



Income Management Policy

1. Aim of policy

This policy outlines our approach to income collection and compliance with our financial objectives and regulatory requirements.

We aim to maximise income collection and minimise arrears through the timely collection of all income. We'll provide a tailored service to meet the needs of all our customers including:

- identifying those customers who need support and refer to the appropriate officer or agency;
- a range of payment methods which are easy to access;
- accurate and timely information;
- profiling of all new and existing customers before offering a tenancy to demonstrate effective risk management;
- early intervention when a customer falls into arrears;
- using possession proceedings and eviction as a last resort
- promptly pursue any former tenant debts including sub account debt such as recharges, using all methods available

2. Scope of policy

This policy applies to all our customers including former customers, who have a responsibility to make payments for rent, service charges, rechargeable repairs and any other income owed to us. The policy will be applied by the Income and Neighbourhood teams and the Income Team Leaders, Income Manager, Head of Operations and Operations Director are responsible for its compliance and review.

Sometimes we may use our discretion and act outside of this policy. If we do it will be with senior manager approval.

3. Policy statement

- We recognise the importance of having a robust approach to income collection to meet our financial objectives and to promote a positive payment culture for our customers.
- We'll take a proactive, preventative and supportive approach in the way we collect rent through encouraging and supporting our customers to take responsibility for their rent and other payments.



- We'll provide a range of options so that it's easy to make payments and we'll promote self-service as a preferred method for our customers to manage their accounts. Direct Debits will be the preferred method of payment.
- We'll have clear and transparent processes for residents that fall into arrears and those that have other debts that will be consistently followed and will ensure compliance and performance is achieved through regular monitoring. In addition, we'll aim for our service to demonstrate value for money through effective use of resources including technology.
- Where customers do not maintain their obligations to pay rent in accordance with their tenancy agreement we'll take prompt action.

4. Policy

We'll be proactive in the recovery of arrears and work with residents to ensure they are given every opportunity to pay their rent and any other charges. We'll be clear with all new customers what the expectation for paying their rent is, in accordance with their tenancy/lease agreement and ensure rent is paid at the sign up for their tenancy. Through the monitoring of accounts and other interventions we'll make sure that our customers are given the advice and support needed to manage their accounts.

Our policy will reflect good practice and will meet legal and regulatory requirements at all times. We will continually monitor good practice and statutory and regulatory requirements.

Our procedures will take account of the Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claim for rent arrears (issued under the Civil Procedures Rules in October 2006 and updated in April 2013)

New Customers will be required pay their rent in advance prior to signing for their tenancy. Where there are exceptional circumstances, this will be reviewed, considered and any reduction approved by the Lettings or the Income Manager. We will encourage customers to pay their rent by Direct Debit which is our preferred method of payment.

We'll use a range of methods for chasing debts including letters, emails, phone calls and texts and some of these contacts may be outside normal office hours (8am and 8pm on weekdays and 8am and 7 pm on a Saturday). We may also use third party organisations to chase debts on our behalf and may use agencies to trace customers both existing and former.

Customers will always be made aware of any other debts they may have with us in addition to rent and service charge arrears. The main rent account debts will be the priority for payment, however in some circumstance's payments will be made to other debts in conjunction with the main debt for example former debt agreements (within tenancy agreements) or utility costs.



Any other debt owed to us such as recharges, utilities and legal costs will be held on a sub account against the customer's account. We will maintain accurate information about this debt and will take robust action to recover this.

If arrears accrue or remain (including low level arrears) and customers fail to engage we will instigate legal proceedings commencing with the serving of a legal notice. Eviction will only be used as a last resort once all other reasonable steps have been taken. Any legal costs incurred will also be recovered from the customer.

We aim to minimise financial losses from former customers who leave owing rent and other charges by:

- pro-active early intervention while the customer is still in residence, as outlined in this policy;
- making every effort to ensure that when a tenancy is terminated the debts are cleared and we receive a forwarding address;
- informing the local authority is informed when tenancies are terminated to prevent benefit overpayments;
- making customers aware of all sub account debt, including recharges and utilities before they leave
- adding recharges to the sundry debt account if the property is not left in an acceptable condition.

5. Statutory requirements

- Housing Acts 1980, 1985, 1988, 1996 & 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Homes & Community Agency regulatory framework
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Civil Justice Court Pre-action Protocol
- Immigration act 2016

6. Related policies

- Rents and Service Charge Policy
- Financial Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy



7. Monitor and review process

The policy will be applied by the Income team and the Income Team Leaders, Income Manager, Head of Operations and Operations Director are responsible for its compliance and review.

Arrears performance is a key performance indicator and will be monitored on a monthly basis by the Executive and quarterly by the Board.

This policy will be approved by the Executive and will be reviewed every three years.

Author	Owner	Date approved	Review date
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