

Committee Approver	Operations Committee
Stakeholder Consultation	Tenants Viewpoint staff - Housing, Assets, Finance Independent consultancy
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Title	Decant Policy
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Revised by	John Turnbull, Head of Housing Simon Haile, Head of Assets
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Related Documents	Allocations Policy Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy Health & Safety Policy Void Policy and Lettable Standard
Location of Electronic Copy	V:\Policies and Procedures Shared\Policies\Housing

1. Viewpoint's Values

Viewpoint is here to help people enjoy their later years. Everything we do is about realising this vision, which is supported by the following straightforward set of values:

- Inspire with positive smiles and words;
- Say 'yes I can and I will';
- Celebrate age, experience and wisdom;
- Do according to our customers' wishes and ambitions;
- Treat people (everyone is a VIP) as we would a "loved one";
- Work hard, have fun and laugh;
- Stay courageous, creative and ahead of the game; and
- Work with those that share our values.

These promises shape us. They are a commitment to our residents, staff and suppliers. They are fundamental to every single plan, decision and project we embark on.

Ensuring that we have systems and processes in place to manage risk effectively will support us to deliver those plans, decisions and projects, in accordance with our vision and values.

2. Policy Statement

This policy describes the approach of Viewpoint Housing Association (Viewpoint) when dealing with a situation where we may have to decant a tenant to temporary (or in some cases permanent) accommodation. We may have to provide decant accommodation when:

- A property is uninhabitable (for example due to fire or flood);
- Work requires to be undertaken in tenants current property that will create an unsafe environment for the household; or
- Products required to be used that would create an unsafe environment for the household.

Our Decant Policy aims to ensure that an effective service is provided to our tenants who will be absent from their home for a period to allow corrective works to be carried out.

We recognise that being decanted to temporary accommodation can be stressful for our tenants (and family members). It is therefore important that we provide information and support during the whole decant process. With this in mind, we will endeavour to have the necessary works carried out as quickly as possible and to a high standard. Our tenants' health and safety will be a main factor when the use of decant accommodation is being considered.

Where accommodation is required and dependent on the length of time the accommodation is required for, the following options will be explored:

- Staying with friends or relatives
- Use of Viewpoint guest bedroom – subject to facilities, location and availability
- Using a local hotel, bed & breakfast or serviced apartment
- Alternative Viewpoint property
- Emergency accommodation via local council

When decanting a customer we will co-ordinate and pay for the following:

- Furniture removal and storage of furniture where this is required
- Gas / electrical appliance disconnection / connection i.e. cooker, washing machines [where we arrange gas disconnection / reconnection of cookers, it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure their appliance meets the current standards. Our contractors cannot reconnect appliances that do not meet appropriate health and safety standards or if deemed unsafe
- Lifting and relaying of carpets if appropriate
- Where a customer lives in sheltered housing, we will arrange for the installation of a dispersed alarm unit if the decant property does not have one
- We will ensure that the Viewpoint decanted accommodation provided meets the Void Policy and Lettable Standard
- Where the decant accommodation provided does not include the availability of food preparation facilities, we will pay an allowance for meals
- Telephone / TV / Broadband / Satellite TV diversion costs.

3. Aim

The main objectives of the Decant Policy are:

- To manage decant proceedings in an efficient and customer focussed manner
- To minimise the period of time that our tenant is absent from their tenancy and cause the least possible disturbance to them
- To provide good information and support before, during and after the decant process
- To provide decant accommodation that meets the existing household's requirements and medical needs where possible
- That decant properties meet our Void Policy and Lettable Standard
- Minimise rent loss.

4. Legislation/related policies

Our approach to managing the decant of a tenant is determined by our statutory and contractual obligations.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 is the main Act that sets out the main requirements of our policy.

Section 11 (9) of the Act advises that:

“Where — (a) the house which a tenant under a Scottish secure tenancy normally occupies is not available for occupation, and (b) the tenant is accommodated temporarily in another house the landlord of which is a local authority landlord or a registered social landlord, the other house is to be taken, for the purposes of this Chapter except sections 12 to 16 and paragraph 4 of schedule 1, to be the house which the tenant normally occupies.”

A tenant who is decanted on a temporary basis will continue to be the tenant of their permanent home and to be responsible for paying rent, any service charge and Council Tax for the permanent property during the decant period.

Our policy also complies with the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Scottish Housing Regulator has identified several key indicators relevant to decant accommodation by which it will measure landlord performance, including the following:

Quality of Housing - ‘Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants’ homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated; are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair; and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH).

- **Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements** - ‘Social Landlords manage their businesses so that tenant’s homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done’.
- **Value for money** - ‘Social Landlords manage all aspects of their business so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay’.
- **Equalities** - ‘Social Landlords perform in all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services’.

- **Communication** – ‘Social Landlords manage their businesses 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’.

Monitoring and evaluation

We will closely manage and monitor all decants. The overall success of this policy will be judged using a mixture of indicators which will measure overall sustainability of estates together with indicators which measure the success and speed of internal processes. The following indicators will be used:

- the number of decants
- the length of the decant period
- customer feedback with satisfaction on the decant process
- monitoring of complaints

The Scottish secure tenancy agreement (section 5) confirms our responsibilities in the event of significant damage to our properties –

Section 5.14 states “If we cause damage to the house or your property in connection with inspections, repairs or improvements or entry, we will reinstate the damage or compensate you for your losses. We have a right to require you move temporarily to suitable alternative accommodation if this is necessary for the repairs to be done. If you are temporarily rehoused, we will reimburse you for any extra expenses you have as a result. You will be charged rent during this period but no more than you normally pay.”

In the rare event that a tenant has to move from their home on a permanent basis, there may be a right to compensation for the loss of their home under the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973. A Home Loss Payment is intended to compensate a tenant who has to leave their home permanently because of redevelopment work or work of a substantive nature. It is a payment in recognition of the upheaval and upset of losing their home.

The law relating to Home Loss payments is contained in the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. To qualify for a statutory Home Loss payment, a tenant must meet specific criteria.

Where a Home Loss payment is to be made, and the tenant receiving the payment has rent arrears or outstanding rechargeable repair debts, we will seek to make an arrangement with the tenant for some or all of the arrears to be repaid from the home loss payment.

5. Scope

This policy applies to all tenants in circumstances where a temporary move is required.

6. Compliance & Support

As part of the review of this policy in 2024, independent consultants were asked to carry out a review of it for best practice compliance. The policy was scored as compliant against the nine Best Value Policy Indicators.

It is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves with the content of this policy and to ensure that they comply with the policy and associated procedures and guidance notes.

If advice or support is required, this is available through the Housing and Assets Team Leaders in the first instance. Appropriate training and support will also be provided, as required.

The policy should be considered in relation to Business Continuity should the need arise.

7. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Viewpoint will treat all customers with fairness and respect. Viewpoint recognises that we have an ethical and a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination.

Where any individual or group has difficulty in understanding this policy staff will assist to ensure that the policy is available in other formats, if required, and that groups are supported through the registration process.

The Decant Policy will act to provide services in a manner that encourages equality and complies with all relevant equalities requirements. Tenant's physical, emotional and support needs will be considered in determining an appropriate decant that actively mitigates discrimination, direct or indirect, based on the protected characteristics.

We will adhere to Outcome 1 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter (*Equalities*): 'Social Landlords perform in all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services'.

This policy is available in other formats, including large print if required.

8. Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)

There is no additional information being requested or retained that would require a PIA.

9. Complaints

Any tenant who is dissatisfied with their decant process can submit a complaint in line with the Association's complaints procedure.

No compensation can be claimed by tenants / family members under Viewpoints corporate Compensation Policy. All allowances / re-imbursments made to tenants for decant purposes are set out in this policy and accompanying procedure.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Viewpoint's Housing and Assets Teams will monitor the implementation of the policy, particularly in relation to conducting lessons learned exercises following cases where the policy requires to be implemented, to ensure continuous improvement, effective customer service and compliance with standards.

This policy will be reviewed within 3 years from the date of approval, in accordance with Viewpoint's policy review framework, or should there be any changes in legal, regulatory or best practice requirements.