

# Policy

**Title: Rechargeable Repairs**

**Date of Issue: December 2008**

**Issue Number: 2**

**Date of Next review: December 2010**

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**Service Area applies to: Repairs, Finance, Call centre, & Income Recovery.**

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**Electronic Storage:**

Translations available on request. Freephone 0800 169 2407

অনুবন্ধ সাপেক্ষে অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা করা হয়। ফ্রী ফোন নাম্বার ০৮০০১৬৯ ২৪০৭

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**December 2008**

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## Introduction

Calico Housing Ltd is committed to providing a cost effective, efficient repairs and maintenance service whilst meeting all its legal and contractual obligations as a Registered Social Landlord.

In the recent Call Centre and Repairs Audit one of the recommendations is to ensure that any repair completed day to day or through the voids process that can be attributed to the responsibility of the tenant should be recharged as appropriate.

By introducing this policy, we aim to define a clear standard by which staff can identify a rechargeable repair, apply our policy clearly, consistently and fairly with customers and adopt a proactive approach with customers in advising them of their responsibilities as tenants.

## Aims / Objectives

The aim of this policy is to promote a responsible attitude by tenants towards their property by ensuring that costs are pursued from those who are negligent or deliberately cause damage.

The objectives of the Recharge Policy are:

- To recover the cost of rechargeable repairs from current and former tenants.
- To maximise income by the recovery of debts owed relating to rechargeable repairs and thus demonstrate value for money within the Repairs Service.
- To promote an equitable service by ensuring that tenants who incur charges are held responsible.

## Performance Measures

The following performance indicators will help us monitor this policy:

- ✓ A percentage of debt recovery on all rechargeable repairs.
- ✓ Total costs of all Rechargeable Repairs raised
- ✓ Regular reporting detailing costs versus amount recovered

## Scope

### Definition of a Rechargeable Repair

Rechargeable repairs are repairs that are caused by damage to fixtures and fittings internally or externally by a tenant, a member of the tenant's household or any visitor to the tenant's property that cannot be attributed to normal wear and tear through the duration of their tenancy

### Rechargeable Repairs Categories

- **Tenants Obligations** - under the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement pg 13 section 2.11 to 2.23 the customer is responsible for certain items of repair. If

the customer fails to carry out one of these repairs, a recharge will apply although the customer should first be given the opportunity to rectify the situation.

- **Unauthorised Alterations** - under Section 97 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended), tenants must seek the Landlord's Consent before undertaking any alterations to the property. Calico Housing Ltd may attach reasonable conditions before granting permission. Where customers have carried out unauthorised repairs and unless there is an immediate Health and Safety Risk, they should be given 28 days to rectify the faults or reinstate to its original condition.

A customer can apply for retrospective authorisation which will normally be granted providing the work complies with any regulatory requirements and has been carried out by a competent tradesperson.

Where Calico Housing Ltd has granted permission for alterations, it will reserve the right to make good the work or reinstate the property to its previous condition and recharge the tenant accordingly.

- **Deliberate damage or damage due to neglect** – where damage has occurred as a result of deliberate abuse or wilful negligence by the tenant, their family or visitors, the necessary repair work will be rechargeable. If the customer wishes to undertake the remedial work themselves, they will be given 28 days to do so.

Calico Housing Ltd will inspect any work carried out by the customer to ensure it complies with our current standards. Where it fails to meet our current guidelines then Calico Housing Ltd reserves the right to recharge for any remedial work required.

- **Void Properties, Transfers & Mutual Exchanges** - where unauthorised alterations or damage is identified during the inspection process, the tenant will be advised of the cost of reinstatement.

In the case of former tenants, the Income Recovery team will pursue the former tenant in line with the Rechargeable Repairs procedure for Income Collection. Failure to repay any outstanding monies will result in the recharge costs remaining on file and should they subsequently apply for a further tenancy, this must be repaid prior to being accepted for housing.

In the case of Transfers & Mutual Exchanges, the customer should be given the opportunity to rectify the faults or pay the costs of the remedial works. The Transfer or Mutual Exchange should not be granted until the costs have been paid.

- **Accidental Damage** - where accidental damage has occurred to fixtures and fittings, we will take into account the damage caused versus the lifespan of the product before reaching a decision on whether to recharge.
- **Damage caused by the Police following a lawful raid at the property** – where an arrest is made the cost of making good any damage (e.g. repair or replacement of external doors) will be recharged to the tenant.

Where no arrest is made, the repairs team will liaise with the local police for reimbursement of costs.

- **Work carried out by Calico Housing Ltd for which there is no legal or contractual responsibility** - this type of work will normally be requested by the tenant. Consideration should normally be given to elderly or vulnerable customers. Where the customer does not fall into this category the customer may be offered our Private Repairs Service.
- **Misuse of the Repairs Service** – where customers misuse the Out of Hours Service, the customer will be recharged the call out fee.

## **Vulnerable Tenants**

Consideration will be made due to the details surrounding the repair and includes repairs for elderly tenants where there are concerns for their general health.

If the Call centre agent, neighbourhood officer, ASB officer or repairs operative is unsure at any time as to whether a recharge should be made through issues such as Domestic Violence, vulnerabilities including mental health issues or our elderly customers then this should be referred in the first instance to their line Manager. If a decision cannot be decided upon at this level then the case will be referred to the relevant Head of Service.

If there is a likelihood that the repair will affect a tenants medical condition or general wellbeing, the repair should not be delayed to resolve any issues surrounding a repayment plan, however the customer will be informed of a pending decision that will be made.

## **Assessment of Rechargeable Repairs**

All requests for a repair that are considered rechargeable by the Call Centre & Repairs Teams will be discussed with the customer at the initial point of contact.

An acknowledgement letter with the estimated costs will be sent to the customer which they must sign and return prior to works being completed (unless other arrangements have been made with a relevant manager) and upon completion of the repair, the customer will be invoiced with the final amount.

## **Repayment Arrangements**

Upon completion of the repair, customers will be invoiced the full costs. The customer will be initially advised of the requirement to repay the outstanding debt with the option to discuss the matter under a payment plan agreement with the Income Recovery team.

Payment will be pursued in accordance with Calico Housing Ltd Financial Regulations and arrears procedures.

## **Complaints**

All complaints in relation to the raising and or pursuance of Rechargeable Repairs must be dealt with via the manager responsible. Due to the nature of the policy and the various departments which this Policy covers the following will apply.

- Void property Rechargeable Repairs – referral to the Voids Manager
- Rechargeable Repair raised by a member of the ASB team – referral to the ASB Manager
- Rechargeable Repair raised by a request from a customer (via call centre) or highlighted via other repairs being completed within a property – referral to the Responsive Repairs Manager.

Where a customer believes that they have been unreasonably recharged for a repair on their property, full details will be taken and passed to the relevant manager as detailed above for consideration.

## **Equality & Diversity**

In applying the Recharge Policy, we will ensure the equality of opportunity and treatment of all of its customers.

The Equality and Diversity Policy shall be applicable.

Should a customer request it, the information will be made available in large print, Braille, on tape or in other language formats.

## **Responsibility**

The Income Recovery manager will be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

However, all of Calico's Management and staff teams are responsible for the implementation and effective customer care with regards to recharges. This may include;

- Advising customers of a rechargeable repair and enforcing the policy.
- Appropriate Customer Involvement.
- Dealing with Customer Contacts.
- Dealing with balance queries.

## **Service Standards**

On requesting the repair an acknowledgement letter will be sent to customers within 3 working days detailing the estimated costs of the repair.

Upon completion of the rechargeable repair, the Repairs team will issues the Finance Team with the completed information and a completed Customer Invoice Request form where an invoice will be raised.

For void properties, transfers and mutual exchanges, the Neighbourhood Management Team will raise a list of rechargeable repairs and likely costing within 7 working days of the inspection taking place. Once the works have been completed the repairs team will promptly inform Finance to ensure an account is raised onto Open Accounts where an invoice will be raised.

Any complaints or appeals shall be dealt with in accordance with our Complaints Handling Policy and shall be recorded using the Contact System.

To collect a percentage of Rechargeable repairs collected (target to be agreed)

## **Consultation arrangements**

A range of tenants were consulted in respect of this policy. A survey was undertaken of customers who had accessed the repairs service, which was completed in 2 ways; on the telephone and face to face through inspection visits.

The survey undertook the views of 96% White British and 4% White Irish customers.

From the initial consultation which has formed this policy the customers highlighted that they wished to see the following points taken forward in its development:

- Customers need to be informed clearly of their responsibilities towards their tenancy.
- Customers had strong opinions on false call outs and rubbish removal.
- Our policy should indicate on what circumstances a customer may be recharged.
- Individual circumstances should be taken into account when setting repayment terms / period of repayment.

The following groups will be consulted, as appropriate, when any further amendments are made to this policy;

- Customers affected by any proposed changes
- Tenant & Resident Associations
- Customers who have contacted us via the customer contact system
- The Board of Management
- Calico Seniors Forum
- Calico Disability Forum
- Calico Staff Teams

## **Benchmark Analyses**

Our Benchmarking has been done through the Housemark Website Forum and via the Repairs and Maintenance Users Group. The following have assisted us by providing their Rechargeable Repairs Policy & Procedure:

- Accord Housing,
- Arches Housing,
- Havelok Housing Association,
- Oxford City Homes
- and Camden Council.

## **Regulatory or Legal Compliance**

Housing Corporation Regulatory Codes – 3.5.3  
Housing Act 1985 Section 97.

## **KLOE's affected and impact**

KLOE 2 – Asset Management  
KLOE 4 – Income Management  
KLOE 5 – Resident Involvement  
KLOE 30 – Access and Customer Care  
KLOE 31 – Equality & Diversity  
KLOE 32 – Value For Money

## **Associated Strategies and procedures**

Value For Money Strategy  
Customer Care Policy/Procedure  
Customer Contacts Policy/Procedure  
New Tenancy Procedures  
Involvement Strategy  
The Tenancy Agreement  
Leaseholder Rechargeable Repairs Policy  
Call Centre –Call Handling Procedures  
Vulnerability Policy  
Domestic Violence Policy