

## Decants policy compliance note

### Summary Statement

#### What is a decant?

It's what we call the process of moving our customers to alternative accommodation.

#### Why might we decant?

A decant might be needed if:

- Required repair works are likely to cause lots of disruption, and it is not reasonable or safe for the customer to stay in their property
- If there is an emergency and the property is no longer habitable or safe for the customer
- In some circumstances where funding for a supported service has ended and we can't provide the accommodation anymore

#### Types of decant

Decants can be:

- Temporary – for a maximum of 12 months, if a customer is expected to return to their home once it is ready,
- Permanent – if a customer is not expected to return to their home such as when a supported housing service is closing, a lease is ending, or the property is due to be demolished
- Internal – to another Home Group property, usually within the same building or area
- External – to a property provided by another landlord if we do not have suitable accommodation in our stock
- Planned – if works are scheduled that will cause the home to be unsafe whilst being carried out
- Emergency – if a property is identified as being unsafe to live in either by us or a statutory authority (sometimes this can lead to a permanent decant), e.g. flooding, subsidence, severe damp and mould. Particular cases that involve harassment or domestic abuse can also lead to emergency re-housing. We will discuss other options with our customers in emergencies:
  - o Staying with friends/family
  - o B+B or hotel
  - o Alternative Home Group properties
  - o Private rent
  - o Alternative support provision

#### Emergency decants

For all emergency decants we must:

- Act promptly on emergencies declared by Statutory Authorities (such as police or council)
- Manage emergency decants to minimise disruption
- Make compensation payments where applicable in line with our policy on compensation
- Activate local emergency plans (where relevant to do so)
- Help customers move to temporary accommodation and complete required works
- Ensure alternative accommodation meets individual needs and maintains support
- Work with agencies to reduce financial hardship and meet wellbeing needs
- Consider one-off payments for necessities
- Support customers with contents insurance claims (if applicable)
- Work with Insurance Team to process claims efficiently

### **Home contents during decant**

Customers are responsible for insuring their own home contents against loss, theft, and damage.

### **Homeowners**

Home Group has no automatic right to decant homeowners other than to enable major repairs to be carried out under the terms of their individual lease or written statement or where the statutory authorities have declared an emergency. Homeowners are required to follow the terms of their lease or written statement and secure accommodation through their buildings insurance policy.

### **Supporting customers through the decant process**

We plan ahead as much as possible to minimise the impact on our customers. We'll talk to our customers about possible decants as early as we can. We will always consider customers' individual needs, particularly for customers living in vulnerable circumstances, or if a decant could cause additional vulnerabilities. For planned decants, such as estate regeneration, we will consult customers during development of the proposal, once funding and dates have been set and when arrangements are made.

To minimise disruption and ensure effective communication we offer a single point of contact for customers during the process. We take care to avoid isolating or leaving customers vulnerable during large-scale moves (such as demolitions or regenerations). Where possible we organise the decant of properties in stages (by floor, block, or street), depending on customers' preferences and the availability of suitable new homes.

In relation to allocating new permanent properties, customers required to move due to decanting are prioritised in Band 1, 'Urgent need to move'. If multiple customers request the same property, priority is given to the household with the longest continuous tenancy with Home Group. Customers will generally be offered properties similar to their current homes, unless their housing needs require a different type or size of property.

Allocation decisions for alternative property types or sizes will follow Home Group's Allocations Policy. For temporary and permanent decants, customers will be made three reasonable offers of accommodation.

If a customer refuses three reasonable accommodation offers, a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) in England or Notice of Proceedings (NOP) in Scotland may be issued in order to facilitate the move, but this action is not automatic. We seek further guidance from Legal Services in such circumstances.

If suitable alternative accommodation is unavailable from our own properties, we will collaborate with external organisations to offer appropriate housing and support. When permanent moves are required, efforts will be made to rehouse neighbours and family households together or nearby if they wish, supporting community networks; households can also be relocated further apart if requested.

### **Suitability of decant property**

Any decant property a customer is moved to must be deemed reasonably suitable for occupation. To ensure this we consider the following:

- State of repair
- Stability
- Freedom from damp
- Internal arrangement
- Ventilation
- Water supply
- Drainage and sanitary conveniences
- Facilities for food prep and cooking, and disposal of waste water

### **Tenancies**

Customers will not be given multiple tenancies during a decant. If they are moved to a similar property, they will receive a temporary agreement with the same terms as their original tenancy.

If we don't have a suitable Home Group property then we will find one with an external provider, such as another housing association, the local authority or a private landlord.

For permanent decants, we will end the original agreement and offer a new tenancy.

### **Changes to the original property**

Substantial changes may result in a review of the type of tenancy offered before a customer returns to the property. This may mean a new tenancy agreement when moving back.

If a household change means the original home is no longer suitable, we will help the customer find appropriate accommodation.

### **Rent and charges**

During temporary decants, customers remain responsible for paying for rent and charges on their original home. Rent is not charged on the decant property.

For permanent decants, customers are responsible for paying rent on the new property.

### **Legal action**

Legal action will only be taken when essential, either to progress a decant or if the customer breaches their permanent agreement. The nature of action depends on whether the decant is temporary or permanent, and planned works and their impact will be discussed with each customer beforehand.

## The end of the decant

Temporary decant agreements end automatically four weeks after written notice is given to the customer that temporary accommodation is no longer needed. The customer must be notified in writing and supported in moving back. If the customer refuses to leave, legal action for possession may be required, using the decant agreement and written notice as evidence.

## Expenses and payments

We ensure our customers are not left out of pocket because of the requirement to move through no fault of their own.

In cases where **emergency** alternative accommodation is necessary, we will cover all reasonable expenses such as:

- Removals and storage
- Additional rent or service charges
- Emergency hotel or bed and breakfast stays
- Transport to temporary accommodation
- Kennel costs for pets
- Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for meals (with receipts) will also be reimbursed
- If tenants cannot access essential belongings, a one-off payment (up to £30 per person) may be provided for basic needs

The list of covered expenses is not definitive; additional essential costs may also be paid depending on the specifics of the emergency, in line with legal requirements.

## How to report issues to us:

Customers can report to us in several ways, by:

- o Calling our Customer Contact Centre on 0345 141 4664
- o Using our online [Get in Touch](#) form
- o By email: [contactus@homegroup.org.uk](mailto:contactus@homegroup.org.uk)
- o To any colleague
- o Or by live chat on our website – look for the symbol below.



## Full version

The full version of the decants policy compliance note can be requested by emailing [policy@homegroup.org.uk](mailto:policy@homegroup.org.uk).