



DECORATION ALLOWANCE POLICY

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST	
Policy Guardian:	Operations Director
Author:	Operations Director
Version number:	2.0
Approved by Chief Executive:	Yes
Approved by Management Board on:	19 June 2018
Effective from:	June 2018
Due for review on:	June 2021
Diversity compliant:	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment required:	No
Data Protection compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety compliant:	Yes
Procedure implemented:	Already in place
QL system changes made:	Not required
KPI's/reporting arrangements implemented:	Not required
Training completed:	Not required
Posted on Intranet:	
Posted on website:	
Publicity material issued:	
Business Services Implementation Review:	

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POLICY: DECORATION ALLOWANCES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy sets out the circumstances where Caledonia Housing Association will issue tenants with a decoration allowance. This policy applies to all tenants who have or will have a Scottish Secure Tenancy or a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy with the Association.
- 1.2 A decoration allowance is described in this policy as the award of vouchers to obtain a specified decoration pack from a decoration goods supply company which is given to assist both new and existing tenants where:
- a property has been allocated and it does not meet a reasonable standard of decoration. For the purpose of this policy, a property is said to be in an unreasonable standard of decoration when there is extensive damage to wallpaper, smoke stained walls, and so on; or
 - work that has been carried out by the Association, or by a contractor working on behalf of the Association, has caused irreparable and excessive damage to the interior decoration of the property

These vouchers will not be transferable and can only be used by the tenant, unless agreed by the Association.

2 PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The overall aim of the Decoration Allowance Policy is to assist tenants with the cost of decorating their home and, in doing so, to assist in the efficient and effective maintenance of the Association's housing stock.
- 2.2 Decoration allowances are intended as a contribution towards the cost of materials and equipment needed to carry out internal redecoration work. Decoration allowances are intended to allow tenants choice in the decoration of their home. The allowances may not meet the full costs involved.
- 2.3 The award of a decoration allowance does not remove the need for tenants to adequately insure the contents of their homes from damage.
- 2.4 The award of a decoration allowance does not remove the need for staff and contractors, carrying out work on behalf of the Association, to take adequate care to ensure that damage does not occur.
- 2.5 The specific objectives of the Decoration Allowance Policy are to give clear guidance on:
- when a decoration allowance will and will not be paid
 - how much may be paid and in what form
 - what items are covered by the decoration allowance
 - publicise the terms of the policy to enable a wider understanding by tenants, staff and the public;

The policy will be supported by detailed procedures which will include clear processes for the assessment and distribution of decoration allowances.

3. DECORATION ALLOWANCE RATES

- 3.1 The value of decoration allowance a property is eligible for will be assessed by either the Maintenance or Planned Maintenance Officer. The Officer will calculate the value of the decorations award using the guide attached to this Policy at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 All decoration awards will be issued in the form of vouchers from a specified decoration goods supplier. The vouchers will only be able to be used to purchase the decorating products detailed in the guide at Appendix 1.

4. ASSISTANCE TO DECORATE

- 4.1 Where a tenant indicates that they will have difficulty carrying out the decoration and there is no other able-bodied member of the household or no other assistance available to the tenant, the Association will offer to assist with decoration costs up to the value of the voucher.
- 4.2 A Team Leader or the Housing Manager will be required to approve the offer of assistance with decoration costs.

5. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

6.1 Legislation

The Association will ensure that the policy complies with current legislation and promotes good practice. The legislation particularly relevant to this policy includes:

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Section 27 and Schedule 4 states that landlords must carry out any necessary work within a reasonable timescale and make good any damage caused by them in carrying out the work.

The Association requires any contractor to 'make good' any damage that they may have caused e.g. repair and prepare surfaces for redecoration, but not to redecorate.

Para 2.2 of the Association's Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement states that the tenant must take reasonable care to prevent damage to the decoration of the property.

Para 5.18 of the Association's Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement also states that the tenant is responsible for taking reasonable care of the house. This responsibility includes carrying out some minor repairs and internal decoration. It also includes keeping the house in a reasonable state of cleanliness. Tenants are advised of this when they sign their tenancy agreement.

6.2 Performance Standards

The Social Housing Charter came into effect in April 2012 and sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Charter replaces the Performance Standards and the outcomes relevant to this Policy are:

2: Communication

Social landlords manage their business so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

4: Quality of housing

Social landlords manage their business so that tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.

5: Repairs, maintenance and improvements

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.

- 6.3 Social landlords are responsible for meeting the standards and outcomes set out in the Charter. The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, individually and collectively, achieve the outcomes.
- 6.4 The Regulatory Framework and Guidance by which the Regulator will undertake this provides that the Regulator's approach to monitoring landlords' achievement of the outcomes and standards in the Charter will be based on the landlords' performance information and their own assessment of their performance. Therefore, for each year ending on 31 March, landlords will be expected to:
- measure and assess their performance in progressing towards or achieving the Charter outcomes and standards;
 - provide the Regulator with some key performance information on their achievement of the outcomes and standards; and
 - report their performance to their tenants and other service users who use their services.
- 6.5 Caledonia will undertake to review each element of the Charter with its tenants and agree with them the measures and performance standards required to achieve each outcome.

7. TENANT SATISFACTION AND INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 In common with its range of services, the Association is committed to monitoring the experiences of tenants using the decoration vouchers. The Association shall use a range of means to obtain feedback from residents on their level of satisfaction with key aspects of these services.
- 7.2 In addition the Association will investigate individual complaints or causes for dissatisfaction with the delivery of the policy and use the information obtained to identify potential service improvements.
- 7.3 More generally the Association will aim to continuously consult with tenants and tenant representative bodies on key aspects of the Decoration Allowance Policy, including the service specification, policy direction and operational practices.

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

8.1 The Association will monitor:

- the total value of decoration allowances issued;
- the number of tenants who received a decoration allowance when the tenancy began;
- the number of complaints made regarding the issuing of decoration allowances and their outcomes.

8.3 Regular performance, financial monitoring and statistical reports will be presented to the Operational Management Team as required.

9 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Association, through the Decoration Allowance Policy, will act to provide services in a manner that encourages equality and complies with all relevant equalities and diversity requirements. The Association's Equalities & Diversity Policy Statement provides further information on these and the Association's approach to equalities issues.

10. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The approach outlined in this policy complies with the Association's commitment to sustainability and takes account of the wider economic and social impacts of the policy in terms of individuals, households, local communities and the environment.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

11.1 Risk management will be achieved through the review of the Decoration Allowance Policy and the associated procedures, to ensure compliance with all legislative requirements and regulatory and best practice guidance. The Association will also consult with tenants as a key element of this review process. Furthermore, appropriate training opportunities will be made available to members of staff to ensure high standards are maintained.

11.2 Budget monitoring and progress with the Decoration Allowance Policy will be the subject of regular reporting to the Operational Management Team. The application of the policy will comply with the Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegated Authority.

12 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

12.1 Any tenant may submit a complaint, using the Association's complaints procedure if it is felt that the Association has failed to correctly apply the Decoration Allowance Policy.

13. POLICY REVIEW

13.1 The Association will review the Decoration Allowance Policy in 2021, or as required following a substantive legislative or regulatory change.

DECORATION ALLOWANCES FROM APRIL 2015

DECORATION ALLOWANCE

A decoration allowance may be awarded in any of the following circumstances:

Example 1: when a new tenant moves into a property where the standard of decoration is below a reasonable standard as defined by the minimum letting standard outlined in the Void Property Management Policy.

Example 2: following any responsive repair work carried out by the Association where the decoration has been extensively or irreparably damaged, at the discretion of the Maintenance Officer.

Example 3: following any planned maintenance or improvement work carried out by the Association and it is deemed necessary for a decoration allowance to be given, for example, following the installation of new kitchen units.

All decoration allowances will be issued in the form of a voucher award to be used to obtain a decoration pack based on the size of the property or room requiring to be decorated, see pack size guide.

Communal areas such as internal corridors and stairways in blocks of flats and sheltered schemes are the responsibility of the Association and are decorated on a cyclical programme.

ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE:

To ensure that the decoration assessment standards are consistent across the stock the following procedure notes will ensure that officers follow strict guidance that should remove any impartiality against their own taste and style.

Any rooms assessed as being in poor condition will be awarded a decoration allowance.

This allowance is not designed to cover the full cost of the work, but is granted to assist with the redecoration of the home.

A decoration allowance will not be awarded where:-

- All decoration, whether old or new, is intact – no major tears or strips of wallpaper should be missing;
- There are no visible graffiti or stains from smoke/water damage on the interior or exterior of the property;
- No areas of missing wallpaper or areas that are damaged or defaced;
- There are faint marks on the walls from pictures
- Condition should relate to the standard in which the paper/paint has been applied and not to taste and colour;
- Obvious damage has been caused by an existing tenant
- The interior decoration of a property is not the incoming tenant's personal taste (unless the decoration is a dark or strong colour that would prove costly to change, for example black);
- A payment is sought following an incident a tenant should have been insured for;
- A new tenancy is beginning as a result of mutual exchange.

- No decoration allowance will be awarded for a room where the Association, or its contractor, has already completed decoration.

An allowance may be awarded where:-

- Areas of room are either undecorated or in a very dirty condition;
- Wallpaper is peeling or badly discoloured;
- There are partially stripped rooms, badly torn wallpaper that would prove unacceptable to live with, walls poorly painted where extensive work is required to correct;
- The wallpaper is considerably torn;
- The walls are badly marked or smoke stained;
- The walls have been cleaned but continue to look dirty;
- The woodwork has been badly chipped/painted, the paint is peeling off or it has been painted a dark or strong colour that is not easily covered up.

The above list shows examples only and is not an exhaustive list of circumstances where a decoration allowance may be awarded.

VALUE OF AWARD

The officer may use the following table to assist them in calculating the decoration allowance award:

Paint Pack	Manufacturer	Pack Description	Price (ex VAT)
GB73	Armstead	1 Bedroom	103.81
GB74	Armstead	2 Bedroom	132.63
GB75	Armstead	3 Bedroom	144.97
GB76	Armstead	1 Room (ex Accessories)	51.95
GB77	Armstead	1 Room (inc Accessories)	63.94
GB78	Armstead	Kitchen/Bathroom	57.67

An annual review of all awards will be carried out on 1 April each year.