

## Lodging & Shared Housing Arrears Policy

### Purpose

This policy explains how we:

- deal with matters such as rental arrears, Residents' responsibilities, unpaid utilities charges, unpaid tenant liability ; and
- manage accounts that are in arrears.

It covers our approach to dealing with arrears, what action we may take, and the responsibilities our Residents have. It also gives details of the support we can offer.

### Definitions

**Resident** refers to a resident living in one of our lodging or shared housing rooms.

### Policy

#### Our commitments

Arrears affect our Residents and us. They put Residents at risk of losing their residencies, and cause financial difficulties for us. It is in everybody's best interests to minimise unpaid debt.

We will respond to arrears in an open, honest and sensitive way.

Our approach will include:

- measures to prevent arrears;
- identifying problems, and responding to them, as early as possible;
- giving Residents support and guidance to help them reduce their arrears; and
- taking action that is appropriate to the level of arrears.

We will only terminate a residency when all our other attempts to recover the arrears have failed.

#### Residents' responsibilities

Under their licence to occupy, Residents have a legal responsibility to:

- pay their rent every fortnight, for the fortnight ahead; and
- pay other charges, such as charges for utilities or tenant damage, when they receive an invoice for them.

We ask our Residents to tell us of any circumstances that may affect their ability to pay the rent or other charges.

A Resident's responsibilities relating to rent payments are set out in their licence to occupy and our 'House Rules'.

### **Our responsibilities**

We must respond to arrears as soon as possible.

When trying to recover arrears we will try to deal directly with Residents before starting formal procedures.

If a Resident fails to pay the arrears, or does not agree arrangements to pay off the arrears, we will take further action in line with our Arrears Procedure.

If a Resident has a support agreement in place with a support provider, we will work with the support provider, in line with the agreement, on all matters relating to recovering the arrears.

### **Preventing arrears**

If we intend to increase rent or utility charges at any time and for any reason, we will give our residents at least 4 weeks' notice.

### **Early action**

If a Resident falls into arrears, we will tell them straight away.

We will try to deal with arrears before the debt becomes unmanageable.

We will give Residents support and information on agencies that can give help and support, including financial advice.

We will also look to offer support for any other issues that may be affecting a resident's ability to pay arrears.

### **Recovering arrears**

If a Resident falls into arrears, we will ask them to contact us to discuss the debt and make an arrangement to pay it off.

If a Resident cannot pay off the debt in a single payment, we will agree a repayment plan with them to reduce the arrears.

If we have agreed a repayment plan with a Resident, we will regularly monitor their rent account. If the Resident misses any payments we will take further action in line with our Arrears Procedure.

We will only take action to terminate a residency when all our other efforts to recover the debt have failed.

### **Appealing**

If a Resident does not agree with any of our decisions or actions they can appeal against them under our Appeals Policy.

### **Monitoring and reporting arrears**

We will monitor and report on arrears using measures specified by the Tenancy Management & Enrichment Sub-committee and the Board from time to time.

### **Relevant Legislation**

None

### **Related Documents**

Procedure: LS\_Arrears\_1\_PRO\_Ver1

### **Process of Policy Development / Review**

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#### **Document Control**

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