



Ex gratia Decoration Allowance Policy

If you require this policy in a different format please ask a member of staff

Date of Approval
March 2016

Review Date
March 2019

1. Primary Objective

The purpose of awarding decoration vouchers is to help tenants improve the decorative standard of their new home and assist them in setting up home.

Carpet and blind service charge is to help those potential tenants who are destitute or do not have the financial means to fit flooring and blinds in their home. The aim is to improve tenancy sustainability for vulnerable people.

2. Operational Objectives

We aim to keep our procedures as simple as possible for our tenants. The decoration voucher schemes are user friendly with easily understood information. Products can be purchased in store, online and over the telephone. We aim to ensure that the decoration vouchers are used to improve the decorative standard of our properties.

We shall consult tenants on their views of the decoration voucher scheme and carpet and blind service charge through new tenant visit surveys.

3. What is a decoration Allowance?

A decoration allowance is a voucher or pack which assists tenants with the cost of decoration in their new home. Where work had been done on the property which has affected the decoration and/or where the property was particularly grimy the Maintenance Department will award a voucher so that the property can be brought up to a better decorative standard.

The current voucher scheme in place is through Dulux Decorating Centre. Both ready-made paint packs and vouchers are available.

3.1 The Value of the Decoration Vouchers

The sum awarded for an individual property can vary from £50.00 to a maximum value of £200.00. The award takes account of the demand for a particular property and the standard of decoration on a room by room basis. This sum is set by the Maintenance Department but can be negotiated by Housing Management if they feel the property warrants it.

4.0 Carpet and Blinds Service Charge

This applies to old style tenement properties and includes providing blinds and flooring to the property, payable via a service charge. **This service charge applies to new tenants however it may apply to existing tenants in exceptional circumstances.** The charge lasts for one year and the furnishings belong to the housing association.

5.0 Review

We will continue to gather feedback from tenants, through new tenant visit surveys, on the effectiveness of the voucher scheme and the carpet and blinds service charge and whether it continues to meet the original objectives. The Housing Management Department will also play a role in deciding whether a decoration voucher is required for a particular property depending on refusal numbers and the condition of the property.

Decoration Allowance Procedure

For Housing Management and Maintenance Staff

1. Our stock is divided into tenemental and new build properties
2. The Maintenance Officer will award £50.00 per room if it falls below a certain decorative standard where work had been done on the property or is in particularly bad condition. They will ignore issues of design or taste. The maximum value of decoration vouchers is £200.00
3. Housing Management staff can request to increase the amount of decoration allowance if a property is proving particularly difficult to let and has had several refusals.
4. In tenemental properties which have proven difficult to let or have had several refusals Housing Management staff can offer letting incentives such as a flooring and blinds package. Likewise, if a prospective tenant is destitute this package can be offered. This is a service charge which is recouped through housing benefit. Starter packs can also be offered to prospective tenants who are destitute, the cost of which is met by the Association. (The procedure for this is detailed separately through **U:\Housing Management Procedures\Decor and lettings Incentive\Decor and letting incentive procedures.docx**)
5. The Maintenance staff record on the **Y:\VOID DATA\Void Repairs 2011-12** under the address the amount of decoration allowance which has been set, if any.
6. At the time of viewing Housing Management staff will advise prospective tenants if there is a decoration allowance associated with the property. If Housing Management staff feel that the allowance should be greater they e-mail the Maintenance Department to advise them of this.
7. At the time of sign up Housing Management staff will advise tenants of their options. For example, the amount of decoration set may cover the cost of a paint pack or may be solely a voucher.
8. Once the need for a decoration allowance has been identified Housing Management staff will contact the Dulux Decorating Centres Business Support either by telephoning 0845 6036498 or via e-mail on **ddc.businessadmin@akzonobel.com** to obtain an authorisation number. B&Q vouchers are obtained from the Finance Department using the decoration request form and then issued to the tenant. Full details of the Dulux Decorating allowance procedures are available on **U:\Housing Management Procedures\Dulux decoration voucher scheme\Elderpark Paint Pack and Voucher Customer Procedures V6.doc**.
9. The new tenant will then sign the relevant pro-forma confirming that they have received a decoration allowance.
10. The Housing Management Department will assess how the decoration voucher has been spent and how influential it was in helping tenants set up home. This is part of the new tenant visit.

11. POLICY REVIEW

A full policy review will be carried out in January 2019