



# Alternative Accommodation (Decants) Policy

Policy Reference Number	HG_GRP_HSG_255
Version Number	1.0
Date Effective From	5/6/26
Last review completed	N/A
Next review of policy due	5/6/29
Extension Date Approved & Reason	N/A
Approved by	Regional Director NW (Policy owner)
Equality Assessment	Tenure policy (June 2026)
Distribution	Internal – Uploaded to our Home World intranet and updates shared via Work Vivo External – Available on the Home Group website and by request to <a href="mailto:policy@homegroup.org.uk">policy@homegroup.org.uk</a>

Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy or saving it on shared/ individual drives. All policies and supporting resources can be found under 'Policy and Procedures' on the intranet. Printed and saved versions may quickly go out of date- contact [policy@homegroup.org.uk](mailto:policy@homegroup.org.uk) for support and advice

Contents	
1.	<a href="#">Introduction</a>
2.	<a href="#">Scope</a>
3.	<a href="#">Regulation and Legislation</a>
4.	<a href="#">Our Policy</a>
4.1	<a href="#">Planned moves to alternative accommodation</a>
4.1.1	<a href="#">Temporary planned moves</a>
4.1.2	<a href="#">Permanent planned moves</a>
4.1.3	<a href="#">Large scale regeneration or remodelling</a>
4.2	<a href="#">Emergency alternative accommodation</a>
4.2.1	<a href="#">Temporary emergency decants</a>
4.2.2	<a href="#">Permanent emergency related decants</a>
4.3	<a href="#">Management moves to alternative accommodation</a>
4.4	<a href="#">Types of alternative accommodation</a>
4.4.1	<a href="#">Staying with friends or family</a>
4.4.2	<a href="#">Hotel, guest house or other holiday/short-term let</a>
4.4.3	<a href="#">Home Group or alternative landlord accommodation</a>
4.5	<a href="#">Suitability of accommodation</a>
4.5.1	<a href="#">Customer requirements</a>
4.5.2	<a href="#">Property requirements</a>
4.6	<a href="#">Supporting customers</a>
4.6.1	<a href="#">Single point of contact (Lead Officer)</a>
4.6.2	<a href="#">Support plan</a>
4.7	<a href="#">Unoccupied homes</a>
4.7.1	<a href="#">Access</a>
4.7.2	<a href="#">Security</a>
4.7.3	<a href="#">Insurance</a>
4.8	<a href="#">Rent, charges and bills</a>
4.9	<a href="#">Expenses and payments</a>
4.9.1	<a href="#">Expenses</a>
4.9.2	<a href="#">Statutory home loss and disturbance payments for permanent moves</a>
4.10	<a href="#">Ending alternative accommodation arrangements and moving back home</a>
4.11	<a href="#">Legal Action</a>
5.	<a href="#">Roles and Responsibilities</a>
5.1	<a href="#">Lead Officer</a>
5.2	<a href="#">Senior/Operations Manager</a>
5.3	<a href="#">Core Admin Team</a>
5.4	<a href="#">Maintenance and Repairs Team</a>
5.5	<a href="#">Regeneration Team</a>

6. <a href="#">Monitoring and Reporting</a>
7. <a href="#">Key Definitions</a>
8. <a href="#">Version History</a>

## 1. Introduction

Home Group is committed to providing people with a safe place to live – this is a fundamental element of our customer promise. This policy sets out our approach to providing alternative accommodation for households in circumstances when a home becomes unsafe or unsuitable to live in on a temporary or permanent basis.

## 2. Scope

This policy covers situations when alternative accommodation might be offered, the different types of accommodation that might be offered, how customers should be supported through the process of accessing alternative accommodation, and how practical matters, such as managing expenses, should be handled.

The policy applies to services for customers in rented and supported housing properties. It also applies to home ownership services (leasehold, freehold and shared ownership properties) unless otherwise indicated. This policy applies to all Home Group colleagues, temporary workers, contractors and volunteers.

## 3. Regulation and Legislation

This policy conforms to best practice set out by the Housing Ombudsman service in England and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. It supports compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements including but not limited to those listed below. This list is not exhaustive, and we will continue to monitor and apply new requirements during the lifetime of the policy through our annual policy risk assessment process.

### England

- Land compensation act 1973
- Housing Acts 1985, 1988 and 2004
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Home Loss Payments Regulations (2014/2019)
- Homes Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018
- Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, including Safety and Quality, and Tenancy standards

### Scotland

- Land compensation (Scotland) Act 1973
- Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987, 2001, 2010 & 2014
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)
- Temporary Accommodation Standards Framework 2023

### UK wide

- Equality Act 2010

## 4. Our Policy

### 4.1 Planned Moves to Alternative Accommodation

Planned moves take place when repair or regeneration works are scheduled in advance and the home cannot safely remain occupied. In such circumstances, we plan moves as far in advance as possible to minimise disruption to customers and manage costs effectively.

If an inspection reveals a home is in poor condition or not safe to live in, we conduct a thorough health and safety risk assessment to ensure customers' safety and well-being

Where health and safety risks are identified we act quickly to arrange a move to suitable alternative accommodation if it is not safe for customers to remain in their home whilst repair works are completed.

We consult with customers in line with legal obligations and make sure that customers views on alternative accommodation are considered.

We make sure that customers have access to all the relevant information about changes to their home and the expected timeframe for any works to be completed.

#### 4.1.1 Temporary Planned moves

We may ask customers to move out temporarily when:

- Major repair or improvement work – such as structural works, rewiring, or extensive internal repairs - cannot be carried out safely with the customer in the home.
- Major adaptations are required and the work makes the home temporarily impractical or unsafe to live in.
- Loss of essential services (heating, water, sanitation) is unavoidable during works and would leave the property uninhabitable for a period.
- Substantial works to address hazards—such as damp, mould or asbestos removal—cannot be safely completed while the home is occupied.

#### 4.1.2 Permanent Planned Moves

In some circumstances, customers cannot return to their original home and will need to move permanently. This may happen when:

- The property is being demolished or is part of a wider regeneration or redevelopment programme, and vacant possession is required.
- Large-scale refurbishment fundamentally changes the property, or returning would not meet the customer's needs.
- There are plans for the property to be sold, making long-term occupation unviable.
- Major structural defects or significant contamination from hazardous materials mean it is no longer safe or reasonable for the customer to return to the home.

#### 4.1.3 Large scale regeneration or remodelling

Where blocks of flats or wider neighbourhoods are being demolished, remodelled or undergoing regeneration, we take all reasonable steps to ensure that customers are not left isolated and vulnerable. Wherever possible, we seek to move households to alternative accommodation on a floor by floor, block by block or street by street basis, taking account of customers' preferences for rehousing and the availability of suitable properties for them to move into.

## 4.2 Emergency Alternative Accommodation

Emergency moves are required when unexpected events make the home immediately unsafe to live in. Emergency moves to alternative accommodation must always be approved by the relevant Operations Manager or on call Operations Manager outside of office hours.

### 4.2.1 Temporary emergency decants

A short-term move may be required when: -

- A fire, flood, or other sudden incident makes the property unsafe to occupy.
- Essential services (such as water or energy supply) fail suddenly, leaving the home unfit to live in until emergency repairs are completed.
- Serious health and safety risks emerge, such as unsafe electrics or severe structural failure.
- Urgent works are needed to remove immediate hazards, including severe damp, mould or contamination.
- Serious damage leaves the home insecure.
- Local authorities advise evacuation is necessary.

### 4.2.2 Permanent emergency related decants-Related Decants

While less common, an emergency event may lead to a permanent move where:

- Damage from fire, flood, or other disaster is so extensive that the home cannot be made habitable again.
- Severe structural failure or contamination cannot be resolved to a standard that makes return safe or reasonable.

## 4.3 Management moves to alternative accommodation

We may consider moving customers in rented accommodation or supported housing to alternative accommodation in other exceptional circumstances where the health or safety of the customer, or member of their household, is at immediate risk and it would not be reasonable for them to wait for an offer of housing through usual application routes. Examples of circumstances under which we might follow procedures for management moves to alternative accommodation include

- A customer or member of their household is experiencing severe harassment from another person / people and there is immediate risk to their personal safety
- There is an urgent need to move on medical grounds
- A customer or member of their household is under the police witness protection programme
- In cases of domestic abuse, to protect the victim / survivor or, where lawful and appropriate, to manage risks posed by the perpetrator

This list is not exhaustive, and each case is reviewed on an individual basis, with the final decision about whether to instigate a management move being made by the relevant Operations Manager. When making their decision, the Operations Manager will take account of

- the level of risk and urgency to move,
- advice from relevant partner agencies, such as the police or health services, and professional advocates (in relation to domestic abuse, mental capacity etc)

- availability of suitable alternative accommodation.
- fair application of our Allocations policy.

Our policy does not override legal remedies, police action or court orders.

In some cases, emergency temporary accommodation might be offered to manage immediate risk, before arrangements can be made for a move to more permanent suitable alternative accommodation.

Where we decide that a management move is not warranted, customers are advised of their housing options, including how to apply for alternative Home Group accommodation, in accordance with our Allocations policy and procedures. Customers may also consider applying for a Mutual Exchange with another customer in line with provisions set out in our Tenure policy. There is no right of appeal against a decision not to proceed with a management move.

We do not accept any responsibility for offering alternative accommodation to customers who have been barred from returning to their home by court or police order. In such circumstances we will work with customers to explore the options available to them and provide information about access to other relevant services.

## 4.4 Types of alternative accommodation

### 4.4.1 Staying with friends or family

Customers may choose to stay with friends or family when alternative accommodation is needed on a short-term basis. If customers choose to make their own arrangements, Home Group will reimburse costs in line with the expenses and payments framework set out in this policy. We agree a plan for reviewing the suitability of the accommodation at the outset

We agree an appropriate timeframe with customers to reassess circumstances when they are staying with family or friends and check whether another option is needed - especially if expected completion of works will take longer than expected or other delay.

### 4.4.2 Hotel, guest house or other holiday / short-term let

When hotel or other very short-term accommodation is required, we arrange this directly through our contracted accommodation provider. This helps us to ensure cost-effectiveness as well as gaining additional assurances regarding the safety and suitability of accommodation and avoiding customers having to pay accommodation expenses up front. We consider customers' individual needs and preferences when booking short-term accommodation wherever possible. We avoid repeated short term bookings wherever possible and consider longer term bookings or using a vacant Home Group property if the customer is not likely to be able to move back home within a few days.

### 4.4.3 Home Group or alternative landlord accommodation

Where the move is likely to be longer term or permanent, we consider offering customers accommodation in another Home Group property, or in property supplied by another landlord.

We provide 'like for like' properties, except in cases where the household requires different accommodation due to specific housing needs—such as overcrowding or under-occupying – when we may offer accommodation more suitable to the household's needs.

If the move is intended to be temporary (up to 12 months) we supply customers with a temporary decant agreement which sets out rights and responsibilities for the customer and for Home Group.

If the move is permanent, we will arrange a new tenancy on terms no less secure than the tenancy at the previous property.

## 4.5 Suitability of accommodation

### 4.5.1 Customer requirements

We are sensitive to the diverse requirements of our customers when arranging moves to alternative accommodation. We ask customers about their individual needs in line with our Person-centred Service Delivery policy, considering a range of factors to help make sure that alternative accommodation is suitable, including

- The size and make-up of the household
- Any requirements for disability aids and adaptations
- Access to work, school and childcare facilities (where relevant)
- Family and community connections

For planned moves to alternative accommodation, we consult affected customers as early as possible in the planning process and as detailed arrangements are made.

We remain flexible in our approach and continue to monitor the suitability of temporary accommodation for customers, identifying and offering alternative options where necessary.

### 4.5.2 Property requirements

Any property used for short-term, longer-term or permanent alternative accommodation must be safe, secure and compliant with relevant regulatory standards. This includes being free of hazards listed in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) in England and meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for properties in Scotland.

In consultation with the affected customer, we carry out a full assessment of temporary accommodation and its suitability in advance of a planned move or once any immediate emergency has passed.

## 4.6 Supporting customers

### 4.6.1 Single point of contact (Lead Officer)

For any move to alternative accommodation, the Operations Manager will appoint an experienced colleague to be the Lead Officer. The Lead Officer acts as a single point of contact and source of information for customers who need to move home. They ensure that decisions are made and tasks carried out in good time, whilst keeping customers updated at each stage. The Lead Officer will also share information with the customer about arrangements for contact outside of usual office hours.

Colleagues who have a supporting role, for example, those managing repair works, should ensure they consult with the Lead Officer and keep them updated in a timely manner. This will enable the Lead Officer to keep the customers appropriately informed of progress or changes to the plan for works.

### 4.6.2 Support plan

Where appropriate, we conduct a needs assessment with customers considering any protected characteristics and vulnerabilities within the household. Where additional support needs have been identified, the Lead Officer will develop a support plan with the customer and any appropriate representatives (such as advocate and power of attorney) to ensure the move goes smoothly.

Depending on the needs of the household and what can reasonably be accommodated, support may include arranging for:

- emotional support prior to moving
- removal and storage or disposal of surplus furniture and belongings
- help with packing
- practical support on moving day such as making sure utility services are disconnected and available at the new home

We work in partnership with local social services and charitable bodies wherever appropriate and possible to help make sure people get the right help.

## 4.7 Unoccupied homes

### 4.7.1 Access

Whilst the home is unoccupied for repairs or other works to be completed, Home Group will arrange access to the property for contractors and tradespeople. Customers who need access to their homes whilst work is ongoing, can arrange this through the Lead Officer.

### 4.7.2 Security

We make sure that unoccupied homes are kept secure and protected from trespassers. We schedule routine periodic checks on properties that are unoccupied for more than 2 weeks.

### 4.7.3 Insurance

It is the customer's responsibility to ensure they have adequate insurance in place to protect the contents of their home. We do not offer compensation for home contents which may be lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed (e.g. as the result of flooding).

Where appropriate, we offer advice to customers to help reduce risk of damage and unnecessary insurance claims – for example, heating an unoccupied property to reduce risk of burst pipes in winter. As part of the planning process for planned decants or longer-term moves, we may also explore storage options to help protect customers' belongings.

In some cases, customers may be eligible to make an application for emergency funding for one-off costs to the Home Group Fund.

## 4.8 Rent, charges and bills

Customers continue to be responsible for paying rent and charges on their original home whilst they are in temporary alternative accommodation. They also remain responsible for managing or paying bills linked to their original home such as bills for gas, electricity, internet, and water. We do not charge customers for rent or other charges on temporary alternative accommodation. We offer reasonable reimbursement of additional expenses incurred for utilities and other bills on the temporary accommodation.

When customers in rented or supported accommodation move to alternative accommodation on a permanent basis, they sign up to a new tenancy and become responsible for paying rent and charges on their new home instead. We apply for a Fair Rent on the 'new' property for secure tenants.

We advise customers of their need to inform welfare benefits agencies of their change in circumstances after a move to temporary or permanent alternative accommodation.

## 4.9 Expenses and payments

### 4.9.1 Expenses

We take reasonable steps to ensure that customers are not left with unexpected additional expenses ('out of pocket') because of a need to move to alternative accommodation in emergency situations or in order for planned repairs or regeneration works to be carried out.

When a move to alternative accommodation is needed as a result of an emergency, we will meet reasonable costs associated with the following: -

- Removal and storage of belongings
- Any additional rent or service charge costs (customers will continue to be liable for the rent on their original property)
- Short-term/emergency bed and breakfast or hotel charges
- Transport costs to emergency accommodation
- Costs of kennels for pets if they cannot be accommodated in any temporary accommodation
- Transfer of utilities and reconnection costs
- Out of pocket expenses, supported by receipts, to cover the costs of meals and laundry if staying in a B&B or hotel
- Where customers are unable to access their home to retrieve clothes, toiletries and money, we may (at our discretion), make a one-off non-recoverable payment of up to £30 per affected person to cover the cost of essential subsistence items
- Where friends or relatives offer accommodation, a payment in line with amounts payable under our allowances and expenses procedures for colleagues staying with friends / family for business purposes

We may consider payments or reimbursements for other expenses, depending on the situation, to avoid customers being left 'out of pocket'.

We reimburse reasonable expenses promptly (usually by the end of the relevant calendar month), following presentation of relevant receipts or other proof of purchase. Where it has not been possible to obtain a receipt, we will still reimburse reasonable expenses at the discretion of the relevant Operations Manager. We may also offer vouchers for food and other essential expenses where customers may have difficulty covering such expenses up front.

It's important to us that our customers do not experience hardship and in some circumstances, we can agree to pay in advance for essential reasonable expenses. The Lead Officer will make this decision.

### 4.9.2 Statutory home loss and disturbance payments for permanent moves

We meet legal requirements to pay compensation to customers for home loss or disturbance resulting from a need to move to permanent alternative accommodation.

We offset any home loss payments against any housing related debt (such as rent arrears) on the customer's account. We inform the customer before the home loss payment is made how much will be deducted from the overall payment, the reasons for deduction and the final amount they can expect to receive. Appeals against 100% offset against outstanding debt are heard by the relevant Operations Manager.

At our discretion, we may make home loss payments to customers who have lived in their home for less time than the qualifying period, provided that all other qualifying criteria are met.

#### 4.9.3 Other payments

Where a customer has had cause to complain about our services in connection with their move to alternative accommodation, and their complaint has been upheld, we may consider payment of discretionary compensation in accordance with our Complaints, Compliments and Comments policy and procedures.

#### 4.10 Ending alternative accommodation arrangements and moving back home

We carry out a thorough inspection and relevant health and safety checks before customers return home to ensure the property is safe to live in. We tell customers about any outstanding minor repairs, along with a clear plan for these to be completed.

We offer support to customers to move back home in line with any support plan that is in place.

We reimburse reasonable costs associated with the move such as travel or removal costs.

#### 4.11 Legal action

We only take legal action where it is necessary:

- to facilitate a move to alternative accommodation where there are no other safe or valid options; or
- where the customer has breached the terms of their permanent tenancy, lease or other agreement

The type of action we take depends on whether the move to alternative accommodation is temporary or permanent. In all cases we follow relevant Home Group policy and procedures for managing rented, supported and home ownership services and enforcing relevant tenancy, licence and lease agreements.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

### 5.1 Lead Officer

Appointed by the Operations Manager to be the single point of contact for customers. Works with customers to identify additional needs or vulnerabilities in the household and to create a support plan where needed. Keeps clear and accurate records of contact notes, calls or meetings with the customer concerning the move and any queries which arose about the process. Overall responsibility for looking after our customers who need to move.

### 5.2 Senior / Operations Managers

Appoint the Lead Officer and approve expenditure on emergency accommodation, discretionary disturbance payments and customer out of pocket expenses. Senior / Operations Managers are also responsible for deciding on possible management moves and hearing appeals against offsetting home loss payments. Responsible for ensuring that the Lead Officer is managing the move effectively and looking after the customers.

### 5.3 Core Admin Team

Supports with booking very short-term temporary accommodation.

#### 5.4 Maintenance and Repairs Team

Arranges or carry out planned and responsive repairs to homes. Manages works that are underway. Carry out inspections after works have been completed to ensure that homes are safe and suitable to move back to and arrange follow up works where needed. Responsible for keeping the Lead Officer fully informed of progress and consulting on any changes to the plan for works.

#### 5.5 Regeneration team

Coordinates neighbourhood regeneration including facilitating moves to alternative accommodation for affected households.

### 6. Monitoring and Reporting

We keep track of customers in alternative accommodation using our decants tracker.

Further assurance is gained through our internal audit programme.

This policy is reviewed at least every three years in line with our policy governing framework.

## 7. Key Definitions

Word / phrase	Definition
<p><i>Use this table to list key words and phrases used in the policy and their definitions. This is to help make sure that the policy is clear and unambiguous. Where the area of practice covered by the policy tends to use a lot of technical terms or jargon (not necessarily all used in the policy), it may be helpful to develop a separate resource in addition i.e. a 'word box' or 'jargon buster'. [delete this row when publishing policy]</i></p>	
Decant	A move to alternative accommodation. This can be on a temporary or permanent basis.
Management move	Also known as 'management transfer'. Where Home Group management make a decision to offer a move to alternative accommodation in exceptional circumstances where the health or safety of the customer, or member of their household, is at immediate risk and it would not be reasonable for them to wait for an offer of housing through usual application and housing allocation routes.
Mutual exchange	Where one or more social tenant legally swaps their tenancy with another social tenant – see our Tenure policy for more information on Mutual Exchange.

## 8. Version History

Version Number	Effective Date	Amendment made by (job title)	Version approved by (job title)	Description of Changes
1.0	5/6/26	Policy Manager	Regional Director NW (Policy owner)	New policy