

Recharge Policy

Approved: HOC Feb 2018
Review: HOC Feb 2023

NOTE: This policy can be made available in a range of formats. Please contact the Head Office if you require this document translated or issued in a format which is more appropriate for you.

RECHARGE POLICY

Policy Statement:

- We recognise that most tenants act responsibly and maintain their homes to an acceptable standard and condition, but on occasions things can go wrong, leading to repairs being requested which would otherwise be the tenant's responsibility. When this happens, Sutton Housing Society (SHS) will act to prevent properties deteriorating by undertaking the repair and recovering the cost from the tenant.
- There are also times when bulk refuse such as mattresses and furniture is left / dumped in communal areas or on SHS land rather than being disposed of properly. This is not only unsightly but is a serious Health and Safety issue. Where we are able to identify the tenant/s responsible for leaving these items, SHS will recover the costs incurred for removing and disposing of these items, from the tenant/s responsible. If there is no known owner, the costs may be added to the services charges for the site.
- Where a property comes to the end of the tenancy and personal items and furniture are left in the property, SHS incurs costs of removing and disposing of these items. These costs will be recovered from the former tenant or their estate.
- The aim of this policy is to promote a responsible attitude by tenants toward their property, the communal areas and SHS land, by ensuring that costs are pursued from those who are negligent and/or deliberately cause damage or do not dispose of rubbish and unwanted items responsibly.
- Court costs are rechargeable.

Policy Objectives:

- Provide clear guidance over the repair responsibilities.
- Provide information as to potential costs for removal of dumped / left items.
- Costs are recovered effectively, efficiently and in a fair and consistent manner.
- To maximise income by the recovery of debts owed relating to rechargeable repairs / dumped or left items / court costs from current and former tenants.

Recharge Policy

Approved: HOC Feb 2018
Review: HOC Feb 2023

Definition of Recharge:

- 1) Recharge repairs are defined as repairs that are caused by damage to fixtures and fittings internally or externally (garden/garage) by a tenant, member of tenant's household, tenant's visitors, that cannot be attributed to fair wear and tear through the duration of their Tenancy.
- 2) Recharge for disposal of dumped or left items is defined as the costs SHS incur for removal and disposal of these items left in communal areas, on SHS land or in empty flats, that is the tenant's, former tenant's or their family / visitors' responsibility to remove.

Where damage has been caused due to crime, and there is a valid crime reference number provided to the Society, a recharge may not be applied.

The Housing Team makes the final decision once the invoice is received from the Contractor as to whether it is a "true" recharge.

A list of examples is attached at Appendix A but is **not exhaustive**.

Vulnerable Tenants:

We recognise that we may be dealing with people from disadvantaged groups, vulnerable tenants and those facing severe financial hardship. Therefore, we will seek to agree sustainable, affordable repayment plans for rechargeable repairs.

Where there are mitigating circumstances, the decision as how to recharge vulnerable tenants will be at the discretion of the Community Housing Services Manager after consultation with the relevant Community Housing Services Officer. Factors that are taken into account when using discretion should include age, disability, income and savings.

Recharge Payment Methods:

In line with good practice, when tenants report a repair request, Officers (CHSO, CHSA, PSO, AO) who take the call / email / or face to face, will inform tenants if the repair is a potential recharge, advise them of the approximate guide cost and agree a payment method and get a signed agreement in place before the work is carried out where possible.

Payment methods available are in line with current rent payment methods. Payment may also be spread over a period of time (payment plan).

The tenant will be asked to complete a "Request for chargeable repairs to property" form before the repair is carried out.

Recharge Policy

Approved: HOC Feb 2018
Review: HOC Feb 2023

Appendix A is to be used as a list of guide prices. SHS charges will be invoiced to the tenant at cost. All contractor charges will be invoiced at cost plus 15% SHS administration charge.

In circumstances where dumped items or the necessary repair would create a safety risk or potential property damage, or where SHS has a statutory duty, the removal / disposal or repair order will be issued prior to a payment arrangement being undertaken.

Recharge Process and Debt Recovery:

If the tenant chooses to employ their own contractor to carry out the works, they first need to obtain written permission from the Community Housing Services Officer (CHSO) or the Property Services Officer (PSO). The repair works must be carried out within four weeks of permission being granted. We reserve the right to inspect the repair after completion - should it not be satisfactory and a contractor is required to correct the works, this will be done at the tenant's cost. Due to the door lock system we use, tenants cannot use their own contractor for the replacement of door locks.

When an order has been placed for the works, the tenant will receive an SHS works order letter notifying them of: summary of problem, priority, target completion date and contractor.

If, when the contractor carries out the work to the property, the work is deemed not to be rechargeable, the Housing Team will contact the tenant.

In the same way if the contractor deems that works previously thought to be SHS' responsibility is the tenant's responsibility, the Housing Team will contact the tenant.

Once the works have been completed, SHS will send a recharge invoice, with a copy of the contractor invoice attached, to the tenant. The invoice payment terms are 14 days from date of invoice.

The invoice amount is added to a sundry account linked to the tenant's rent account.

After this period, if payment has not been received or an agreement has not been put in place, then a final reminder will be sent by the Finance Officer giving a further 30 days to pay the final amount with a notice that 'failure to pay or maintain payments of the recharge may result in the instigation of legal action for the recovery of costs in compliance with SHS's debt recovery practice.' This will be passed over for action to the relevant Community Housing Services Officer. SHS will seek to recover the debt via legal action for recovery of costs if no payment is received or plan agreed, where appropriate.

Tenants' ability to transfer or exchange to alternative accommodation may also be affected by identified recharges and/or outstanding recharge debts.

Recharge Policy

Approved: HOC Feb 2018
Review: HOC Feb 2023

Complaints:

If a tenant is unhappy with the decision on a recharge, then they can appeal within 14 days of receiving the recharge invoice to the Community Housing Services Manager. The appeal must be made in writing and will be replied to within 10 working days.

If after appealing the tenant is still dissatisfied with the decision that SHS has made, the Complaints Procedure should be followed, starting at the point of appealing to the Operations Director. The Complaints Policy and Procedure is available on the website or on request.

Equality and Diversity:

SHS recognise that tenants of all races, ages, religions, gender, sexual orientation, literacy levels and disability should be treated equality and fairly and we will not discriminate in implementing this policy and procedure.

SHS will be sensitive to tenants' individual needs and will tailor our services and approaches accordingly.

All tenants' will have access to this document upon request.

Equality and Diversity training is mandatory for all SHS staff.

Monitoring and Reporting:

Any expressions of dissatisfaction or complaints are regularly monitored by the Senior Management Team. Any learning is shared with the wider SHS team.

Please see Procedure Manual Section 4 Housing Management, 4.47 Recharge Procedure