



## Decant Policy

### Introduction

This policy outlines the circumstances when Irwell Valley Homes (IVH) may need to move customers out of their homes either temporarily or permanently and how this will be managed. The process of moving the customer out is known as a 'Decant'.

The policy applies to all customers who rent a property from IVH. Leaseholders and Shared Owners are excluded from this Policy.

The Decant policy will apply when:

- A property needs major work which will significantly impact the customer's ability to live safely within their home while the works take place.
- When we need to decant a customer in an emergency for their own health and safety. For example - due to a flood, or fire.
- When IVH need to demolish or sell the property in-line with our effective Asset Management Strategy.

### Policy

#### 1. Policy

Whilst there is a need for different teams to work effectively together, the decant process is managed by the Neighbourhoods team and the Independent and Community Living Team.

- A Neighbourhood Officer (NO) will be assigned to lead on the decant for general needs customers.
- An Independent Living Manager will be assigned to lead on the decant for customers living in sheltered accommodation.
- A Supported Housing Manager will be assigned to lead on the decant for people living in Supported Housing.

The lead will contact the customer to discuss the requirements of the decant and the reasons for this. This will include:

- Whether the move is temporary or permanent.
- Whether the customer will be moved to a hotel or another IVH property.
- The nature and approximate timescales of all works required at the property.

## 2. Policy Principles

We will follow these principles when considering and managing a decant.

- We will work with customers to try and avoid a decant, and wherever possible, will make every effort to keep customers in their home, providing it remains safe to do so.
- We will secure alternative accommodation for named tenants and all the authorised occupants of a household.
- In most cases, the decant arrangement will be temporary, however, sometimes a permanent move may be necessary or offered to the customer in line with their own personal needs.
- If customers would prefer to stay with family and friends for the duration of the decant period, we will support them in doing so.
- We will ensure decants are managed effectively with minimal disruption and distress for customers.
- We will ensure that good information, frequent communication and support is provided to make the move and re-settlement processes go as smoothly as possible. Maintaining a positive relationship with the customer.
- We will aim to get the customer back to their home at the earliest opportunity where applicable.
- We will be flexible, especially where customers are identified as needing extra support.
- We will ensure customers are not financially disadvantaged by the decant and will consider arrangements and support to ensure this happens.
- We will make reasonable and prompt payments to customers who are moved. We will be fair in calculating the amounts to be paid to customers if not determined by statute, for the loss or costs incurred.
- We will ensure colleagues involved in the decant process are adequately supported.
- We will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements.
- We will take legal action in instances where a customer refuses to move from their permanent home, or where a customer refuses to move back to their permanent home from temporary accommodation.

## 3. Types of Decant

3.1 **Emergency/Unplanned Decant** – where IVH deem the property to be uninhabitable due to damage caused by an unplanned event or incident such as:

- Fire, flood or severe leak.
- A severe infestation that may seriously affect health.
- Severe damp and mould.
- Loss of power which cannot be rectified as an emergency repair.

- Loss of heating where this cannot be fixed in a reasonable time (within emergency repair timescales), and no temporary solution is available to provide portable heating appliances.
- A drainage or plumbing problem where W/C facilities are unusable and cannot be rectified as an emergency repair.

3.1.1 A timescale of works will be given at the earliest opportunity.

3.1.2 The lead will guide the customer through the process in line with our policy and discuss expectations to ensure the customer is aware of what our role is and what is expected of the customer. The lead will also discuss the individual needs of the customer and how they may be impacted but the move and any support that may be required.

3.1.3 The Lead will inform the customer of all options available to them depending on the nature of the decant purpose.

3.1.4 Depending on the nature of the decant, customers will either be offered hotel accommodation, or an alternative IVH property on a temporary basis. This will depend on the length of time the decant will be required and on a case-by-case basis. Where customers can and wish to reside with family and/or friends we will support them to.

3.1.5 In the event an alternative IVH property is required for the duration of the decant, the customer will remain the tenant of the original property. The temporary property will be let on a Licence to Occupy (Decant Licence) which will be signed by the customer.

3.1.6 Customers temporarily re-housed in another Irwell Valley Home will continue to pay rent on their permanent property and Irwell Valley Homes will pay for costs connected with living at the temporary property such as gas and electricity, telephone and water charges where applicable.

3.1.7 Where hotel accommodation is provided in an urgent/emergency, shorter term situation, customers will continue to pay rent on their existing property as per the tenancy agreement and Irwell Valley Homes will pay for the hotel accommodation.

3.1.8 Where a customer is move into a hotel, we will endeavour to book bed and breakfast where possible. Where there are no facilities to eat at the hotel or the customer wishes to purchase food themselves, this cost can be reimbursed (receipts to be provided). Where necessary, payment of the daily meal allowance can be paid up front with customers providing receipts for the duration of the decant period. Costs should be reasonable and must not exceed the daily allowance (see Decant Procedure).

3.1.9 Customers will be required to return to their main home as soon as works are completed.

3.2 **Planned Decant** – when we need to arrange temporary rehousing in situations where there is no immediate emergency, but Irwell Valley Homes needs to carry out work to the property and it is deemed that it is not safe for the works to be carried out whilst the customer is still living at the property. This includes:

- Major structural repairs
- Asbestos works (removal where access restrictions cannot be otherwise accommodated)

- Damp and Mould treatments or repairs to multiple rooms in the house.
- Plastering work to multiple rooms in the house.
- Electrical work requiring the power to be off longer than 24 hours.
- External repairs/upgrades – roofing replacement
- An accumulation of many smaller repairs which are scheduled to take place in one go, affecting multiple rooms and spaces in the home.

3.2.1 Unlike an emergency decant, with planned decants, we have more time to find accommodation. In the first instance, we will check if customers are able to stay with family or friends. Where this is not an option, we will look for a similar IVH property in the local area. If none are available, we will consider other options such as hotels or Air BNBs.

3.2.2 Permanent rehousing is only considered in exceptional circumstances. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Where work to a property is going to be of a substantial nature and is likely to take a considerable amount of time, IVH may work with the customer to make the decant permanent. Where this is an option, the customer may be eligible for Home loss and disturbance payments – refer to compensation policy.

3.2.3 We will do everything we can to ensure that a suitable offer of alternative accommodation is made to decanting customers, but we are restricted in the supply of properties available.

3.3 **Demolition of Property** – In some situations, i.e. where major redevelopment works are being undertaken, a property may need to be demolished or significantly changed, and a decant will be required on a permanent basis. This is so the customer only needs to move once to minimise disruption.

3.3.1 The lead will assess the customer's needs as early as possible to help to identify suitable alternative accommodation. We will offer alternative accommodation on a like for like basis so that customers are not penalised because we require them to move.

3.3.2 In such cases, the customer may be able to claim a Home Loss and Disturbance payment – see Compensation Policy.

3.3.4 Where permanent rehousing is required, we will offer customers the same tenancy type and the same security of tenure unless the customer chooses to move to a property let at an affordable rent.

3.4 **Social Need** – in some situations where a customer is facing extreme social needs, for example Domestic Abuse or Violence or the victim of crime a temporary or permanent decant may be required.

3.4.1 In such circumstances, we will follow our Domestic Abuse Policy to ensure customers experiencing domestic abuse are offered sensitive and confidential treatment in discussing rehousing options.

3.4.2 We will work with the Local Authority (LA) and other partners, to determine if any safe accommodation is available that our customer can reside in whilst the case is being managed. We will also ask customers if family or friends are able to offer them a safe place to stay where this may be appropriate.

- 3.4.3 If we need to move a customer, and there are no other safe, alternative options, such as with family, friends, or accommodation via the LA, we will look to offer hotel accommodation for a short-term solution.
- 3.4.4 We recognise that this will be a distressing and upsetting time for customers and therefore, we will work with them to try and avoid a decant if possible and work with partners to provide any necessary support.

#### 4. Customer Care

- 4.1 We will take into consideration a customer's housing need, support needs, views and individual characteristics, including any protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act when identifying suitable alternative accommodation. Any reasonable adjustments or support needed to ensure the person can live safely in the accommodation provided will be made.
- 4.2 Where we can, and there is a choice, we will discuss rehousing options and preferences to enable us to find a solution that best meets the customers' needs.
- 4.3 We will endeavour to find suitable accommodation as near to the customers' current home as possible. We will also take into consideration the location of workplaces, children's schools etc. Such factors will be balanced against the availability of alternative properties, the requirement for the move to take place and the need to achieve value for money.
- 4.4 The lead allocated to the decant will be the point of contact for customers throughout the process so they know who to contact should any queries arise. General support and advice will be given throughout the process, together with updates on progress of works, and any other relevant timescales. This will allow for return moves to be planned with notice factored in where applicable.

### Performance Reporting

This policy will be effective from September 2024.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or when changes in regulation, legislation and IVH good practice require them to be updated.

This policy's effectiveness will be measured using the performance indicator of customer feedback and complaints.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director (Customers) is responsible for the overall effective implementation of this policy.

The Head of Customers and Communities is the author of the policy and responsible for managing the decant budget.

The Neighbourhood Managers and Support Housing Managers are responsible for overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.

The Lead Neighbourhood Officers, Neighbourhood Officers, and Supported Housing colleagues are responsible the administration and application of the policy and procedure.

#### Associated Documents and Good Practice

- Planned and Unplanned Decant Procedures
- Complaints Policy and procedure
- Compensation Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- ASB Policy
- Disaster Recovery Plan/Procedure
- Equality Act 2010
- Tenancy Policy
- Damp & Mould Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Alterations & Improvements Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Development Strategy
- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Act 1988/1985

#### Version Control

<b>Approval Date:</b>	August 2024
<b>Approval Body</b>	Executive Director (Customers)
<b>Implementation Date:</b>	August 2024
<b>Policy Authors:</b>	Ross Powell- Head of Customer and Communities
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Ceris Esplen – Executive Director (Customers)
<b>Frequency of Review</b>	Every 3 years
<b>Planned Review Date</b>	July 2027
<b>EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) Date and Link to EIA</b>	July 2024
<b>Safeguarding Impact</b>	N/A
<b>Lead Team</b>	Neighbourhoods Team

**The latest version of this policy should be viewed online from The Hub area of the IVH intranet. Any printed version cannot be relied on as the most current version**