

# Slough Borough Council Decant Policy

## Policy Aims and Objectives

This policy sets out the Council's approach to managing decants, ensuring that households who need to move from their home—either temporarily or permanently—are supported in a fair, safe, transparent and well-coordinated manner. It establishes clear service standards, responsibilities and expectations for both tenants and staff.

The policy reflects learning from the Housing Ombudsman's guidance and casework on decants and temporary moves and embeds the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards.

## Policy Scope

This policy applies to council tenants with a secure tenancy. Leaseholders and occupants of Council Temporary Accommodation are excluded from this policy.

## Policy Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure that all decants are managed in a way that protects tenant safety, wellbeing and rights, and minimises disruption and distress.
- Provide a clear, consistent framework for temporary and permanent decants, regardless of which internal service including the maintenance contractor initiates the move.
- Ensure effective collaboration with tenants to identify suitable accommodation during the decant process, taking tenants' needs and situations into account.
- Promote effective communication, record keeping and accountability throughout the decant process.
- Ensure that decisions are informed by a full understanding of each household's needs and circumstances.

- Comply with relevant legislation, regulatory standards and good practice, including guidance from the Housing Ombudsman.

### Types of Decants and Definitions:

- **Temporary move** (often called a *decant*): A time limited move to alternative accommodation so significant repairs, safety works or redevelopment can take place, with the presumption of return to the principal home.
- **Permanent move**: A move where returning to the original home is not intended (e.g., demolition, disposal, redevelopment).
- **Emergency move**: An immediate move due to an imminent risk (e.g., fire, flood, structural or health/safety hazard), with rapid assessment to follow.
- **Planned move**: A scheduled move to enable major works that cannot practically or safely be completed in occupation.
- **Decant/temporary accommodation**: The property or accommodation provided for the duration of the temporary move.
- **Principal home**: The resident's main, permanent home from which the move arises.

### Policy Objectives

To achieve these aims, the Council will:

- **Recognise different types of decants**
  - Acknowledge that decants may be temporary or permanent and ensure that this is clearly identified, communicated and documented from the outset. Permanent decants will be authorised and allocated in line with The Allocation Scheme.
  - Ensure tenants understand the reason for the decant, its expected duration (where temporary), and what this means for their security of tenure and future housing options.
- **Ensure tenant safety and suitability of accommodation**

- The Council will work with the tenant identify a suitable type of accommodation.
- Work with tenants to explore the possibility of a staying with family or friends as a first option.
- Assess the suitability of any decant accommodation offered, taking account of location, property type, affordability, accessibility and household composition.
- Complete a recorded household risk assessment prior to the decant to identify and address any vulnerabilities, medical needs, disabilities, mobility issues, safeguarding concerns or other support requirements, ensuring that all members of the household are considered, including any support the tenant or household members may need in moving.
- If a tenant is receipt of care, the Council will ensure that the care they provide is not compromised during the decant process.
- The use of hotels as temporary accommodation should not exceed beyond four weeks.
- If the use of hotels as temporary accommodation is likely to exceed four weeks, this will be reviewed by the head of housing.
- **Provide clear accountability and points of contact**
  - Allocate an appropriate named lead officer for every decant case who will act as the primary point of contact for the household.
  - Ensure tenants know who to contact, how to raise concerns, and what to expect at each stage of the process.
  - If a tenant requires reasonable adjustments during the decant process they can contact their primary point of contact.
  - Proactively communicate with tenants to ensure that they are given updates on the works being completed in their principal

home and their welfare is prioritised during the decant process.

- Inform the tenant of any extensions of decant time as soon as possible.
- **Strengthen internal coordination and communication**
  - In recognising that decants may be initiated by multiple internal teams ensure that robust internal communication, shared records of decant cases and vulnerabilities is identified in the household risk assessment and clear handovers are in place so that tenants receive a joined-up service and are not required to repeat information unnecessarily. There will be clear communication to the repairs and maintenance contractor to ensure that repair works for the principal property are a priority.
- **Use appropriate legal agreements and documentation**
  - Ensure that the correct legal arrangement is used for all decants, including licences or tenancies, and that these are explained clearly to tenants in plain language.
  - Provide written information setting out rights, responsibilities, rent and charges, and the process for returning to the original home where the move is temporary.
- **Ensure that tenants do not experience financial detriment because of a decant**
  - The Council will ensure that tenants who are required to move, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, do not lose out financially as a consequence of the decant.
  - The Council recognises that being required to move home—particularly at short notice—can create additional and unexpected costs and will take reasonable steps to mitigate financial hardship.

Where a decant is required to enable works or address risks for which the Council is responsible, the Council will make disturbance payments to cover reasonable and evidenced costs arising directly from the move.

- Disturbance payments may include, but are not limited to:
  - Removal and storage of belongings
  - Disconnection and reconnection of utilities
  - Redirection of mail
  - Travel costs incurred as a result of the move
  - Additional food or subsistence costs where normal cooking facilities are unavailable
  - Other reasonable expenses directly attributable to the decant
- Where a decant results in a permanent move, the Council will ensure that tenants are advised of, and supported to access, any statutory entitlements, including Home Loss Payments and disturbance payments under the Land Compensation Act 1973, where eligibility criteria are met.
- The named lead officer for each decant case will actively monitor the financial impact on the household throughout the period of the move and ensure that disturbance payments and reimbursements are processed without unnecessary delay.
- During a decant a tenant will continue to pay for rent and utilities on their principal home.
- **Meeting Transparency, Influence and Accountability (TIA) Standard and Tenancy Standard**
  - Comply with the RSH Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard by ensuring that:
    - Information about the decant process is clear, accessible and timely.
    - Decisions are explained and recorded, with reasons provided to the tenant.
    - Tenants are treated fairly, listened to and supported to understand their options.
    - Tenants are treated with dignity and respect throughout the decant process.
    - Complaints and feedback are welcomed and used to improve services.
  - To comply the RSH Tenancy standard:

- Permanent decants will be authorised and allocated in line with The Allocation Scheme.

- **Performance Reporting**

- Report on performance targets regularly to the Resident Performance Board. Furthermore, key performance information relating to decant cases and compliance with statutory legislation and regulatory requirements will be published openly to allow for tenant and public scrutiny.

- **Learn from complaints and Ombudsman findings**

- Embed learning from Housing Ombudsman guidance, determinations and sector-wide reports on decants and temporary moves.
- Use complaints, feedback and outcomes to improve policy, procedures and staff practice, reducing the risk of service failure and detriment to tenants.
- Tenants can raise a complaint via the [housing services form](#) online, phoning 01753 475111 and choosing option 3 or in person at one of the Council's Community Hubs.
  - The Council will adhere to Slough Borough Council's Tenant and Leaseholder Complaints Policy and follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

- **Promote fairness and consistency**

- Apply this policy consistently across the Housing Service to ensure equitable outcomes for tenants, while retaining flexibility to respond to individual circumstances.
- The Council will ensure it makes reasonable adjustments to its service delivery, communication methods, and scheduling to meet the specific needs of individuals with protected characteristics, thereby guaranteeing fair access and outcomes.
- This policy will be made available in other languages or accessible formats on request.

## Refusing to decant:

- If a tenant refuses to decant from their principal property, the council will make sure tenants are made aware of the health and safety risks of staying in a property.
- If a tenant refuses to decant from a property, which holds a significant health and safety risk, the council may seek possession of the property under the Housing Act 1985.
- If a tenant refuses to decant from a property the council will advise the tenant to obtain legal advice.

## Role Responsibilities

The Head of Housing Management will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, the development of any procedures necessary to support this policy and ensuring that staff are constantly working to meet the required standards.

## Staff Training

Relevant staff, as identified by the Head of Housing Management, will attend mandatory training to ensure the Council delivers a professional, competent, and compassionate service in line with this policy and the RSH Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

- Vulnerability and Communication: Training will include modules on understanding vulnerable people, identifying health risks, and effective, empathetic communication.
- Assessment: The effectiveness of all training delivered will be formally assessed to ensure it translates into improved frontline service delivery.

## 8. Record Keeping (Knowledge and Information Management - KIM)

In line with the Housing Ombudsman's guidance on Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) and the RSH Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, the Council will maintain a single, comprehensive, and accurate record for every decant case.

This record must include all reports, inspections, investigations, correspondence (including the written summary of findings), contractor visits, actions taken, decant arrangements, and reasons for any timeline extensions. This approach ensures information is easily accessible to all relevant staff, enabling effective case management, continuity of service, and clear accountability for compliance.

## 9. Equalities Undertaking

The Council is committed to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- Recording Characteristics: Staff will record whether a tenant or household member has a protected characteristic which may be impacted by a homemove or which may affect their ability to access the service.
- Adjusting Service: The Council will ensure it makes reasonable adjustments to its service delivery, communication methods, and scheduling to meet the specific needs of individuals with protected characteristics, thereby guaranteeing fair access and outcomes.
- The Council will provide accessible versions of this policy on request.

## 11. Complaints

If the tenant believes the Council is not following this policy, the form of redress is the Council's complaint.

Tenants can raise a complaint via the [housing services form](#) online, phoning 01753 475111 and choosing option 3 or in person at one of the Council's Community Hubs.

The Council will adhere to Slough Borough Council's Complaints Policy, and follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

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