



Policy Outline

DECORATION VOUCHERS

Updated July 2009

OVERALL PURPOSE

West North West homes Leeds Decoration Vouchers policy outlines our approach to provide compensation to reimburse tenants for damage caused to their decorations necessarily by works undertaken by the West North West Homes and our contractors. It also covers the provision of decoration vouchers as an incentive to new tenants moving into empty properties (voids) where the property is in need of some redecoration. It sets out our commitment to high quality service delivery with an aim of achieving sustainable communities, highly satisfied customers and value for money.

This policy document provides details on the scheme for decoration grants and sets out the contributions towards customer costs to redecorate following major improvements or repairs or for new tenants moving into an empty property.

INTRODUCTION

West North West Homes Leeds will ensure that:

- Customers are provided, in a fair and consistent way, with some recompense towards redecoration costs following major improvement works to their homes or as an incentive when new tenants are moving into an empty property.

It should be noted that where a mandatory decoration grant is due to be paid, West North West homes Leeds has the obligation to consider individual representation on the amounts. West North West homes Leeds is obliged to 'make good tenants decorations to their existing condition' and either carry out the work itself or appropriately compensate tenants for the damage caused. There is no obligation to offer compensation that would result in an enhancement of decorative condition, more a requirement to reinstate to the condition that existed before the works were undertaken.

The only exception to the mandatory rule is where improvements are proposed and the tenant agrees to the works proceeding in the knowledge that no redecoration works are to be undertaken.

The Decoration Grant scheme has been in operation within Leeds since the 1980s and reflects common practice across local authority and social housing organisations.

No decoration grant is awarded if the redecoration is undertaken as part of the

scheme of works.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

We will monitor the implementation and delivery of services through this Policy through:

- Customer satisfaction surveys (target 90% overall satisfaction)
- Use of Tenant Inspectors (carried out post improvements)
- Management and reporting of decoration voucher costs (monthly financial reporting)

Decoration Vouchers Policy

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 West North West homes Leeds aims to deliver an effective and efficient scheme for decoration grant scheme in line with the service standards agreed with our customers.
- 1.2 West North West homes Leeds will fulfil its mandatory obligations to provide compensation to reimburse tenants for damage caused to their decorations necessarily by works undertaken by the West North West Homes and our contractors
- 1.3 West North West homes Leeds will ensure customers are given clear information relating to this policy, and associated procedures and standards

2.0 Outline of Service

- 2.1 When we carry out major home improvement works (e.g. new kitchens, bathrooms, full re-wire) it is often necessary to remove or damage existing decoration and/or plaster work to allow new fitments, installation of new pipes, cables, etc. Replacement of kitchen and bathroom units to different locations may also disturb existing decorations.
- 2.2 The decoration voucher award scheme provides a contribution to the cost of redecorating to customers. There is no obligation to offer compensation that would result in an enhancement of decorative condition, more a requirement to reinstate to the condition that existed before the works were undertaken. Therefore it is not intended to cover full redecoration costs as this would be both a high cost and very difficult to administer.
- 2.3 Decoration vouchers are used (rather than cash awards) so as to ensure the vouchers are used for the purpose intended; to maintain homes.
- 2.4 No decoration vouchers are provided where redecoration is undertaken as part of the improvement project works. Currently where Kitchen and/or bathroom refurbishment work is involved full redecoration by means of

painting walls, ceilings and woodwork is provided as part of the refurbishment work.

- 2.5 For other rooms and for partial kitchen/bathroom work the following maximum decoration vouchers can be awarded assessed in relation to damage incurred by room, up to a maximum value per scheme:

Scheme	Refurbishment Grant
Living Room	£100
Kitchen	£60
Bedroom	£60
Staircase/Landing	£60
Bathroom	£50

- 2.6 The *maximum* values being based on the number of bedrooms

Maximum Grant	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed
Refurbishment	330	390	450	510	570

- 2.7 A referral process will be developed for cases where the above values do not meet the mandatory requirement to 'make good decorations to the existing standard' where very high quality decorations are impacted.
- 2.8 The assessment for decoration voucher awards will be carried out, with the customer, by the West North West homes Leeds Project Officer. West North West homes Leeds will write to the customer confirming the award and the customer can collect the vouchers from a designated housing office.
- 2.9 For decoration vouchers issued as an incentive to new tenants moving into empty properties the same maximum grants will be applied. The assessment will be carried out by the Lettings Officer.
- 2.10 Customers are provided with a choice of either B&Q vouchers (usable at all B&Q stores, no expiry date) or the Leeds Local Scheme vouchers (usable at a range of local stores, use within 3 months).
- 2.11 Decoration vouchers can only be used for decorating materials and curtain rail equipment.
- 2.12 On issue of the agreed decoration vouchers the local Housing Office will check for any rent arrears. If any arrears exist then the Housing Office may retain, up to 75% of the voucher value to set against the arrears. The customer will be consulted regarding this decision. Local Housing Offices will be considerate to vulnerable tenants and any special circumstances.
- 2.13 If a customer is not satisfied with the decoration award given then we can arrange a further viewing and consideration by a Project Manager. Any further dissatisfaction will be taken up using the West North West homes Leeds Complaints process

3.0 Specific Needs

- 3.1 West North West Homes Leeds will take into account the specific needs, which may arise, of older, vulnerable, disabled people and black and minority ethnic groups, in a manner that promotes equality and inclusiveness ensuring all customers are treated equally and fairly taking into account race, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and religious belief.
- 3.2 In special circumstances, where a customer is unable themselves to carry out the decoration work because of vulnerability then West North West homes Leeds can make arrangements for a cheque for the award amount to be made out to the customer.
- 3.3 In cases of rent arrears the Housing Office will be considerate to vulnerable tenants and any other special circumstances so as to ensure some award is provided to help redecoration.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The policy has been developed by the Improving Homes Service Improvement Group and reviewed by the Asset Management Customer Sounding Board.

5.0 Implementation

- 5.1 The Head of Property Investment is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of all West North West homes Leeds' employees to ensure that their work is carried out in line with this policy and procedures relating to it.
- 5.3 The decoration voucher scheme for home improvement works is managed by the Investment Planning and Delivery Team. Project Managers and Project Officers, managing individual projects, will carry out the assessment and award following property work completion. The budget for decoration vouchers is maintained within the capital improvement projects.
- 5.4 The Housing Offices manage the issuing of the vouchers.
- 5.5 The Finance Team within West North West homes Corporate and Finance division will control and monitor voucher allocation to Housing Offices.

6.0 Monitoring

- 6.1 The Investment Planning & Delivery Team will ensure that decoration vouchers are assessed and provided in a consistent way they will carry out an annual audit check. Tenant Inspectors will also cover the satisfaction on decoration vouchers when they carry out inspections of home improvement works.
- 6.2 The audit check will include a limited number of checks, including during tenancy audit visits, to ensure that customers have used the vouchers (or cheques) to improve the decorations in their homes.

7.0 Review

- 7.1 In preparation for delivering this policy during 2009 West North West homes Leeds has reviewed and taken into account new or emerging government legislation and government and council policies.
- 7.2 As a result, this policy now fully reflects, and is inclusive of the issues arising from those policies and legislation, and considers the impacts arising. The policy has been amended as following

8.0 Legislation

- 8.1 West North West homes Leeds aims to develop strong partnership working with Property Management Services and contractors delivering the service and will therefore work alongside and link strategies, regulations and policies which include, but not be limited to, the following

Asset Management Strategy
Tenant Support Policy
Vulnerability Policy and Strategy
Customer Care Strategy
Complaints/Compliments Policy
Value for Money Strategy
Procurement Strategy
Cohesion and Diversity Strategy
Financial Strategy
Access to Services Strategy
Customer Involvement Strategy

