



Moray Council

Housing & Property Services

Decoration Allowance Policy

1. Scope of policy

- 1.1 This policy sets out the framework for addressing appropriate standards of decoration within Moray Council housing stock at various stages throughout the tenancy. This policy applies to all tenants who have a [Scottish Secure Tenancy \(SST\)](#) or a [Short Scottish Secure Tenancy \(SSST\)](#) with the Moray Council.
- 1.2 Managers and Officers within Moray Council's Housing Service will have the discretion to authorise and issue decoration packs and compensatory allowances to new and existing tenants in certain circumstances, to ensure the standard of decoration is acceptable and meets [Moray Council's Letting Standard](#).

2. Strategic Context

- 2.1 The Decoration Allowance Policy will assist the Council to meet the aims and priorities of its [Local Housing Strategy 2019 – 2024](#), to improve the stock condition and energy efficiency of housing in the social sector, as well as the Moray 2027 - Corporate Plan.

3. Objectives and principles of the Policy

- 3.1 The overall aim of Moray Council's Decoration Allowance Policy is to ensure tenants receive assistance towards the cost of decorating their home while Moray Council, as a social landlord, ensure the efficient and effective maintenance of the Council's housing stock.
- 3.2 The specific objectives of the Decoration Allowance Policy are to:
 - provide clear guidance regarding the use and authorisation of decoration packs and compensatory payment allowances;
 - ensure the council fulfils its legal duties as a landlord;

- ensure any disrepair or decoration work required following repairs or upgrade works, are remedied to meet the [Moray Letting Standard](#);
- publicise the terms of the policy to enable a wider understanding by tenants, staff and the public; and
- give clear guidance on how disputes will be dealt with.

3.3 The principles underpinning the policy are:

- the Council will provide internal supporting operational procedures for staff, incorporating agreed good practice to ensure consistency;
- staff training will be provided to ensure that staff are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them;
- communication with tenants and service users will be in ‘plain language’; and
- performance will be monitored to ensure the policy is being adhered to.

3.4 Decoration packs and payments are intended:

- as a contribution towards the cost of materials and equipment needed to carry out internal decoration work, but may not always meet the full costs involved in decoration due to tenant choice of aesthetics, etc.
- to offer the tenant more choice and flexibility when decorating their home.

3.5 The award of a decoration pack or compensatory payment does not remove the need for tenants to adequately insure the contents of their homes from damage.

3.6 The award of a decoration pack or compensatory payment does not remove the need for staff, carrying out work on behalf of the Council, to take adequate care to ensure that damage does not occur.

4. **Legal Provisions, Regulations and Standards**

4.1 Moray Council will ensure that the Decoration Allowance Policy complies with current legislation, regulatory requirements and promotes good practice.

Landlord responsibility to “make good”

4.2 The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) sets out the main requirements of the policy:

- [Section 27](#) and [Schedule 4](#) states that landlords must carry out any necessary work within a reasonable timescale and make good any damage caused by them in carrying out the work.
- [Section 30](#) explains the right to compensation for improvements when a tenancy comes to an end. Compensation costs will be assessed in line with regulations from the [Secure Tenants \(Compensation for improvements\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 1994](#).

4.3 The Council require any contractor to 'make good' any damage that they may have caused e.g. repair and prepare surfaces for redecoration, but not to redecorate.

Tenant responsibility for internal decoration

4.4 Paragraphs 2.3 and 5.17 of Moray Council's [Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement](#) (SST) and [Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement](#) (SSST) state that the tenant must take reasonable care:

- to prevent damage to the decoration of the property (this includes the tenant's household and any visitors to the property); and
- of the house, which includes carrying out minor repairs and internal decoration.

Tenants are advised of these responsibilities when signing their tenancy agreement and during their tenancy.

4.5 Other relevant legal provisions and guidance include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) - The Council will ensure that any information obtained will be processed and used accordingly.
- [Equality Act 2010](#) – The Council will aim to ensure that it does not discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristics.
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#) – The “right to respect for private life”, (article 8 of part I, rights and freedoms) and “protection of property”, (article 1 of part II, the first protocol) apply, however the safety of tenant's would

provide an objective justification with these rights, due to it being a proportionate means to a legitimate aim.

- [The Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) identifies various outcomes that are relevant. Outcome 4, “Quality of Housing” ensures that tenants’ homes are clean, tidy and in a good state of repair when they are allocated. The “Repairs, maintenance and improvements” outcome (outcome 5) sets out that tenant’s homes should be well maintained, and landlords must provide repairs and improvement services that safeguard the value of their assets. The “Value for Money’ outcome (outcome 13) covers the management of housing services and makes sure that tenants receive services that provide value for rent and any other charges they pay.

5. Decoration allowances

5.1 Decoration allowances will take the form of either:

- a voucher for a decoration pack towards paint and decoration materials; or
- a compensation payment towards decoration or remedial works following a planned improvement or upgrade.

5.2 The size of decoration pack a tenant is eligible for will depend on the number and size of the rooms that need decorated and will be calculated on a room by room basis.

5.3 Decoration allowances may be allocated in the following circumstances and will be issued at the discretion of the area housing officer who will assess the property for damage:

- in cases where a tenant moves into a newly allocated Council property and the standard of decoration is below that defined within the [Moray Letting Standard](#);
- where repairs have been carried out by the Council, or by a contractor working on behalf of the Council, and this has caused excessive damage to the interior decoration of the property; and
- following any planned maintenance or improvement work carried out by the Council, or by a contractor working on behalf of the Council, where it is

deemed necessary for a decoration allowance to be issued, for example, following the installation of a new heating system.

5.4 For the purpose of awarding any allowance, extensive damage may mean partially stripped rooms, badly torn wallpaper that would prove unacceptable to live with, walls poorly painted where extensive work is required to correct, and so on.

5.5 A decoration allowance will not be awarded:

- where the existing tenant has caused damage or neglected the interior decoration of the property. Moray Council's [Rechargeable Repairs Policy](#) will apply in these circumstances;
- to change the interior decoration of a property because it is not the incoming tenant's personal taste (unless the decoration is a dark or strong colour that would prove costly to change, for example black);
- to act as payment after an incident a tenant should have been insured for;
- where a new tenancy is beginning as a result of a mutual exchange; or
- for a room where the Council, or its contractor, has completed decoration.

6. Decoration allowance for a new tenancy

6.1 [The Void Management Policy \(Section 7\)](#), refers to the letting standards and states that, with regard to decoration purposes:

- the property will be in a clean condition;
- paint packs will be assigned to all voids with the exception of those that have already been decorated; and
- internal doors, walls, skirtings and facings will be in an acceptable condition for decorating.

6.2 [Section 8 of the Void Management Policy](#) states that a post termination inspection will be completed on all voids. This inspection will assess the decorative standard of the property and review the level of paint pack to be granted to the new tenant.

6.3 [Section 12 of the Void Management Policy](#) confirms that only basic preparation work, and no decoration, will be carried out on void properties with paint packs being issued on a room by room basis.

6.4 Tenants being awarded decoration allowances will be sent their vouchers by email or post following their sign up, if it is a new tenancy. They will also be given a Johnstones decoration booklet with information on how to order their decoration packs and the conditions attached to their use.

7. Assistance to decorate

7.1 Where a tenant indicates that they will have difficulty carrying out decoration works themselves because of any particular needs, age, mobility or vulnerabilities, the Moray Council will provide a decoration service. Tenants who qualify for, and would like to use the service, can request it through their Area Housing Officer. This is usually identified during the viewing process. All sheltered housing properties where decoration is required will be decorated before the tenant moves in.

7.2 The Council's decoration service will:

- be available as an alternative to any decoration pack,
- only be available for the rooms which have been previously identified as requiring a decoration allowance during a void inspection ([Void Management Policy, Section 12](#));
- take the form of the application of emulsion paint from a limited choice of colours to walls, and white gloss paint to skirtings, fascias, doors and so on. The Council will not apply tenant's own wallcoverings and will not lay floor coverings.

7.3 To qualify for the decoration service the tenant(s) must:

- have difficulty carrying out decoration work themselves due to any particular need, age, mobility or vulnerability; and
- be in receipt of benefits such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Adult Disability Payment (ADP), Employment and Support Allowance, or Attendance Allowance; or
- be in receipt of other similar benefits paid to persons with physical impairments. Tenants will be required to verify receipt of benefits by showing their Award Letter, payment book and so on; or
- have special, social or medical reasons to have the decoration work undertaken by the Council. Moray Council will use its discretion to establish eligibility based on individual circumstances. Further information sharing may be required with NHS staff, Social Work and/or the Housing Support Team or any other appropriate professional. This may not be required where evidence is clearly visible; and
- have no adult member of the household, or other family members, who could reasonably be expected to carry out the work on the tenant's behalf. The Council will use its discretion to establish eligibility on this ground.

7.4 Tenants who qualify for the decoration service will be required to:

- agree that their tenancy will begin on the same date as it would have if they were receiving the decoration pack;
- give the Council, and/or their approved contractor, access to the property to carry out the decoration works;
- move personal possessions, as far as possible, especially ornaments, and other fragile or valuable items in preparation for the decoration works.

8. Decoration allowances following repair work

8.1 Moray Council may award a decoration allowance following response repair work carried out by the Council where the interior decoration has been damaged.

8.2 Where the damage is as a result of the neglect of an employee of the Council, or its contractor, then this matter will be dealt with on an individual basis through the [Complaints Procedure](#).

8.3 Once the repair work has been completed and the area housing officer has been informed of any damage to the decoration, an area housing officer will carry out an inspection to assess the property for a decoration allowance entitlement.

9. Compensation payments following planned maintenance or improvement works

9.1 Compensation payments will be based on average trade prices and index linked to increase annually in line with inflation. Full details of decoration allowance rates are detailed in the internal operational Decoration Allowance Procedures for staff and will be updated annually.

9.2 Following a kitchen upgrade:

- the kitchen will be painted by the Council, or approved contractor, with emulsion paint from a limited choice of colours, with white gloss paint to skirtings, fascias, doors and so on.
- a flooring allowance will be given. Rates will be detailed in the internal operational Decoration Allowance Procedures for staff and will be updated annually.

9.3 Following heating upgrades tenants will be provided with a compensation payment to compensate for any remedial work/decoration required.

9.4 Allowances for compensating tenants following planned maintenance or improvement works will be paid following the completion of the work by an automated payment into the tenant's bank account.

10. Use of decoration vouchers

10.1 Decoration vouchers for decoration packs will be valid for six months. The area housing manager has discretion to extend this time period, or re-issue another

voucher to replace the original voucher where the situation warrants it. Examples would include a family bereavement or prolonged illness.

- 10.2 Decoration vouchers can only be used with the nominated approved retailer, Johnstone's Trade Decorating Centre, and cannot be exchanged for cash or any other products. Tenants will be given a Johnstone's decoration booklet with information on how to order their decoration packs and the conditions attached to their use.
- 10.3 The Council will only reimburse retailers when their invoice is accompanied by 'spent' vouchers.
- 10.4 If, during a property inspection, the decoration of the property is unchanged or the tenant is unable to demonstrate that they have purchased decoration materials, either through the presence of the materials themselves or the receipts for the materials, the area housing officer may, with the authority of their area housing manager, recharge the tenant for some or all of the value of the decoration and flooring allowance.

11. Lost or stolen vouchers

- 11.1 Any lost, damaged or expired vouchers issued to the tenant for a decoration pack, will only be replaced at the discretion of the area housing manager following appropriate enquiries.

12. Review of decoration allowances

- 12.1 An annual update of all decoration/allowance rates will be carried out each year in line with inflation.

13. Review of decision and complaints

- 13.1 Any tenant who is not satisfied with the manner in which the Council, its contractor(s) or the approved retailer, has dealt with any aspect of the service they have received regarding decoration and / or flooring allowances has the right to have their case investigated.
- 13.2 In the first instance the tenant will write to the area housing manager stating their grievance. The area housing manager will investigate and respond in writing within 14 days of receipt of the request for the review.
- 13.3 If the tenant is not satisfied with the area housing manager's response, the area housing manager will refer the tenant to the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

14. Performance Monitoring

- 14.1 In order to comply with its service commitments, the Council will monitor the following:
- the number of tenants who received a paint pack when their tenancy began;
 - the costs involved in the issue of paint packs;
 - complaints or comments made around decoration / decoration packs during tenancy settling in visits. The comments and complaints are not reported and are few in number.
- 14.2 The supplier, (Johnstones), informs the Council when deliveries of paint packs are not made, with packs delivered to Council offices after two unsuccessful delivery attempts to the tenant(s).
- 14.3 Paint pack statements are received which show if paint packs have not been redeemed. This allows for monitoring of the service.
- 14.4 This policy will be reviewed in 2026.