due has been paid in the meantime, this reminder can be disregarded or the rent account can be checked by telephoning your Local Office. It may take up to 5 days for rent payments to be processed through the banking system.

Failure to ensure that any rent outstanding is promptly paid will result in the issue of a Warning Letter leading to a Notice to Quit and termination of the Tenancy.

If a member is having difficulty in paying the rent or has arrears, she / he should contact their Local Office Monday - Friday (9.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. or 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.) to discuss her / his situation.

If appropriate, a *Rent Arrears Payment Agreement* may be entered into with the member in order to give them time to pay off the arrears as well as continuing to pay the full amount of rent due.

If a member fails to respond to a Warning Letter about rent arrears, or breaches a Rent Arrears Payment Agreement, Termination of the Tenancy with Notice to Quit is promptly issued and eviction will follow if the member does not surrender the dwelling before or at the expiration of the Notice.

It is, therefore, very important to make sure that rent payments are kept up-to-date or, if any difficulty arises, to contact the Local Office.



## Termination of a Tenancy

Tenancies in rental co-operatives are subject to the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2015. Tenants of co-operative rental dwellings have access to the services of the Residential Tenancies Board and details can be found on their website at [www.rtb.ie](http://www.rtb.ie)

A tenancy may be terminated in the first six months without reason upon giving 28 days' notice. Tenancies may also be terminated without reason in the first six months of any further Part 4 tenancy, although longer notice periods will apply.

The Tenancy in a co-operative dwelling may be terminated at any time if a member fails to fulfil or breaks any of the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement. This includes (summary) :

- failure to pay the rent amount due on time and in full, or having persistent arrears of overdue rent,
- failure to care for and clean the dwelling and garden areas (if any) let to her / him, or to carry out repairs for which the members are responsible,
- causing or permitting damage to the dwelling, or to walls, fences, doors, gates, communal facilities, trees and shrubs in the co-operative / apartment block/s or common areas,
- persistently causing or permitting nuisances and disturbances, including the playing of loud music, engaging in harassment of the neighbours or other anti-social behaviour.
- If a member fails to leave a dwelling at the end of the period of a Notice to Quit, he / she may be evicted. This is a rare occurrence.

- The terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement apply to all members of the household / family of the member who holds the tenancy, including children and young people, and to visitors to the dwelling.
- Membership of the housing co-operative ceases if a member is evicted from, or leaves, a co-operative dwelling.
- A member wishing to leave a dwelling is required to give one month's advance notice in writing to the Local Area Office.

**Note:** Members must give full details of all persons residing in the dwelling. Failure to do so is a serious breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

## Inheritance

In the event of the death of a member, the tenancy may be re-assigned to the tenant's spouse (husband or wife) or partner if he / she has been residing in the co-operative dwelling and had no other accommodation, prior to the death of the member. This would require the acceptance of the requirements of co-operative membership and compliance with the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement.

The tenancy may also be re-assigned to a deceased member's adult child, over the age of 18 years, who has been residing in the dwelling prior to the death of the Parent, without alternative accommodation, again subject to acceptance of and compliance with the requirements of co-operative membership and the terms and condition of the Tenancy Agreement and provision of proof of housing need.



## Pets

The keeping of dangerous dogs or other large animals, reptiles and birds is not allowed under the Tenancy Agreement. Dogs that are listed in the Control of Dogs Regulations 1998 are strictly prohibited.

The breeding of dogs or cats and the keeping or feeding of pigeons and seabirds or vermin is also not allowed.

The keeping of a pet is subject to the prohibition on persistently causing nuisance, disturbance and annoyance to neighbours. Persistent barking by a dog during the day or the night would be regarded as a source of disturbance and annoyance. In such circumstances, the member will be required to dispose of the dog.

Any damage done by a pet to the front or rear / side garden areas or yards, or to fences and walls etc., must be properly reinstated or repaired by the member. If a pet fouls any part of the co-operative the member must clean up same immediately.

Members are reminded that the keeping of dogs and cats in garden areas may cause some health risks to young children.

## Door Keys and Electronic Fobs

Following the letting of a dwelling each member is usually supplied with two keys to the entrance door of the house or apartment.

(Additional keys to other doors or gates or car parks may also be supplied).

Some co-operatives may have an electronic key entry pass system.

- It is advisable to entrust an additional copy of the entrance key to a reliable neighbour or nearby relative in case you lock yourself out. Members are responsible for replacing the lock and / or any damage caused through gaining entry. Members are also charged for the supply of new keys or electronic passes.
- Members vacating a dwelling, or on termination of a tenancy, must return all keys to the Local Office.

## Structural Alterations & Aerials

A member must obtain permission in writing before making any structural alteration or extensions to a dwelling. This includes any changes to the outside of a dwelling including garden walls.

Any alterations to the plumbing, heating and electrical installations also require permission in advance.

Consent may not be given if the proposed alterations affect the overall design appearance of the co-operative, or compromise safety, or otherwise have any effect on members in adjoining dwellings, or would affect the future re-letting of the dwelling.

The fixing of satellite dishes to the exterior of the dwelling is generally not permitted and requires the consent of the local office.

If consent is given, there will be conditions specified. In addition, any statutory regulations, including Planning Permission, if necessary, must be complied with and all costs must be met by the member.

Members are not permitted to colour or paint any brickwork or cement rendering of dwellings, or to erect any equipment, including aerials and dishes, on the front or on the chimney stacks of dwellings. Any equipment erected in this manner will be removed by Co-operative Housing Ireland.

## Insurances

Members are required to arrange their own insurance cover in respect of loss or damage to their household goods and contents. This should include insurance cover for loss or damage due to leaks, fire or flood or glass breakage.

All of the co-operative dwellings / buildings are insured against loss or damage due to risks such as fire and, therefore, tenants are not required to have insurance cover in respect of the actual dwellings let to them. It is important that members' own household furniture, floor coverings, if any, equipment and other contents are insured against loss or damage.

If any member is unsure how to arrange insurance cover, they should contact their Local Office for advice and assistance.



Section 4:  
**Inside  
Your Home**





*“Each member is responsible for the normal cleaning, care, repair and decoration of the dwelling let to her/him.”*



## Members' Responsibilities

Each member is responsible for the normal cleaning, care, repair and decoration of the dwelling let to her/him. This includes:

- all cleaning, internal decorating and re-decorating of the dwelling including painting and re-painting of woodwork on a regular basis (i.e., at least once in each period of five years), but excluding painting of external walls and brickwork,
- the standard and type of decoration or re-decoration and painting must be such that the dwelling can be easily re-let if vacated by the member, without major refurbishment or replacement work,
- repair and replacement, if necessary, of any damaged fittings or damage to walls, doors, gates, and fencing,

(such repairs must be carried out to a good standard), but excluding external structural repairs to the dwelling,

- prompt replacement of broken glass in windows or doors etc., together with the cleaning-up of any broken glass and safe disposal of same by the member,
- repair of leaking or dripping taps and waste-pipes and the removal of airlocks in pipes or radiators, and the repair of any damage caused,
- repair of doors and locks or replacement of any broken parts. If a lock is changed, the Local Office must be supplied with a key for the new lock,
- keeping the down-pipes, gullies, drains, waste-pipes and sewer connection pipes clear of any obstruction or blockage, including the removal of leaves, plastic bags or any other litter from the gullies. Cooking oil, grease, nappies, baby wipes or other unsuitable material must not be put into waste-pipes or gullies.
- cultivation and upkeep of both the front and rear or side garden areas (if any) of the dwelling, including the regular cutting of grassed areas in the gardens and road verges and keeping same clear of litter and rubbish. The parking of cars or other vehicles in the garden grassed areas or road verges is not allowed.
- ensuring that all rubbish and litter is disposed of in properly fastened bags or bins on the appropriate bin collection day, or into the large co-operative collection bins, if provided.
- Housing Officers will inspect the co-operative regularly to ensure that dwellings, garden areas and road verges are being kept in good condition.

## Repair Request Service

Each Local Office operates a central Repair Request Service to deal with the following types of repairs and maintenance:

- Repairs needed to the structure and exterior of the dwelling / building. This means the roof, walls, floors, doors and external window frames.
- Gutters, down-pipes and drains (but members are responsible for keeping gutters, gullies and drains clear of litter, leaves, plastic bags and other obstructions).
- Repairs to baths, toilets, sinks or wash-hand basins due to component failure (but the cost of repairing any damage caused by members or their households may be charged to them).
- Repair and maintenance of electrical wiring, switches and sockets, gas and other piping, fitted heaters, gas boilers, radiators, water tanks and cylinders - (but Members are responsible for dealing with tap drips / washers, minor leaks and air-locks).
- Repairs or re-decoration required as the result of any of the above work.

**If a repair is needed under the above headings, a Repair Request can be made to your Local Office between 9.30 and 1.00p.m. and 2.00p.m. and 5.00p.m.**

A *Repair Request form* is made out for each request and this is processed for attention according to its priority under the following headings:

- emergency
- urgent
- routine maintenance
- cyclical maintenance

If a member is having difficulty in dealing with any repair which is their own responsibility, a request can be made to Co-operative Housing Ireland for assistance. The cost of carrying out such a repair will be charged to the member and can be repaid in affordable instalments.

The following is a *guide* for members about the categorisation of Repair Requests and the responses they can expect:



#### **Emergency:**

These are repairs to overcome a potential safety risk and would usually be a response to serious electrical faults, major water leaks, or making safe any part of the dwelling / building which has been damaged, or weather-proofing damaged areas. This type of repair would usually receive a same-day response, with completion expected within 2-3 days, depending upon the extent of the repairs required

#### **Urgent:**

These are repairs to deal with a failure of the plumbing or sanitary installations, or failure of a main heating unit, or roof leaks, i.e., faults causing serious inconvenience to the member and the risk of damage to the house itself. This type of repair would receive a response within two days, with completion expected within 5 working days. However, with some repairs, the contractor may have to order parts. If this is the case the member will be kept informed as to when the job can be completed.

#### **Routine:**

These are repairs which can be dealt with on a routine basis within a period of 4 weeks. Some types of routine repairs may be included in a cyclical or planned maintenance programme for the co-operative.

Cyclical and planned maintenance are works to preserve dwellings / buildings and fittings over a period of years, such as external painting or the regular servicing of gas boiler units.

An after-hours or holiday call service for Emergency repairs only is also provided. Again emergencies are only those events that pose a threat to life or property. All other calls will be logged and reported to the office for attention on the next working day.

The after-hours or holiday call service telephone number for Emergency work only is: **1890 444 888**

Please note that except for during extremely severe weather conditions, central heating **not** working is not regarded as an emergency. Members are advised to have an alternative safe electrical heater, such as an oil-filled radiator type, for occasional use in such circumstances.

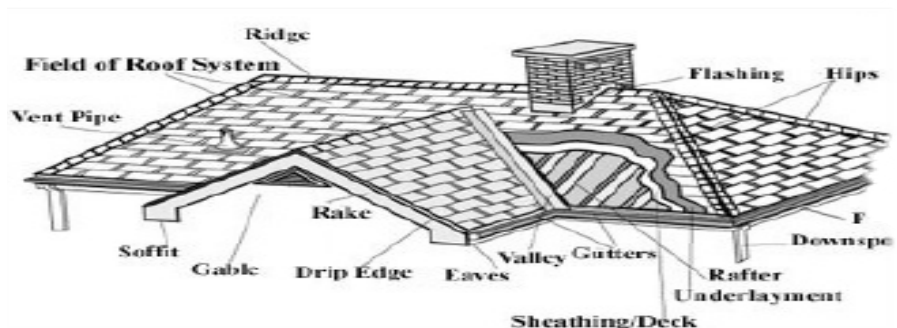
## Reporting Repairs

Members who wish to make a repair request should try to give as accurate a description as possible of the repair required and its location.

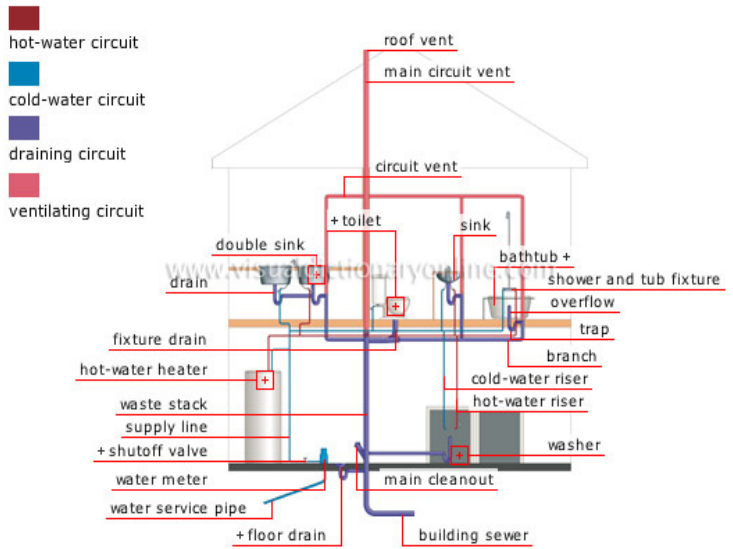
This helps to ensure that the Repair Request form gives accurate information to the staff member taking the call and to the contractors.

The following diagrams may be of assistance in identifying key components of a typical house, the plumbing and electrical installations.

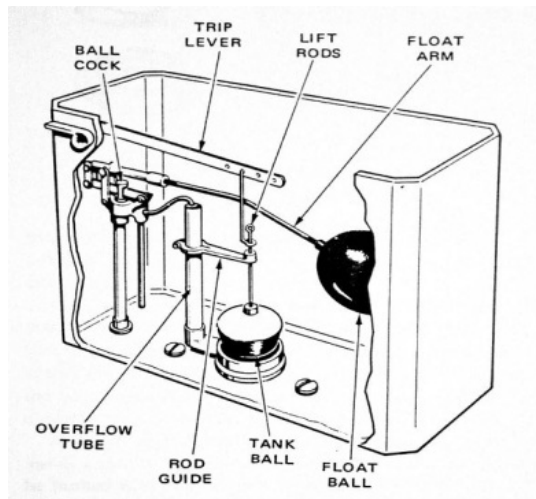
## Roof



## Water System in a typical house



## Cistern



# Safety Information

## Electrical Faults

Before making a Repair Request to deal with an electrical fault, members should first check that the problem is not in a household appliance such as a kettle, iron, lamp, television, cooker, washing machine etc. or loose wiring in a plug.

This can be checked by unplugging all electrical appliances and looking to see if the trip switch still turns off the electricity supply. If it doesn't, then plug the appliances back in one at a time and you will be able to see which one is faulty. If the trip switch continues to operate even when all the appliances are unplugged then you should make a Repair Request.

## Burst Pipes or Serious Leaks

- Immediately turn off the water at the stop-cock.
- Turn off the boiler.
- Turn on all the taps to drain the water as quickly as possible from the system. Make sure that there are no plugs in the sinks or bath tub first.
- Try to identify where the water is coming from.
- Make a Repair Request to your Local Office.

## Gas Leak

If you smell gas:

- Put out any cigarettes or naked flame.
- Do not use a match or naked flame to look for a leak.
- Don't use an electrical switch or mobile 'phone.
- Turn off the gas at the meter.
- Telephone Bord Gais on 1850 205 050



## Fire

To avoid the risk of fire or smoke spreading you should:

- Never tamper with door closers or wedge any doors open.
- Never tamper with or remove fire or smoke alarms. Make sure to regularly test the batteries in smoke alarms and replace them if the alarm starts to “chirp”.
- Never leave a chip pan, frying pan or deep fat fryer unattended.
- Make sure that you know the fire escape route in your apartment block (see evacuation notices in hallway and exit signs).
- Remember that the main landings and stairwells in co-operative apartment blocks are designed to be fire escapes and so **never** leave rubbish, bicycles, clothes horses, household furnishings, etc. in hallways or stairwells.
- Never store petrol, gas containers or other dangerous substances in houses or apartments.
- Make sure that the fire blanket supplied is stored somewhere easily accessible.
- In the event of a fire spreading, leave the building and ‘phone the fire brigade.



## Fire Alarms

Co-operative apartment blocks are fitted with fire and smoke alarm panels which will give a loud warning if set off. Members should make sure that they are familiar with the system and co-operate with the regular fire drills.

## Security

Members in apartment blocks should make sure that the front and rear entrance doors are always kept closed. Members should only allow entry to callers to their own apartments. Anybody ringing their buzzer for entrance to another apartment should not be let in.

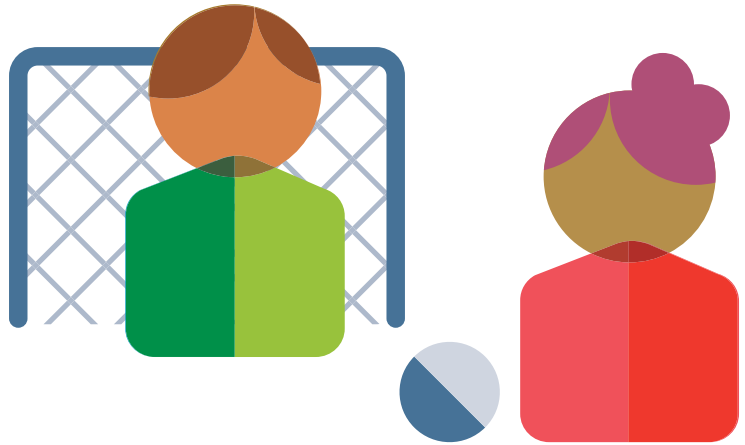
Doors should never be wedged open for any reason.

It is important for the security of all our members that we know exactly who is living in our co-operatives. This is one of the reasons that it is vital that members give us full details for all people living in their dwelling. There is no need for partners to be added to the tenancy agreement but they must have permission to reside in the dwelling.



The background features a warm color palette of oranges and yellows. It is composed of several overlapping, rounded rectangular shapes that create a layered, mountain-like effect. The colors transition from a deep, dark orange on the left to a bright, sunny yellow on the right.

Section 5:  
**In Your  
Community**



## Communal Areas

In choosing to accept co-operative membership and a tenancy, members agree to participate in the management and maintenance of their co-operative estate. Some members choose to join management committees and may even progress to membership of the Co-operative Housing Ireland board.

Other members may become very involved in developing the local community through arranging activities and events for members and their children, while yet other members may choose to participate by lending their support without becoming actively involved.

Whatever level of participation members choose however, there are certain responsibilities that come with co-operative membership. Section 3 covered the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement, including the upkeep of communal areas.

Members have a responsibility to ensure that communal areas and communal facilities are kept clean and litter free. This means that members in apartment blocks are expected to participate in cleaning halls and stairwells. The Local Area Office will help members to produce a rota so that it is always clear whose turn it is to clean if this is necessary. In some co-operatives members clean together as a communal activity. Members should make sure that they and their children do not litter the hallways and estates.

It is very important that hallways, landings and stairwells are kept clear as they are the fire escape. No rubbish, bicycles, scooters, clothes horses etc. should ever be left out. If the Housing Officers see any such obstructions during their regular inspections and clinics, the member will be contacted immediately as this is a serious breach of the tenancy agreement. The Local Office will remove and may dispose of any items that are not removed by members.

Each co-operative has a caretaking plan that is carried out by staff and contractors and monitored by local committees. It is very important that all members play their part in the upkeep and cleanliness of their co-operative. Many co-operatives arrange clean-up days where members and their children come together to tidy their estate.

## Waste Management

Where possible communal waste and recycling bins are provided in bin storage areas. These bins are for the use of co-operative members only and are only to be used for the disposal of household rubbish. Any member allowing other persons to use the bins or dumping themselves in the bin storage area or anywhere else in the co-operative is in serious breach of the tenancy agreement. The member will further be charged for the cost of disposing of such rubbish.

Where communal waste facilities are not provided, members are required to make adequate arrangements for the regular removal of waste.

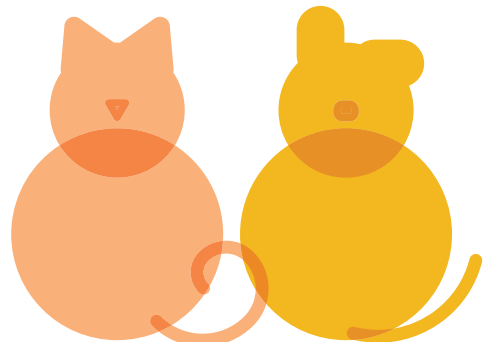
The buildup of waste in an area can attract vermin. Members are required to keep their gardens free from waste and to report any illegal dumping that occurs throughout the co-operative.



## Pets

Members are allowed to keep pets such as a small dog or cat but are not allowed to breed cats or dogs. The keeping of dangerous dogs, or other large reptiles or birds is not allowed. Nor is the keeping or feeding of pigeons, sea birds or vermin.

If a member keeps a pet then there are certain responsibilities that they must uphold. If a pet is a source of persistent nuisance and disturbance then the member will not be allowed to keep it. To avoid this, members should make sure that their dogs are not left unattended on balconies or in gardens where they may disturb neighbours by prolonged barking. Similarly dogs should only be allowed out in the co-operative with their owners and on a lead. Member should be aware that dogs who are let roam unattended may be collected by the Dog Warden or Gardaí. All members must clear up any faeces deposited by their pets immediately.



## External Appearance

Members are responsible for the upkeep and cleanliness of their homes. The outside of the houses should be kept clean and tidy and the gardens should be neat.

Aerials or dishes should never be added to the front or chimney stacks of dwellings.

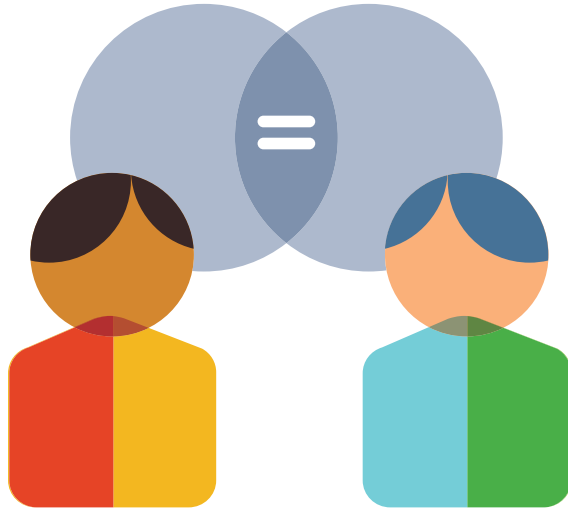
Members are encouraged to maintain and look after their homes, and to sand and varnish wooden door and windows. However, they should use the same colour varnish as the original. This is because co-operative estates are designed as a whole and it is important that they retain that design. For this reason the Local Office will make sure that the dwellings are painted, if necessary, and carry out other maintenance work.

Any member who wishes to make improvements to their home can contact the Local Office in writing for permission. They should say, in detail with drawings or pictures if possible, what they want to do to the dwelling and what contractors they would like to use. The Local Office may then give conditions such as the colour of windows frames and will want details regarding the proposed contractor such as their Safety Statement, Tax Clearance and Public Liability Insurance details.

The background features a gradient of blue tones, with several overlapping, rounded, mountain-like shapes in various shades of blue and purple. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# Section 6: **Working Together**





## Solving Problems

If a member is having any sort of difficulty, there is usually a way that we can work together to ease the problem. If the problem is with a neighbour, then the member should try talking to their neighbour. This should be done in a calm, polite and pleasant manner. If there has been a particularly annoying incident, it is generally a good idea to wait a while to allow tempers to die down.

Arguments between adults sometimes occur because of rows between children. The children often forget the incident after a short time and carry on playing together but if their parents become involved it can result in disputes and resentments that can carry on for years.

## Noise, Nuisance and Disturbance

Everybody has the right to enjoy their home in peace. Co-operative members are expected to show each other consideration. There also has to be some degree of tolerance. This is especially true in apartment blocks where it is not possible to completely soundproof apartments. However, members in both houses and apartments should be careful not to have the volume on television sets or stereos too high. Other sources of nuisance are children jumping off furniture, the wearing of heels on wooden floors, dogs barking and constantly banging doors. Again it is a good idea to calmly and politely raise the issue with your neighbour and ask for their consideration. They genuinely might not be aware that they are causing a nuisance or disturbance.

If speaking to your neighbour fails to solve the problem, then you can contact your Housing Officer. This can be done by ringing your Local Office or by speaking to the Housing Officer at the regular clinic in your co-operative. It is a good idea to keep a record of the times and dates of when the incidents that are disturbing you occurred. The Housing Officer will investigate the matter. They may speak to the local committee to see if any other members are affected but the identity of the complainant will never be revealed. Any complaints of this nature are recorded and the member making the complaint is kept informed of any action that is taken.

## Persistent Harassment, Intimidation or Anti-Social Behaviour

Co-operative members choose to become a part of the co-operative and agree to keep the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement. They are not expected to engage in harassment, intimidation and anti-social behaviour in their communities. Persistent behaviour of this type is a serious breach of the Tenancy Agreement and if not resolved may lead to a Notice to Quit the dwelling and the termination of the tenancy.

Any member who is found to have behaved in such a manner will be interviewed and, if necessary, receive a formal warning that if such behaviour continues, steps will be taken to end the tenancy.

Complaints about persistent harassment, intimidation and other anti-social behaviour should be made to the Local Office. Details about the time, place and nature of the behaviour should also be recorded. A complaint should also be made to the Gardai.

Remember that each member is responsible for the behaviour of their household, including children, as well as all the behaviour of all their visitors.

**Note:** Any discussions with the Housing Officer or Local Office are confidential. However, if there is reason to believe that there is any threat to the safety of children, staff or members or evidence of criminal activity then the relevant authorities will be informed.

## Complaints Procedure

It is the intention of Co-operative Housing Ireland to deal with all complaints promptly and to make sure that the member is kept informed about what is happening.

Complaints can be made by telephone, email, in writing or in person. All complaints will be logged. Anonymous complaints will also be logged but the complainant warned that full action cannot be taken on such complaints. All discussions with the Local Office are confidential.

Complaints about noise, nuisance and disturbance and harassment, intimidation or anti-social behaviour will be dealt with in the manner described above.

If the complaint cannot be dealt with immediately, the matter will be logged and further investigated. The member will be kept informed of the ongoing investigation.

If the member is not satisfied with the outcome, or if the complaint is about a staff member, then it will be investigated by the appropriate manager. Again the member will be kept informed of progress. The manager will attempt to give a response within ten working days and will inform the Executive Director of Housing Management and Community Affairs.

If the member is not satisfied with the response of the manager, the Executive Director will carry out a full review of the complaint including:-

- All details supplied by the member;
- The response by staff, including all documentation;
- If the response was fair and equitable;
- If there have been any unreasonable delays;
- If the relevant policies and procedures of the organisation have been upheld;

The Executive Director may consult the Chief Executive but in all cases will keep him informed.

When the review is complete, the Executive Director will contact the member to inform them of his decision. If the Chief Executive considers it necessary, this may include referring the matter to the Co-operative Housing Ireland Board of Management.

*“If a member is having any sort of difficulty, there is usually a way that we can work together to ease the problem.”*



Section 7:  
**Useful  
Information**



## Handy Hints

You are responsible for keeping the inside of your home in good condition.

To help you do this, it is wise to carry out small tasks and checks to prevent future problems such as:

- Wipe off condensation from all windows on a regular basis. If any mould forms, clean it off using a mix of bleach and water, or buy a mould removal product from a DIY store
- Blockages in kitchen sink waste pipes can be prevented by flushing through with washing soda and hot water.

In the autumn, you should check the following list of items before they cause you any problems:

- If you use an open fire, have you swept the chimney? This is normally your responsibility.
- Are all your heating controls set correctly?
- Are there any tiles or slates missing or broken on the roof?
- Are there any leaks from gutters and downpipes?

If you need advice about any of the above contact your Local Office.



## Condensation

Condensation occurs when there is an excessive build up of moisture in the air. There is always some moisture in the air, but additional moisture is created by:

- Cooking and boiling water,
- Taking baths or showers,
- Drying clothes indoors,
- Extra people in smaller apartments, etc.

Warm moist air condenses and forms water when it cools. This happens when it touches a cool surface. In your home these are the outside walls, mirrors, windows, wall tiles and even clothes.

If the condensation cannot dry out it will cause mould to form on walls, in cupboards and on window-sills, and mildew to form on clothes, especially leather goods. This is often thought to be damp but it can be avoided by reducing condensation.

There are several ways to reduce condensation,:

- Produce less moisture by covering pots when cooking. Turn down the heat when water boils. Switch off boiling kettles promptly. Dry clothes outside, or in a well ventilated room.
- Ventilate to let the moist air out, by opening a bathroom or kitchen window for a while to let steam escape, or by using an extractor fan. All windows should be opened for a while each day to change the air in your house or apartment.
- Keep your home warm with at least a low background heat ; this need not result in significantly increased heating costs.
- Wipe away moisture if it forms on cool surfaces.



## Clearing Blockages in Toilets

If the toilet pan is already full, remove some of the water into a suitable container using a jug or bowl. Push a toilet brush or plunger to the bottom of the pan and pump up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure which may shift the blockage. Check by flushing the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone. You may need to repeat the process several times before the toilet flushes normally. Do not use plungers with a metal disk, as these may chip or crack the toilet bowl.

## Avoiding Blockages

Air fresheners that attach to the rim of a toilet pan should be fastened securely to ensure they do not fall in and cause a blockage. Blockages are usually caused by unusual objects such as nappies, toys, sanitary towels, air fresheners, baby wipes etc. If such a blockage occurs as a result of one or several of these objects becoming lodged, you may be charged for the cost of clearing the blockage.



## Dealing with a Cold Radiator

If the whole radiator is cold, check that the radiator “turn-on” valve is open. If more than one radiator is cold, the whole heating system may need to be checked.

If the top part of a radiator is cold, this is because air is trapped in the system. Bleeding the radiator releases this air and allows hot water to fill the whole system.

Turn off the heating system before bleeding, otherwise the pump might draw more air into the system.

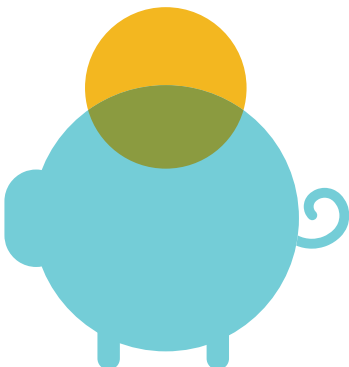
You will need a special radiator “Allen” key, available from most DIY or hardware shops. You will also need a rag or cloth and a bucket or bowl.

### *How to bleed a radiator*

The bleed valve is the small square nut at the top end of the radiator. Place the key over the valve and hold the cloth around it to catch any water. Gently turn the key anti-clockwise until you hear a hiss - this is the air being released. When water starts to come through, turn the key back clockwise to shut the valve off. **DO NOT** unscrew the valve completely, as the plug will come right out.

## Money Advice

- If a member is having financial difficulties which may affect the payment of rent, they should contact their Housing Officer without delay
- The **Household Budget Scheme** provides a means for members in receipt of certain types of social welfare to arrange for direct deduction of rent and other household bills. Members should contact their Local Office who will help them to apply for the Scheme.
- The **Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS)** provides independent financial advice and guidance. MABS can help you to plan a budget to pay outstanding bills in order to overcome financial difficulties and can arrange a repayment schedule with your debtors. Details of the contact telephone numbers for local MABS offices are in the Telephone Directory or can be found online at [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)
- Co-operative housing members are also advised to join the co-operative Credit Union movement. You can find your local Credit Union on [www.creditunion.ie](http://www.creditunion.ie)



## Energy Saving Advice

Make sure that you are clear on how your central heating system works. If you have any doubts, contact your Local Office to arrange for a demonstration.

Try turning your heating down by one degree. If you are warm enough then try another degree. Keep going until you reach a comfortable temperature.

Make sure that you turn off all lights, appliances and even chargers when they are not in use. Don't leave them on standby turn them off fully.

Try using your washing machine at a lower temperature.

Don't use a tumble drier for clothes if you can dry them outside.

If you haven't already changed to low energy bulbs, do so.

## Useful Contacts

Members are advised to fill in the following useful information:

***Name of Housing Officer:***

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***Address of Local Office:***

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***Phone Number:***

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***Email:***

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***Local MABS Office:***

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*Local Recycling Centre:*

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*Location of water stopcocks:*

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*Location of Gas supply control:*

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*Location of Electrical trip switch:*

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*Electricity meter:*

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## Co-operative Housing Ireland

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**Fax:** +353 (1) 6614462  
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[www.cooperativehousing.ie](http://www.cooperativehousing.ie)