



Rent Collection Policy

Policy Number

POL 02

Purpose of Policy

To ensure that a service is in place for tenants to be able to pay their rent promptly by a variety of methods which reflect individual needs and circumstances.

Policy Statement

Derwentside Homes' Rent Collection Policy will be implemented in line with Derwentside Homes's Charitable Objects and the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance.

Derwentside Homes will advise new tenants of the importance of paying their rent on time and the different methods available.

It will continually publicise the full range of payment methods available and adopt new methods as they are developed.

Tenants will be encouraged to claim Housing Benefit and to arrange for it to be paid directly to Derwentside Homes.

Performance Measures

- Satisfaction with cash collection service.
- Average cost per transaction.
- BV157 % of interactions delivered electronically.
- BV66a Rent collected as a % of rent roll.

Responsible Officer	Head of Housing Services
Policy Author(s)	Head of Housing Services Performance Monitoring Officer
Date Approved by the Shadow Board	
Frequency of Review	Three years or as dictated by legislation/guidance
Review Date	
File Reference	
Consultees	LSVT Working Group –Policies and Procedures Tenants Forum Staff Management Team Derwentside Homes Shadow Board

Rent Collection Policy

1 Statement of Intent

- 1.1 Derwentside Homes is committed to ensure that the payment facilities for its tenants are easily accessible and that the range of options open for tenants to pay money to it reflects the needs of its customers. It is recognised that it is essential that any cash collection service complements other services provided by Derwentside Homes. To this end, it will:
- advise tenants, when they sign up for their tenancies, of the importance of meeting their obligations under their tenancy agreements to pay their rent and any other service charges on time;
 - provide tenants with six-monthly statements of their rent accounts;
 - provide tenants with advice on their eligibility for Supporting People and Housing Benefit in order to maximise welfare benefit take up, and encourage tenants in receipt of housing benefit to arrange for the benefit to be paid directly to Derwentside Homes;
 - ensure that payments received are promptly credited to individual accounts;
 - maintain customer confidentiality at all times in line with Data Protection legislation;
 - on request provide customers with an up to date statement of their account;
 - provide a range of options for the convenient payment of tenants' rent.
- 1.2 The security of tenants, staff and money are high in the priorities of Derwentside Homes and collection facilities will be provided to ensure that risks in the delivery of the service are kept to an absolute minimum.
- 1.3 The problems of access and mobility of service users is paramount in considering the range of rent payment methods that Derwentside Homes will provide for tenants. It will be mindful of its commitment to take account of the needs of different groups within the community.
- 1.4 Derwentside Homes is aware of the social stigma which can be attached where debt exists. Staff will deal with tenants in a proper and respectful manner at all times.

2. Outline of Service

- 2.1 Methods of payment include:
- Swipe card payment at a Post office or Paypoint;
 - Direct debit or standing order;
 - Debit card by telephone;
 - Deduction from salaries, where tenants are also employees of the RSL;
 - Payments at a local office;
 - Internet payments;
 - Direct payments from DSS;
 - Other arrangements as developed.

- 2.2 The full range of payment methods will be continually publicised. The use of direct debits and standing orders will particularly be encouraged, since they facilitate a simple, efficient and reliable method of rent payment. Bank mandates will be readily available at local offices to encourage the use of this method of rent payment. Staff will offer bank mandates to tenants as they sign up for their tenancies, and advise them of the availability of this facility.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 Derwentside Homes will consult tenants about Housing Management and changes in the company's practice and policy in line with the arrangements established by Derwentside Homes Tenant Consultation Policy (REF NO). Consultation on this policy will also be carried out with:

- applicants on the waiting list;
- staff;
- statutory agencies;
- voluntary agencies;
- Derwentside District Council;
- other Registered Social Landlords.

- 3.2 The Council, for the convenience of its customers, presently collects a number of additional charges including house contents insurance and water rates. Derwentside Homes would review in consultation with its tenants whether to continue to collect these charges.

4. Review of Policy

- 4.1 Derwentside Homes will review this policy, as a minimum every three years or whenever there are any changes to legislation or case law, taking into consideration good practice and any research that would impact on this policy and/or service delivery, including trends in complaints received by Derwentside Homes. This policy will be reviewed and implemented in line with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance.

5 Legislation and Guidance

- 5.1 Derwentside Homes will ensure that its approach to Rent Collection is in line with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance, Guidance for Charitable Registered Social Landlords – the Joint Guidance – the Charity Commission and the Housing Corporation. Derwentside Homes will have regard to Derwentside District Council's Homelessness and Housing Strategy in the formulation and implementation of its policies. It will ensure that this policy is compatible with the obligations of existing legislation including but not limited to:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- Race Relations Act 1976(As amended 2000);
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975(As amended 1986);
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998;

- Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003;
- Housing Act 1996;
- Housing Act 2004;
- Data Protection Act 1994;
- Charities Act 1993.