

Decant Policy Review Resident Involvement Report

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Report Purpose

The Head of Property and Estate Management has recently reviewed the Decant Policy, specifically Section 3 of the policy have been reviewed and refreshed based on research undertaken of other Registered Providers Policies.

Consultation Themes

The consultation theme was to involve residents who had expressed an interest in reviewing groupwide policies, procedures or strategies. Residents were asked to comment on whether section 3 was clear and understandable, the decision-making process for authorising a temporary move and anything that could be included to enhance the policy.

Consultation Methodology.

This report sets out the findings of the review undertaken by residents. Residents were given a variety of ways to respond to the review:

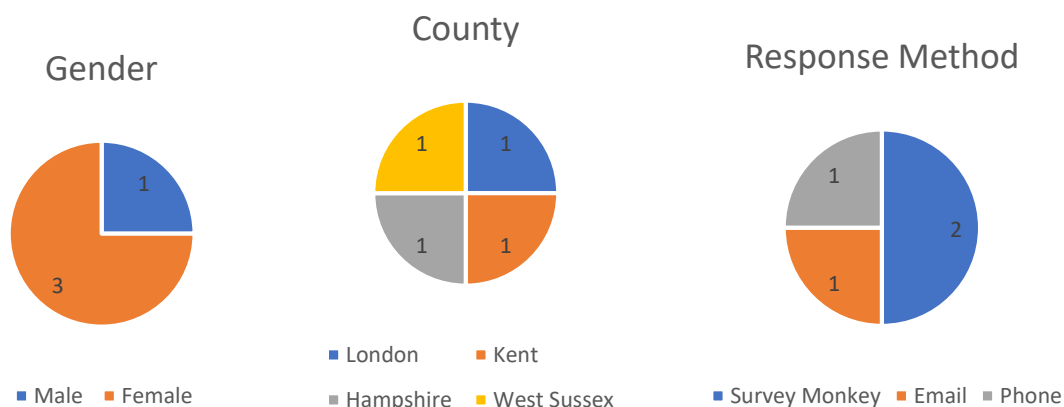
1. By a feedback form attached to an email for residents' comments.
2. By talking to relevant Customer Involvement Officer over the telephone.
3. By using the survey monkey link to complete a survey.

The Customer Involvement Team was responsible for the design, co-ordination and delivery of the review and report findings to the Head of Property and Estate Management.

In line with standard research practice, and due to the numbers of residents involved, the findings of this review group cannot be viewed as providing representative feedback on the views of all the Group's residents. These results do provide an insight into the views and opinions of residents.

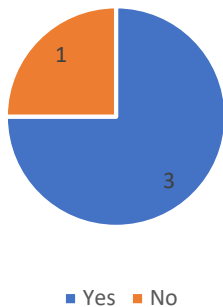
Respondent profile

73 residents were invited to participate with 4 responding.



Consultation findings

Question 1 - Section 3 – Emergency Decants. Is this section clear and easy to understand?



Please tell us why you gave the document this score including what could be changed or improved?

- Content is clearly explained and easy to understand
- Because I clearly understood it
- I feel you (SHG) could make it clear that the Decant will be local and if not, how far away it can be. Come people have work and they may not drive so this only means is public transport. Also, if they need to visit the benefit office. People do not like change, what assurance can SHG give once the work is done the residents they know will be back in the same place. (not the bad one)
- Have put no because 3.7 should make it clearer as to where else would be an option for housing needs whether it's B&B, hotel, council etc. 3.8 the word discharge needs to be replaced with simpler language, will you enforce them being removed from temp accommodation or will you not pay or accommodate further if they misbehave? It's not clear in my view

Question 2 - The policy sets out how Southern Housing Group will establish a decision on assessing and authorising a temporary move for emergency decant. Do you feel this is clearly explained in the policy?

All responded 'Yes' with the following comments:

- Reasons for decision explained
- The line at 3.6 I was wondering what might happen if a family member wanted to help but could not due to financial reasons e.g. electric, gas bills etc. then would the group be able to help financially? A family member might feel obliged to help but realistically not be able to and accept under duress, leaving themselves in a hard position later on. Would the Group offer some money to help such a family?
- Have put yes as it does say like for like property with taking into account location, special circumstances. This should cover being near job, adaptations in home, as well as health etc and have chance to appeal etc
- SHG Could go a bit more on this. SHG have to take into the policy that some people cannot read. Will there be a face to face meeting of the residents as you know the ones that can read will twist things their way.

Question 3 - Thinking about the resident's journey during an emergency decant, are there any aspects we could add to enhance the policy?

1 resident responded 'No' as they couldn't think of anything to add. Other comments were:



- If I was being emergency decanted then I would like to have a phone number I can call and speak directly to someone involved in the decanting process, rather than main switchboard. That person or team of people would be able to make available funds for emergency situations that may somehow arise. I would also appreciate a handbook or something with all the relevant information that I could keep with me. That perhaps had some guidelines and helpful information I would also want reassurances that any of my possessions would be safe and that only the necessary staff from the group would be able to enter my decanted property and that those staff were trusted, or DBS checked etc.
- Appreciate consultation and regular contact etc (if this is kept to as many policies say regular contact, but this never happens) but some aspects would be a worry, what do you class as reasonable choice of accommodation, this is very open to interpretation. If you feel property is overcrowded or under occupation could they lose their home? Or do you mean if one person is in a 2-bed property it's reasonable to move them temporarily to a 1 bed property? That section isn't clear and could be improved. Also, payments are not great and opens up concerns. Temp moves don't get an inconvenience payment, so residents pay for property they have had to vacate temporarily and go to designated property without mod cons, home comforts, this warrants an inconvenience allowance/payment. Also, it could be temp property is further away from work, more travel, etc would extra costs be paid for. Will temp property have furniture etc would you reimburse moving some of their items to the new property? Can your current property stay as is or would things need to be removed? At no point should it cost the tenant more money during the temp move (already paying for the home they vacated) and they shouldn't have to stress about it.
- See comment in question 1 bullet point 4 about decant locally.

Question 4 – Any other comments?

- I am curious as to what happens when you go to decant a property that has perhaps 2 occupants registered but actually the family perhaps has a brother or aunt staying with them temporarily for some reason. Of course, the person is in the wrong for having more people than the agreement, but it could make someone homeless. It could also make the resident have to sneak their family or friend into their new accommodation and break rules there. I imagine it could be a tricky situation if a person relying on a friend's sofa was forced onto the streets. How would SHG handle a situation like this?
- 1. Concerned it says home loss payment goes to permanent loss only so temp loss only get cost of staying elsewhere, no inconvenience payment? They pay rent for property whilst not there, miss out on all home comforts, etc just to get temporary housing? That's not right.
 2. Reasonable? What is classed as reasonable it's very open to interpretation.
 3. It's mentioned in accordance with group lettings & allocations policy on like for like basis would be good to have a link to information on this.
 4. Complaints policy- would be good to give a link to this.
 5. The tenant will continue to pay rent for vacated property and although temp accommodation would be paid, they are giving up their home comforts etc so should get an inconvenience payment. Also, there is a chance of extra cost to the tenant if further away

from job for example i.e. extra travel, food costs-have stocked up freezer at home and can't use any of it etc. At no point should the tenant pay more for being in temp accommodation, all expenses should be paid-and made clear. Even if you request receipts to get reimbursement.

Recommendations

These recommendations have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data:

Recommendation 1 – Consider making suggested changes or give greater clarity on the following:

- Make it clearer on what the alternative housing options might be and what 'local' means
- Consider alternative word to 'discharge'
- How residents can receive financial support
- How staff will communicate specific to residents needs i.e. alternative format either written or verbal
- Dedicated member of staff to support resident during this time
- Hand book or guidance for resident
- Include link to lettings and complaints information

Update from Project Lead

Below sets out how each area of the recommendation will be addressed or an explanation as to why if it isn't being taken up.

Recommendation 1 – Consider making suggested changes or give greater clarity on the following:

- Make it clearer on what the alternative housing options might be and what 'local' means.
We have referenced some examples of accommodation. We cannot expand on "local" as this will be case by case basis and priority will be Health & Safety and the need to get works undertaken
- Consider alternative word to 'discharge'
Having considered this further we are not proposing any amendments. We need an overarching statement that enables us to make decisions based on the circumstances on a case by case basis
- How residents can receive financial support
As a policy it commits to compensation and have added in reference to permanent and temporary to make it clear. How the system of this works can be explained at the time and referred to in procedure.

- How staff will communicate specific to residents needs i.e. alternative format either written or verbal
The related policies section have been added and also included the suggested policies
- Dedicated member of staff to support resident during this time
I do not think it is realistic or helpful to make broad commitments on this, how we communicate with the affected residents will be agreed at the time
- Hand book or guidance for resident
Whist it is agreed that a more detailed guidance document might be helpful for residents and staff this is too much detail for a policy. When SHG are establishing the procedures, we can re-consider what supporting documents we may need to review/produce
- Include link to lettings and complaints information
Added to related policies section

This policy will be updated and will go through our internal approval process which should be completed by beginning of May 2021. Once final approval is given any procedures or other related document will need to be reviewed and updated including informing relevant teams of the changes. The policy should 'go live' by June / July 2021.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback on the proposed changes to enable us to ensure it meets residents' expectations.