

Decant Policy

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1. Introduction

As a landlord, Reading Borough Council is obliged, under the terms of the tenancy agreement, to keep the structure and exterior of its properties in good repair. If the property requires major refurbishment or repairs, a decant will be required. A decant involves a *temporary* move from a permanent property to an alternative property. There will be no change to a tenant's security of tenure in the instance of a decant.

A refurbishment may be required for a variety of reasons, for instance, when the property has been:

- Damaged as a result of fire or flood, making the property unfit for the tenant to occupy until the repairs have been carried out – this would be an "emergency decant".
- Rendered uninhabitable due to environmental reasons, for example in instances of, a very severe infestation requiring the property be vacant before treatment can take place. The severity would be assessed on a case-by-case basis and subject to the pest controller's recommendation.
- Subject to an ongoing problem, such as subsidence or persistent and major damp and mould; the specification for works may recommend that the property be empty for a period of time.
- Deemed as a risk to the health and safety of occupant(s), and it is not practicable to undertake work with the occupant in situ.

If tenants are required to move, we aim for all tenants to be offered a suitable property for their needs.

Where an individual has particular needs and their existing home has been specially adapted, we will ensure that accommodation is provided with similar adaptations.

Tenants who live in properties larger than their housing needs require, may be temporarily placed into a smaller property that is considered suitable, in line with our Housing Allocations policy.

If an emergency decant is required, we may need to place tenants in temporary accommodation. This may not be of the same suitability as the permanent property they are decanted from. It may also be the case that the tenant opts to stay with family or friends as an alternative short-term arrangement.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out the approach Reading Borough Council will follow when a tenant or resident needs to be temporarily or permanently relocated (decanted) from their home due to major repairs, redevelopment, or other circumstances requiring vacant possession.

3. Scope

The Decant Policy applies to all occupants of properties managed by Reading Borough Council. It aims to minimise disruption to residents who are required to move out of their homes on a temporary or permanent basis, whilst balancing cost effectiveness and financial responsibility of the Council.

The position with leaseholders will be determined on a case-by-case basis. In such cases we will carefully review the lease conditions to ensure that all actions are taken in accordance with the lease agreement.

4. Compliance

Reading Borough Council will ensure that all decanting procedures comply fully with relevant legislation and regulation, including:

- The Land Compensation Act 1973
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- The Housing Act 1985, 1988 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 inc. Awaab's Law
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Decent Homes Standard 2006

The policy should also be considered alongside:

- The Tenancy Agreement
- Damp and Mould Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Housing and Estate Management Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Allocations Scheme 2026
- Tenants Accessibility and Vulnerability Policy
- RBC Residential housing leases

5. Responsibilities

Reading Borough Council's responsibilities include the following:

- Notify tenants promptly and clearly when there is a need to decant and the reasons behind it.
- Provide suitable alternative accommodation that, as far as reasonably possible, meets the household's needs.
- Offer the tenant(s) a Decant Agreement if they are temporarily decanted into another council property. This will be subject to the same terms and conditions as their existing tenancy.
- Offer ongoing support and advice throughout the decant process.
- Cover reasonable costs relating to the decant, such as moving expenses, storage costs, reconnection costs etc.
- Have due regard to requirements under the Land Compensation Act 1973 (Home Loss Payments) in the event the property is due to be demolished.
- Ensure the tenant is informed about the costs for which they are responsible, which includes rent and rechargeable costs for their main residence or temporary accommodation. This also includes utility payments such as gas, electricity, internet, and phone bills.
- Ensure that all decant actions comply with legal obligations and policy requirements.
- Liaise with relevant support agencies for vulnerable tenants.
- Keep tenants informed of timescales for the work being carried out and notify them of any delays.
- Keep clear and accurate records of all contact notes, calls and meetings with the tenant concerning the decant and any queries arising from the decant or the decant process.
- Before a tenant returns to their main residence, carry out a thorough inspection / health and safety check to ensure the property is fit for habitation. Any snagging issues will be communicated to the tenant, along with a clear plan of action and timelines for resolution.
- Facilitate a smooth return to the original, or a suitable alternative, property when works are complete.
- Determine whether there are any exceptional circumstances that deem it appropriate for the tenant to stay at the decanted property on a permanent basis. This will only be possible if the temporary property can be let on the same tenancy type as a tenant's current tenancy, meets the tenant's assessed bedroom and household need, and complies with the council's published Allocations Scheme.
- Take appropriate legal action if the tenant refuses to move on (from either the permanent or temporary property).

Tenants' responsibilities include the following:

- Engage positively with council officers and attend meetings or appointments regarding the move.
- Provide timely and accurate information about household needs and circumstances to assist in finding suitable accommodation.
- Maintain the condition of the temporary accommodation during the decant period.
- Return the keys promptly at the agreed time of departure.
- Notify the council promptly of any changes in household composition or circumstances.
- Cooperate with all reasonable requests from the council relating to the decant process.
- Return the original property in a reasonable condition if moving permanently.
- Make arrangements for post to be redirected. If the temporary move is not in a hotel or serviced apartment, the tenant must make arrangements to have utilities to be switched on and billed to them at their temporary property.

6. Health and Safety

This policy is designed to help keep tenants safe and minimise health and safety risks. Where there are health and safety risks in a permanent home that cannot be safely managed, we will take steps to move residents into suitable temporary accommodation that is safe to occupy for an agreed period.

Our priority is always to reduce risk and ensure residents are supported in a safe and appropriate way, in line with our duties as a landlord.

7. Communication

Effective communication is essential to managing tenancy breaches and maintaining good relationships between tenants and Reading Borough Council as the landlord.

Reading Borough Council commits to:

- **Clear Information:** Providing tenants with accessible information about their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement, and how to report concerns.
- **Responsive Contact:** Acknowledging complaints regarding tenancy breaches promptly and keeping complainants informed of the progress and outcomes of investigations.
- **Neutral and Respectful Dialogue:** Ensuring all communications with tenants are handled impartially, respectfully, and confidentially.
- **Engagement:** Encouraging open dialogue and, where appropriate, facilitating mediation between parties to resolve any disputes amicably.

- **Staff Communication:** Ensuring all staff involved in tenancy management are kept informed of procedures and updates to policy.
- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Communicating effectively with internal and external agencies such as Environmental Health, the police, and social services when their involvement is required.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Providing tenants with opportunities to influence and give feedback on how their tenancies are managed to support continuous service improvement.

This policy is accessible to all tenants including lessee's, as well as Reading Borough Council (RBC) staff, and stakeholders via the Reading Borough Council website and will be updated to reflect any changes. [Accessible Information and Communications Policy - Reading Borough Council](#).

Internally, this policy will be available to all staff and stored on the Reading Borough Council SharePoint site for easy access.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring equal and fair access to our services by considering the individual needs of our tenants, their families, and other members of their household. Whilst working with tenants we will consider these needs and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. We will always treat people with fairness, dignity, and respect.

This policy will be implemented in a way that:

- **Treats all tenants fairly and without discrimination** on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- **Recognises and respects the diverse needs** of tenants, ensuring communication and support are accessible to everyone, including those with language barriers, disabilities, or other vulnerabilities.
- **Ensures reasonable adjustments** are made to accommodate tenants with specific needs or disabilities in relation to tenancy breach investigations and interventions.
- **Provides equal access** to complaint reporting mechanisms and support services for all tenants.
- **Promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity** among housing management staff to support positive and respectful interactions.
- **Monitors and reviews** the policy's impact on different tenant groups to ensure it does not disproportionately affect any particular community.

All our staff are regularly trained in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion to help them understand when and where we may need to adapt our standard policies, procedures, and working practices to accommodate the unique needs of our residents.

Our policies sets out how we seek to meet the specific needs of vulnerable residents, ensuring they receive the appropriate support and adjustments that they need to sustain their tenancies.

9. Reasonable Adjustments

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all tenants, including those with disabilities or specific needs, can fully access and benefit from this policy.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Identify and respond to individual needs** by offering reasonable adjustments in communication, investigation, and resolution of tenancy breaches.
- **Provide information in accessible formats** such as Braille, audio, or translated versions, depending on tenant requirements.
- **Offer alternative methods of communication**, including email, text message, or face-to-face meetings, to suit the preferences and needs of tenants.
- **Adjust appointment times or locations** to accommodate tenants with mobility, health, or caregiving needs.
- **Work closely with support workers, advocates, or family members** where tenants require this assistance to facilitate a move.
- Ensure appropriate sensitivity and tailored support when dealing with tenants with **health conditions or disabilities**.
- **Train staff** to recognise and respond appropriately to requests for reasonable adjustments in relation to tenancy management issues.

10. Complaints

Reading Borough Council is committed to handling complaints fairly, promptly, and effectively. We use complaints, comments, and compliments, to help us review and improve our services.

If a tenant has a complaint about this Decant Policy, this can be raised through the Council's Complaints Procedure. Further information, including how to make a complaint, is available via the Council's complaints process, linked below.

11. Implementation and review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or when there are changes to best practice or statutory requirements, to ensure the policy achieves its objectives and continuously improve services and performance.

It is the responsibility of the Housing and Estate Manager to ensure that implementation of the Decant Policy is monitored. All staff involved in these matters has the responsibility to read, understand and implement this policy.