

Decoration Allowance Policy

Linthouse Housing Association	
Policy Implementation Checklist:	
Policy Guardian:	Director of Property Services
Policy Author:	Technical Services Manager
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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Decoration Allowances

- 1.1.1 Linthouse Housing Association's Decoration Allowance Policy supports the management of redecoration costs/allowance payments due to tenants in a way that is fair, transparent and consistent.
- 1.1.2 This Policy outlines our responsibilities in issuing and managing decoration allowances. A decoration allowance is intended as a contribution towards the cost of materials and equipment needed to carry out internal redecoration work. It is not intended to meet the full cost of redecoration.
- 1.1.3 The aim of this Policy is to contribute to the effective maintenance of our housing stock, in enabling tenants to maintain their properties to a decent decorative standard. Notwithstanding, this does not remove the need for the tenant to adequately insure the contents of their home from potential damage.
- 1.1.4 **Note:** In this Policy, Linthouse Housing Association is referred to as “we”, “us” or “our”.

1.2 Scope of Policy

- 1.2.1 This Policy applies to decoration allowances for new and existing tenants.
- 1.2.2 Decoration allowances are awarded for: void properties below a “reasonable” letting standard, internal damage caused by failures in relation to the external building fabric as a result of reactive maintenance works, and damage caused to decoration arising from planned maintenance works by the Association (such as window replacement works or central heating systems).

1.3 Equality and Diversity

- 1.3.1 Equality and diversity reflect the core values of Linthouse Housing Association and we strive to ensure that they are embedded throughout all of our services,

policies and decision making. We are committed to promoting an inclusive and diverse culture that treats every individual with dignity, respect and fairness. We will actively challenge discrimination and empower people to succeed.

1.3.2 If you require further information, please refer to our Equality and Diversity Policy.

1.4 Our Mission

1.4.1 The Decoration Allowance Policy forms part of our mission to:

“deliver high quality and cost-effective housing services designed to meet the needs of existing and future customers. To work in partnership with others to create thriving communities that people want to live and work in”.

1.5 Our Vision and Values

1.5.1 Our vision is the creation and sustainment of lasting, unique, vibrant homes in stable, popular and ambitious urban communities. Our vision is underpinned by four core values which we apply to all areas of our business. These are to be:

- i. **Customer Driven**
- ii. **Honest**
- iii. **Accountable**
- iv. **Transparent**

1.6 Our Organisational Culture

1.6.1 Our **C.H.A.T** values as outlined, form the foundation of our **Listen, Hear, Act (L.H.A.)** customer excellence and organisational culture programme. All staff receive training at induction on customer service standards and the organisational culture we promote. This includes reference to our equalities policy and a requirement to treat colleagues, tenants, contractors, service users and any other stakeholders with dignity and respect.

1.6.2 The organisational culture we promote is based on finding solutions to suit customer needs regardless of individual differences. To do this we will:

1. **Listen** - We are committed to listening to those we do business with, be that our customers, staff, stakeholders, regulators or funders, to ensure that our responses are reflective of what people are saying to us.
2. **Hear** - Once we listen and understand the need/demand/offer that is presented, we will ensure that we fully understand what is being said.
3. **Act** - Whilst we will think about what we do, we want to be known for acting swiftly to deliver solutions and for always keeping our promises.

1.3.3 Our Customer Service Standards aim is to ensure all of our service users receive an excellent standard of service. The Standards helps define what our customers can expect when contacting or engaging with the staff in our office. It is available on our website, direct from the office, or in other formats as required.

1.7 Applicable Definitions

1.7.1 Decoration Allowance

A decoration allowance is a payment in vouchers that is issued where an existing tenant must redecorate their home as a result of damage to the internal fabric of their property, caused by other property component failures.

1.7.2 Below Reasonable Standard

For the purposes of void properties that are deemed to fall 'below a reasonable letting standard', this covers:

- Wallpaper that is considerably torn;
- Walls that are badly marked/smoke stained;
- Walls that have been cleaned but continue to look dirty; and
- Woodwork that is badly chipped/painted.

Section 2: The Legal Framework

2.1 Housing (Scotland) Act 2001: Landlord Responsibility to “Make Good”

2.1.1 Section 27 and Schedule 4 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 states that landlords in a Scottish secure tenancy must ensure that the property is, at the commencement of the tenancy, reasonably fit for human habitation and must keep the property in such condition throughout the tenancy.

2.1.2 Landlords must also ensure that any necessary work is carried out within a reasonable timeframe and make good any damage caused by them in carrying out the work.

2.2 Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement: Tenant’s Responsibility regarding Internal Decoration

2.2.1 Paragraph 2.3 of Linthouse Housing Association’s Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement states that the tenant must take reasonable care to prevent damage to the decoration of the property.

2.2.2 Paragraph 5.1.17 of the Tenancy Agreement also states that the tenant is responsible for taking reasonable care of the property. As outlined, this responsibility includes carrying out minor repairs and internal decoration. Tenants are advised of such when signing their tenancy agreement.

Section 3: Overarching Objectives and Implementation

This section outlines our overarching objectives and how these will be implemented in practice.

3.1 Overarching Objectives

3.1.1 Our key aim is to assist tenants with the costs incurred in relation to decorating their property at the start of their tenancy or as a result of necessary repair work. In doing so, this helps to facilitate the effective and efficient maintenance of the Association’s housing stock. In order to achieve our aim, we have the following objectives:

- To clearly outline when a decorative allowance will or will not be issued;
- To provide clear guidance regarding how much will be paid and in what form;
- To set out what can and cannot be purchased with the allowance; and
- To identify and implement an appropriate method of monitoring.

3.2 Implementation

3.2.1 Use of Decoration Allowances

A decoration allowance may be awarded in three circumstances (outlined below). To help the new tenant carry out this work, we will operate a scheme to provide vouchers for decorative materials meaning the tenant will carry out the works, but we will contribute to the cost of the associated materials.

Where a property is being let to a person who has no able-bodied member of their household to help decorate, we will make a decision on whether to carry out the decoration work. The decision to carry out this work will be at the discretion of the Technical Services Manager ('**TSM**') and Asset Manager ('**AM**') in the absence of the TSM.

Where a tenant requires assistance with ordering their supplies online, Customer Service Team staff will provide assistance at the time of sign up; Property Services Team staff if the payment is part of reactive or planned maintenance works.

Voids

Where a void property requires redecoration to bring it up to a "reasonable" standard, we will seek to have decoration carried out by the incoming tenant.

We will only provide vouchers for areas that are considered poor and below a reasonable lettable standard by the Housing Officer ('**HO**') or Property Services Officer ('**PSO**')

With regards to **exclusions**, we will not carry out decoration works or issue decoration allowances where the incoming tenant is one of the parties to a mutual exchange or is succeeding to the tenancy following the death of the previous tenant or is having the tenancy assigned to them by the outgoing tenant.

Reactive Maintenance Works

We will only offer a decoration allowance if the internal damage was caused as a result of failures in relation to the external building fabric e.g. if the building fabric has allowed water penetration to affect the internal areas of the property.

Tenants are expected to have their own home contents insurance to cover damage to decoration as a result of water penetration caused by flood or leaking pipe work.

Planned Maintenance Works

A decoration allowance may be awarded to a tenant where planned maintenance works carried out by the Association has disrupted the interior decoration, such as window replacement works. This will be at the discretion of the TSM or one of the Property Services Officers. (PSO)

The amount offered will depend on the extent of the damage and will be limited only to the areas affected. For example, if the disruption is due to window replacement works and it is a single window that has been replaced, the allowance will only be for the decoration of the one wall affected by the works and not the entire room. Where a bay window is replaced, the allowance may include for 2 walls either side of the recess. The allowance will be made on the existing wall covering, i.e. wallpaper or paint. The Association will offer an allowance to cover the cost of paint where new skirtings have been fitted as a result of new windows being fitted.

Where central heating systems are being replaced, our contractors will be instructed to hang replacement radiators in the same position as the existing radiator, unless the tenant instructs otherwise. However, where the new radiator is smaller, this could affect decoration. In this case, a decoration allowance may be awarded.

3.2.2 Pre-end of Tenancy Inspection

The Association's pre-inspects properties as soon as the outgoing tenant has given notice. The purpose of this inspection is to identify items of repair that are the responsibility of the outgoing tenant. This will include redecoration of all or part of the dwelling by the outgoing tenant to meet the decoration standards

adopted by the Association. This will apply only if the standard of decoration is poor and where we require to redecorate the property or offer the incoming tenant a decoration allowance.

3.2.3 Decoration Standards

The PSO/HO carrying out the pre-termination inspection will assess the standard of decoration taking account of any fair wear and tear.

Where an outgoing tenant fails to bring their decoration up to an acceptable standard prior to the termination of their tenancy, we reserve the right to recharge the tenant any costs incurred to bring the property up to an acceptable standard.

Incoming tenants may be offered a decoration allowance based on the decoration work required to bring the property up to a lettable standard. The allowance will be based on the cost of materials only (with the labour being provided by the tenant).

The cost of the materials will be based on an average cost of wallpaper and standard paint prices. B&Q is the Association's nominated supplier of decoration materials and the allowance will be based on their current prices at the time of the policy review.

In instances where decoration works are carried out by us, only existing wall coverings and woodwork will be painted. We will not completely strip wall coverings unless deemed absolutely necessary.

We will consider requests from incoming tenants to strip wallpaper that is deemed offensive but that would otherwise be assessed as being in good condition by the PSO/HO.

We will adopt a standard colour scheme for decoration works, similar to that in new-build properties i.e.

- Walls - Magnolia matt emulsion
- Ceilings - White matt emulsion
- Woodwork - White gloss

3.2.4 Levels of Decoration Allowance

We will apply a level of allowance sufficient to cover the reasonable costs of materials such as paper and paint. Appendix 1 indicates the levels of decoration allowance on a room by room basis. The level of allowance on any particular property will depend on the overall assessment of the work required as determined by the PTO/HO during their assessment.

3.2.5 Administration of the Scheme

We will provide tenants with B&Q vouchers to allow the Decoration Allowance scheme to operate on a 'voucher redeemable against goods' basis. Accordingly, we will not issue decoration allowances to tenants either in the form of cash or cheques.

Our TSM or AM will use of the Association's credit card to purchase the B&Q vouchers after assessing the value of the vouchers to be granted. The Officer assessing the decoration required will fill in pro-forma with full details of the property and the amount granted, and thereafter have the amount verified

Tenants will be able to choose from the full range of papers and paints available in B&Q. Where the goods chosen to exceed the value of the vouchers, the tenant will pay the difference.

Tenants who have been granted a decoration allowance and who fail to uplift the vouchers within 4 weeks of being notified that the vouchers are available will lose their allowance.

3.2.6 Post Inspection

The officer issuing the voucher will carry out post-inspections of decoration work carried out by tenants to ensure that they have used the decoration allowance for the purpose intended and that the work is to an acceptable standard. Where the tenant has failed to use the allowance for decoration or has decorated to an unacceptable standard, we may consider recharging them the value of the allowance.

3.2.7 Responsibility

The TSM will be responsible for ensuring that this Policy is implemented, monitored and reviewed as required.

Section 4: Compliance and Complaints

4.1 Compliance

4.1.1 Annual Report to Management Committee

LHA intends to monitor the implementation of this Policy by virtue of an annual report to Management Committee that encompasses:

- a) the number of decoration allowances granted per phased works;
- b) the value of decoration allowances paid; and
- c) the number and outcome of any appeals made against decoration allowance decisions.
- d) The number of complaints received relative to the administration and management of the Decoration Allowance Policy.

4.2 Complaints

4.2.1 General Complaint Handling Procedure

LHA employ a particular complaint handling procedure that was established for housing associations throughout Scotland and developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

In accordance with housing law, we provide our tenants with thorough information pertaining to our complaint policy. Moreover, we also advise all service users on their right to complain.

A complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the housing association’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the housing association”.

Detailed information on how to make a complaint is readily available by request from our office or on our website (www.Lighthouseha.com).

Section 5: Review of Decoration Allowance Policy

This Policy will be reviewed after 1 year to ensure that the appropriate amendments are made, and costs contained within Appendix 1 are reasonable, and subject to a rate of inflation adjustment. All staff and relevant third parties will be informed. Continuously subjecting our Policy to review will ensure that its effectiveness is maintained, and that feedback can be acted upon in a reasonable time frame.

Decoration Allowance

AVERAGE (per room)	Average allowance per room (in £`s)
Living Room	£72
Bathroom	£40
Kitchen	£32
Double Bedroom	£50
Single Bedroom	£50
Hall	£38
Hall/Stair/Landing	£68

For disturbance caused by repair work to one wall only, the cost will be calculated by dividing the average room cost by four.

Where the tenant is to receive a decoration allowance and the overall value of the decoration allowance exceeds £150, the tenant will receive the allowance in equal parts, with no single part exceeding £250. Checks will be made by staff before a subsequent voucher is issued that the initial voucher has been used for the purpose intended and the decorative finish is to a standard acceptable to the Association's Technical Services Officer.

Example

Total Decoration Allowance = £300

Tenant will receive 2 equal Allowances of £150

Increase of Decoration Allowances

Where a void property may be more difficult to let, the TSM will have the discretion, subject to budget availability, to increase the decoration allowance by up to 100% to encourage acceptance of offers. In other circumstances, we may make the decision to carry out the works ourselves, prior to letting the property.

Administration of the Allowance

Where a tenant requires assistance with ordering their supplies online, Customer Service Team staff will provide assistance at the time of tenancy sign up; Property Services Team staff will assist if the payment is part of reactive or planned maintenance works.

TITLE OF POLICY:	Decoration Allowance Policy
Strategic Outcome:	Support improvements in the quality of housing stock managed by LHA.
What is the purpose of the proposed Policy?	The purpose of the Decoration Allowance Policy is to contribute to the effective maintenance of LHA housing stock by enabling tenants to maintain their properties to a decent decorative standard.
Protected Characteristic Groups affected by the Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability – potential for being unable to carry out decoration. The policy mitigates this by providing option for the TSM/AM to instruct contractor to carry out the decoration required.
Who is the target audience of this policy or who is intended to benefit from the proposed policy and how? (ie. employees, service users, management committee etc.)	LHA tenants
List any existing documents, evidence, research which have been used to inform the EqIA (this must include relevant data used in this assessment)	n/a
Has any consultation involvement been undertaken with the Protected Characteristic Groups to inform this assessment? (please provide details of who and how consulted)	n/a
What is the actual likely impact?	n/a
How have you, or will you, put the Policy into practice, and who is or will be responsible for delivering it?	Property Services and Customer Service Staff
How does the Policy fit into our wider or related policy initiatives?	The policy supports part of LHA mission to deliver high quality and cost-effective housing services designed to meet the needs of existing and future customers.
Do you have a set budget for this work?	Budget will be reviewed and monitored regularly following introduction of the Policy.