



CUSTOMER PAYMENTS POLICY 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Association acknowledges that under certain circumstances it will be required to make payments to tenants, applicants, former tenants and other service users.

This policy sets out the principles for payment.

2.0 TYPES OF ALLOWANCES

2.1 Redecoration Allowance

Redecoration allowances may be offered to tenants in the following circumstances:

- ✓ Following Refurbishment or Repair
- ✓ On Re - letting a Void Property

2.2 Following Refurbishment or Repair

Decoration allowance will be provided where decoration has been severely disturbed because of work carried out by the Association. The Property Services Manager or delegated staff shall assess whether a decoration allowance shall be payable and if so the amount to be paid in accordance with Section 4.0

The Association however reserves the right to carry out preparation work and/or decoration if this work is of a complicated nature.

The Association will also undertake decoration on behalf of tenants who are unable to carry out the work themselves because they are elderly or disabled and have no means of local assistance. In such cases a choice of decoration will be provided.

2.3 Re-letting a Void Property

Decoration allowance will be provided on re - letting a new tenancy where decoration falls below a minimum standard as determined by the Association or where a decoration allowance may make the property more attractive to re - let. The Housing Services Officer will assess the amount of allowance to be paid in accordance with Section 4.0 taking into account any recommendation from the Property Services Officer (Inspections)

2.4 Decant Allowances

The Association has a Decant Policy. This Decant Policy sets out in full the arrangements for decanting tenants. Where it is deemed necessary to decant a tenant prior to undertaking any contract works the Association shall meet the cost of the following:

- ✓ Furniture removal and storage, including uplift and refitting of carpets and moveable floor coverings
- ✓ Phone disconnection and re-connection

- ✓ Electricity connections
- ✓ Gas connections
- ✓ Disconnection and re-connection of white goods
- ✓ Mail re-direction
- ✓ Disconnection and reconnection of Satellite TV systems.
- ✓ Re-instatement of Tenant's doorbell or (replacement of same, if this is not possible)
- ✓ Any other decant cost as may be determined by the Housing Services Manager, Property Services Manager or delegated staff.

Where fittings and fixtures that require the approval of the Association have been fitted by the tenant e.g. laminate flooring the Association will accept no responsibility for their removal or refitting.

Where standard fittings and furnishings require to be removed for the purposes of carrying out the works and as a result of their removal cannot be re-used these shall be replaced by the Association on a like for like basis.

2.5 Compensation for loss of central heating and hot water

The Association has arrangements in place for the servicing and repair of heating and hot water systems.

Failure of heating and hot water system is regarded as an emergency, and tenants may report such failures to the office during working hours or directly to our emergency repairs contractor if the failure occurs while the office is closed.

Our contractors will endeavour to repair the system immediately but if they cannot, the contractor will offer to provide temporary heating and hot water appliances and where these are accepted by the tenant, the Association will make payments for failure in service delivery, which also recognise the increased costs of heating and hot water likely to be experienced by the tenant. Payments will be made as follows:

- ✓ For each temporary heater (maximum 1 per bedroom and 1 for the living room) - £2.32 per day
- ✓ For each temporary hot water appliance (maximum 1 per property) £1.17 per day
- ✓ No payment will be made for a period of less than one day. The period for which the tenant was without heating and/or hot water must include an overnight period
- ✓ Payments will be made promptly, following confirmation of the cause of failure
- ✓ Payments will be made in cash where the tenant requires it
- ✓ No payment will be made where the failure is due to an act or omission on the part of the tenant
- ✓ Payments will be revised annually in accordance with the annual increase applied to rents

3.0 EX GRATIA PAYMENTS

The Association may, in certain circumstances, make a payment to a service user where a claimant has experienced a direct and quantifiable loss (but not including a loss of earnings) as a result of action or omission on the part of the Association.

Under certain circumstances payments may be of an “ex-gratia” nature where matters cannot be resolved through alternative processes or the application of other procedures.

3.1 Common Situations

The most common situations where an ex gratia payment may be applicable include;

❖ As a result of action or omission on the part of the Association

Examples of situations might include the following:

- ✓ as a result of an omission / failure of the Associations staff to ensure the standard of accommodation at the point of letting met with the Associations published standards;
- ✓ As a result of an omission / failure of the Associations maintenance contractors to undertake repairs in a manner which meets the Associations published standards where this is disputed by the contractor.

❖ Where standards of service have been poor or unsatisfactory

Examples of situations might include the following:

- ✓ as a result of lack of heating / partial heating only as a result of a repeated fault which although being responded to by the Associations maintenance contractor has remained inoperative for an extended period of time and which has caused inconvenience to the service user;
- ✓ as a result of any level of service which following investigation has shown to be less than the Associations published service standards

The above list is for illustration purposes only and is not exhaustive and reference to “compensation” relates to circumstances not already covered elsewhere in this or other policy documents.

3.2 Entitlement

There is no automatic entitlement to ex-gratia payments with any claim being considered on its own merits.

3.3 Delegated Authority

In order to streamline to process the following levels of delegated authority are authorised:

Position	Sum
Housing Services / Property Services Manager	Up to £250
Chief Executive	£251 to £500
Management Committee	Over £500

3.4 Complaint Situations

In complaints situations in order for any service user to be eligible for an ex-gratia payment the complainant must have firstly exhausted the Associations complaints procedure.

Where a complaint remains unresolved the member of staff dealing with the complaint may offer an ex-gratia payment in an effort to resolve the complaint.

In such a situation any offer will be subject to the complainant agreeing, in writing, that the payment, which would be made as a goodwill gesture and without acceptance of any liability, will bring the complaint to a satisfactory conclusion.

3.5 Insurance

Claims for injury or damage to property shall be referred immediately to the Association's insurers. Ex-gratia payments may be made if the amount of the claim falls below the excess payable on the Association's Insurance Policy."

3.6 Liability

Any payment made is a gesture of goodwill and not an admission of liability. The claimant must confirm, in writing, that acceptance of the payment constitutes settlement of any claim.

4.0 PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES - GENERAL

Where a tenant is decanted a temporary agreement for occupancy will be entered into. Rent during the period of the decant will be paid on the lower of the 2 properties.

Decant costs shall be paid directly by the Association to the public utility/contractor unless the decant is arranged by the main contractor in which case payment will be made through the contract.

4.1 Minor/Major Works

In the case of a redecoration allowance which will be paid on completion of the main contract or the issue of a Partial Possession certificate of the main contract. The Property Services Manager (or another officer the Property Services Manager may delegate) shall authorise the amount of allowance to be paid as an initial payment. The Property Services Manager shall have the discretion to request that a random or selective inspection be carried out to ensure that redecoration has been completed. The remaining allowance shall then be paid

4.2 Method of Payment

The Association prefers to pay decoration allowances in the form of vouchers as these are more secure. However, payment in the form of a cheque or bank transfer may be made to current tenants following minor or major works of improvement where: the tenant wishes to receive the allowance in this manner. No additional redecoration allowance will be paid where full decoration is included in the works contract.

4.3 Beginning of a Tenancy

At the beginning of a tenancy, the Housing Services Manager (or another Officer as the Housing Services Manager may delegate) shall authorise the amount of allowance to be paid as an initial payment. The Housing Services Manager shall have the discretion to request that a random or selective inspection be carried out to ensure that redecoration has been completed. The remaining allowance shall then be paid.

4.4 Credit to Rent and/or Recharge Arrears

Payment of the allowance will be made directly to the tenant in the following circumstances:

Where:

- The tenant is in arrears of rent or recharge arrears to the Association **and** is upholding an arrangement to reduce the arrears and wishes to receive the payment directly.

Or

- The tenant is **not** upholding an arrangement to reduce the arrears but the tenant is experiencing a form of hardship and wishes to receive the payment directly.

The allowance will be credited to the arrears of rent or recharge where:

- The tenant is in arrears of rent or recharge arrears to the Association **and** is **not** upholding an arrangement to reduce the arrears and there is no hardship apparent.

5.0 REDECORATION ALLOWANCE LEVELS

The amount of decoration allowances payable is stated in **Appendix 1**.

The Association will provide an information leaflet along with vouchers that will advise recipients that levels of allowance are set to contribute to, and not meet the full costs of decoration, and provide general information on the arrangements for issue and redemption of the vouchers.

Where, in the opinion of the officer assessing the need for a decoration allowances, the house type is such that a payment in excess of these standard allowances is appropriate, they shall recommend to their departmental manager that an enhanced allowance shall be paid, and the reason for the enhanced allowance.

The enhanced allowance shall be payable only with the approval of the departmental manager.

The Customer Services Committee shall receive a report on the payment of decoration allowances if the amount payable exceeds the budget by more than 10%. This report will not identify specific properties, but will specify instances of enhanced allowances and the reasons for payment

Where allowances are paid in the form of vouchers, the amount paid to the tenant may be rounded to the nearest whole pound in excess of the allowance payable.

6.0 BUDGETARY PROVISION

Resources for funding the above payments to customers will be included in the annual budget.

7.0 ENTITLEMENTS, PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS

The Association shall comply with its Policy on the payment of Entitlements, Payments and Benefits to Management Committee members and members of staff in the payment of any sums due under this Policy.

8.0 LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

- ✓ Decant Policy

- ✓ Complaints Procedure
- ✓ Finance Regulations / Procedures
- ✓ Insurance Policy

9.0 **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed at least every 5 years.

27th October 2020

Policy Review & Consultation Process

Reviewed by the Management Team	27th October 2020
Reviewed by the Customer Services Committee	12 th November 2020
APPROVED BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE:	26th NOVEMBER 2020
Date of Next Review	November 2025

Approved

REDECORATION ALLOWANCES

			From 1 st June 2014	From 1 st Dec 2020
Living Room			£55	£60
Each Bedroom			£45	£49
Bathroom			£35	£38
Kitchen			£45	£49
Hall without staircase			£45	£49
Hall with staircase			£55	£60
Ceiling only			£10	£11

The above amounts will be reviewed on an annual basis in April of each year with reference to the increase in the Consumer Price Index (the "rate of inflation") published in September¹ of the preceding year.

APPROVED