



Rent, Services & Occupancy Charges Policy



RENT, SERVICES AND OCCUPANCY CHARGES POLICY

1. Statement of intent

This policy sets out how we set our rents, services and occupancy charges for social rented properties, lead tenancies, leased properties, other tenures and shared ownership properties and how we try to ensure that these are affordable to our customers.

The rents for Mid Market Rent properties let through Kingdom Initiatives are set by Kingdom Initiatives Ltd.

The policy objectives are detailed below and the rent structure detailing the specific mechanisms by which we set social and lead tenancy rents is set out in appendix 1.

As part of our overall business strategy, we have adopted a Sustainability Policy. The principles of that policy will be applied to the implementation of this policy.

In line with our commitment to equality and diversity, this Policy can be made available in a variety of formats, including large print, translated into another language or on audio tape. Reasonable adjustments will also be made to assist individuals who have a disability.

This policy has been developed and reviewed in consultation with tenants.

2. General Principles

The objectives of this policy are intended to ensure:

- The mechanism for setting rents and occupancy charges generates sufficient income to meet our financial requirements.
- The rent structure is capable of setting affordable rents for the different type and size of properties in our stock.
- The mechanism for setting rents and occupancy charges is transparent and is understood by staff, board members and customers.
- The policy complies with the Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance by ensuring that, where possible, rents set by the policy are affordable to those on low incomes and who do not receive housing benefit.

In support of the policy objectives and our obligations, when reviewing our rent levels we will:

- Consult with tenants ahead of any change in rents
- Assess the affordability of the proposed new rent levels
- Provide and consult on a range of proposed rent level options



- Provide clear information through our customer communication channels on the consultation process and outcomes

3. Costs to be Covered

The rent structure provides a framework for setting rents for individual properties, which, when combined, will provide an annual income sufficient to cover all relevant costs incurred by us. Costs to be recovered by rental income will include:

- Housing Management costs – costs associated with managing all aspects of a housing service and determined by the annual budget.
- Maintenance costs – costs associated with undertaking day to day repairs on properties.
- Voids and bad debts – a provision to cater for income lost through voids or rents being unrecoverable.
- Major repairs and renewals – costs associated with planned maintenance and replacement of components within houses such as kitchens.
- Loan Charges – costs associated with servicing private loans taken out by us to fund the building of additional houses to meet demand.
- Insurances – costs associated with building, public and liability insurances which we are obliged to have in place.

4. Rent and Occupancy Charges

We set charges that take account of affordability, the costs of managing and maintaining our houses, in comparability with other social landlords in the area and that enable us to service existing loans and fulfil contractual obligations.

We have a fair system for apportioning rents and charges between individual properties.

Rents are charged for properties where a tenant leases a property from Kingdom through a tenancy agreement

Occupancy charges are payments that sharing owners pay for the share of their property that remains owned by Kingdom

5. Service Charges

Service charges are calculated and charged, where applicable, separately from rents and occupancy charges and are calculated on the basis that we aim to be fair and reasonable and we cover the full cost of providing services such as landscaping and stair cleaning to our customers.



A brief description on how the different service charges are calculated is shown in Appendix 2 and is designed to ensure consistency of approach, be affordable to those in low paid employment not in receipt of housing benefit and generate enough income to cover costs and ensure that the standards set by us are met.

6. Rent Setting Categories

We have a number of tenure types and the rent setting mechanism for each tenure as outlined below.

Social Rented (Pre 1989) Tenancies

The number of these tenancies is diminishing but the rents for these properties are set by the Rent Officer once every 3 years.

We will conform to the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1984 in the re-registration of rents and service charges, but seek at the time of re-registration to minimise differentials between rents, taking account of the three year cycle of re-registration.

Social Rented Properties (Post 1989)

The rents for these properties are set in accordance with Appendix 1. The rent structure includes a base rent for each property and an additional charge, in pounds (£) for each of a range of characteristics which apply to individual properties.

This approach is designed to be a consistent approach to calculating rents based on fair principles, reflective of the benefits and amenities provided by the property, simple to understand and transparent.

Leased Properties

Leased properties are properties that we own and are subsequently leased to a local authority, other RSLs or a charitable organisation. Lease properties are not set in accordance with Appendix 1 but will be reviewed at the same time as other tenures. The rents for leased properties will be uplifted each year by the same percentage as applied to our social rented properties (post 1989). We will also add all costs we incur in terms of renewing leases and applying for House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licences where these are required. The leased property rents are set on an annual basis at the same time as our other rents.

Other Properties including Shared Ownership



The rents and charges for these properties will be uplifted each year by the same percentage as applied to our social rented properties (post 1989) unless an alternative specific provision is written into leasing or contractual arrangements, or unless a specific alternative option is agreed following customer consultation.

7. Affordability

One of our key objectives is to provide good quality, affordable housing to those on low incomes therefore we take affordability very seriously. The financial viability of the organisation is crucial for our survival and therefore must also be at the core of any debate on affordability.

We carry out affordability assessments as part of our rent review process. We fully appreciate and understand that affordability can be subjective and for individuals, perception of affordability can be influenced by a range of factors. However, for the purposes of our assessments we have adopted the following definition of affordability:

“Rents are considered to be affordable if the household pays no more than 25% of their income on rent.”

We will consider the following key factors in our affordability assessments:

- We will take account of the rents charged by the other Housing Associations in our areas of operation.
- We will take account of house purchase costs for low cost home ownership and market entry level housing.
- We will compare our rents with market rents in the private rented sector.
- We will take account of household income

We provide in-house tenancy sustainment services to help our customers maximise their household income, reduce expenses, and access financial support. Our comprehensive services include:

- Budgeting assistance
- Benefits advice
- Energy advice
- Debt negotiation
- Tenancy skills development
- Support with household management tasks
- Advocacy
- Help to access services and opportunities within the community.



When specialist services are required, we will facilitate referrals and work to eliminate any barriers to free, impartial advice. This includes ensuring access to expert debt advice services.

8. Review of Charges and Tenant Consultation

Rents and occupancy charges are due on the first day of every month and there are no rent-free periods.

We will consult with tenants and other customers regarding potential rent and service charge increases, giving reasonable and real options to consider and taking account of their views before finalising rent increases.

We will normally review our rents and charges once a year and all customers will receive one month's written notice of any change to their monthly charge.

The revised charges will apply from 1 April each year.

If improvements are made to a property after the annual rent review and which add a new component rather than a scheduled replacement or upgrade, we reserve the right to increase the rent for that property before the next scheduled review to cover the cost of the improvement. In this event we will provide one month's notice of our intention to do so.

The rent components itemised at **Appendix 1** will be reviewed on an annual basis or as required to consider the introduction of any new component types or technologies into our properties. Any changes to the components on Appendix 1 following review will be subject to approval by the Kingdom Group Chief Executive.



Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed 5 years from the date of implementation or latest review, which will be the date the policy is approved by the Board of Management, or earlier if deemed appropriate.

In the event that this policy is not reviewed within the above timescale, the latest approved policy will continue to apply.

Any policy likely to significantly impact on the tenant or changes to the standard of service must be consulted on.

Policy drawn up with reference to: Housing (Scotland) Act 1984
Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

Reference made to the following sources and other guidance: Scottish Social Housing Charter

Prepared by: Matthew Busher

Reviewed by Policy Sub-Committee: 9 February 2021

Approved by Board of Management: 15 February 2021

Update to Policy approved by Customer Services Committee: 25 June 2024

Next review date: No later than February 2026



APPENDIX 1 – Rent Setting Structure

Note: The Base Rent and all rental components shown in this table are the figures used when the rent structure was implemented as a common reference point. All figures are subject to having the appropriate increases applied as agreed by the board following consultation. Every year we provide a rent statement specific to each tenancy that details the current rent component charges for that property.

Base Rent Values

Base Rent (All properties)	£240
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Criteria and Values

Criteria
Criteria 1 - Property Size: Double Bedrooms
Criteria 2 - Property Size: Single Bedrooms
Criteria 3 - Property Type
Criteria 4 - Bedsit
Criteria 5 - EPC Banding
Criteria 6 - Energy Efficiency Enhancements
Criteria 7 - Private Garden
Criteria 8 - Private Driveway
Criteria 9 - Carport
Criteria 10 - Additional WC
Criteria 11 - Additional Bath/Shower
Criteria 12 - Dining Room
Criteria 13 - Study
Criteria 14 - Gas Heating
Criteria 15 - Refurb
Criteria 16 - Person Size
Criteria 17 - Utility Room

Criteria 1 - Property Size: Double Bedrooms	Add Rent
0 Double Bedrooms	-
1 Double Bedrooms	£10.00



2 Double Bedrooms	£20.00
3 Double Bedrooms	£30.00
4 Double Bedrooms	£40.00
Criteria 2 - Property Size: Single Bedrooms	Add Rent
0 Single Bedrooms	-
1 Single Bedrooms	£ 5.00
2 Single Bedrooms	£15.00
3 Single Bedrooms	£25.00
4 Single Bedrooms	£35.00
5 Single Bedrooms	£45.00
Criteria 3 - Property Type	Add Rent
Flat - Common Access	£ 5.00
Flat - Private Access	£15.00
Terraced	£30.00
Semi Detached	£40.00
Detached	£45.00
Criteria 4 - Bedsit	Add Rent
Bedsit	-£10.00
Non Bedsit	-
Criteria 5 - EPC Banding	Add Rent
A	£15.00
B	£10.00
C	£ 5.00
D or lower	-
Criteria 6 - Energy Efficiency Enhancements	Add Rent
Other Energy Efficiency Enhancement	£ 5.00
Solar Thermal Panel	£ 5.00
Photo Voltaic Panel	£10.00
No Energy Efficiency Enhancements	-
Criteria 7 - Private Garden	Add Rent
Private Garden	£10.00
No Private Garden	-
Criteria 8 - Private Driveway	Add Rent
Private Driveway	£10.00



No Private Driveway	-
Criteria 9 - Carport	Add Rent
Carport	£ 5.00
No Carport	-
Criteria 10 - Additional WC	Add Rent
Additional WC	£ 5.00
No Additional WC	-
Criteria 11 - Additional Bath/Shower	Add Rent
Additional Bath/Shower	£10.00
No Additional Bath/Shower	-
Criteria 12 - Dining Room	Add Rent
Dining Room	£10.00
No Dining Room	-
Criteria 13 - Study	Add Rent
Study	£ 5.00
No Study	-
Criteria 14 - Gas Heating	Add Rent
Gas Heating	£15.00
No Gas Heating	-
Criteria 15 - Refurb	Add Rent
Refurbished	-£25.00
Non Refurbished	-
Criteria 16 - Person Size	Add Rent
1 person	-
2 person	-
3 person	-
4 person	-
5 person +	£20.00
Criteria 17- Utility Room	Add Rent
Utility Room	£ 5.00
No Utility Room	-



APPENDIX 2 – Service Charges

The main groups of estate management services we provide are as follows:

1. Communal Gardening Services.
2. Communal Cleaning Services.
3. Communal Lighting.
4. White Goods, Carpeting and Furniture.
5. Administration on behalf of external factors.
6. ‘Factoring’ Service for Owner Occupiers.

Communal Gardening

The charges for the gardening contract are calculated by examining the contract cost of each development based on the measurements. The unit cost is then calculated by dividing that cost by the number of properties which have access to the service. We then add a provision for contingencies and the filling of the grit bins. In certain schemes where we carry out snow clearing there is an additional charge added for providing this service.

Communal Cleaning

The charges for this service are applied by calculating the unit cost for cleaning over all the properties receiving the service. We also add a provision for contingencies and the uplift of items left in the communal areas.

Communal Lighting

The communal lighting charge is applied to flats with a common entrance and for developments where the site lighting is not adopted by the Council. The communal charge is based on the previous year’s expenditure for lighting plus an allowance for inflation. There are two bands of charges applied, one for flats to cover their share of the stair lighting and site lighting and another for the houses for their share of the site lighting.

White Goods

We are now only providing and maintaining white goods for a limited number of properties. We work out a monthly charge for each white good item provided on the basis of the previous year’s expenditure, plus an allowance for inflation.



Furnishings

In the few instances where furnishings, carpets or soft furnishings have been provided, the monthly charge is calculated by dividing the total cost of the goods provided by 60 as we make an assumption that the furnishings will have a 5 year life.

Administration on Behalf of External Factors

We currently have some rented units in developments where external factors carry out services on our behalf. We contact the factor prior to the rent review to obtain details of their management fee and services for the following year. We then take the total cost for each development and divide by the total number of units in the development.

'Factoring' Service for Kingdom Owner Occupiers and Sharing Owners

We maintain the developments, provide block building insurance where appropriate, correspond, invoice and collect payments. The calculation of factoring service costs are based on the actual cost for the development and are apportioned as set out in the title deeds. In addition, we charge an annual management fee which is reflected in the cost of providing the factoring service. Details of these charges are set out in the sharing owners or owners Written Statement of Services.

