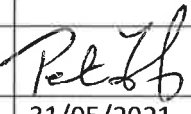




Rent Income Collection and Arrears Management Policy

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Separate procedures are available to implement this policy	

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Collecting rent for the homes that we let is our main source of income. Effective rent income collection and rent arrears management is essential so that Cill Dara HA can fulfil its contractual and legal obligations to our tenants and lenders. This includes being able to maintain and improve our current homes as well as expanding our portfolio of social homes.
- 1.2 As a responsible landlord, with a commitment to creating sustainable tenancies and avoiding legal action and evictions, it is important that we do not allow tenants to accrue debts in the form of unpaid rent.
- 1.3 This document gives Cill Dara HA's policy on the following areas:
- Arrears prevention, including pre-tenancy work
 - Current tenancy arrears recovery
 - Former tenancy arrears recovery
 - Former tenancy arrears write offs
- 1.4 We have developed this policy to direct and support service delivery in line with our vision and mission:

Cill Dara's vision is to provide the people of Kildare with a safe and supported home environment.

Our mission is to identify and meet the housing and associated support needs of members of the Kildare community who are eligible for social and affordable housing.

2.0 Scope of Policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to all current and former tenants.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

3.1 The aims and objectives of this policy are to:

Current tenancy arrears

- a) To deliver a rent income management service that maximises the likelihood of tenants paying their rent and, therefore, keeping their home
- b) To take all reasonable measures to prevent arrears of rent occurring and escalating
- c) To assist tenants to maximise their income – and, therefore, be able to pay their rent - and tackle debt by providing direct support or signposting to welfare benefits and financial advice
- d) To treat tenants as individuals and respond to their differing needs in order to provide the assistance required to sustain their tenancy
- e) To promptly and effectively recover arrears, only taking enforcement action when all other measures have failed.

Former tenancy arrears

- a) To take all reasonable measures to collect former tenancy arrears, whilst ensuring that the service is cost effective
- b) To write off unrecoverable debt in a timely manner and in line with good accounting practices.

4.0 Policy Statement

Our overall approach to effective rent collection and arrears management may be summed up as follows:

- To prevent arrears
- To manage arrears quickly and effectively when they occur
- To try to support a tenant in arrears, enabling them to address the issues that are preventing them from paying their rent
- To enforce the terms of the tenancy agreement by the legal measures available to us when all other measures have failed.

4.1 Arrears prevention

We recognise the value in work carried out designed to prevent arrears from occurring in the first place.

We will:

- Carry out pre-tenancy work to ensure that tenants understand their obligations in relation to payment of rent. Also that we might identify any support needs that the tenant may have that may impact on their ability to pay rent
- Provide flexible payment options that make it easy for tenants to pay rent and service charges
- Provide clear and concise information to tenants about rent arrears recovery
- Visit all new tenants within six weeks of their tenancy starting
- Issue rent statements quarterly to all tenants
- Make early contact with tenants in arrears and within a predetermined timescale
- Develop partnership arrangements with local providers so that we can signpost our tenants for specialist money, debt and welfare benefit advice
- Signpost our customers to specialist training, education and employment services with the aim of helping them into work and, thereby, increasing their incomes
- Respond quickly to crisis events that are known to precipitate debt problems
- Publicise our rent assessment procedures so that tenants know to contact us if their income is reduced
- Train our front line staff in welfare benefits, managing debt and reducing arrears.

4.2 Current tenancy rent arrears recovery

- Early contact will be made with tenants to establish the reason for the non-payment
- We will give clear messages about the consequence of non-payment of rent
- We will provide tenants with information on where they can get free and confidential help and advice regarding debt
- We will make affordable agreements to clear or reduce arrears based on an understanding of a tenant's financial situation
- Our recovery procedures will have line manager review and approvals required at the stages of 28-day RTB warning and Notice of Termination.

4.3 Use of probationary tenancy and the Part Four tenancy cycles

We will keep under review probationary tenancies and the four or six year tenancy cycles. We will use these effective, “break clauses” to review the suitability of a tenancy continuing where a tenant is in debt.

We may consider ending a tenancy, where there have been a number of cycles of a tenant getting into debt and then clearing their account. (Ending a Part Four tenancy is dealt with in our tenancy management policy and procedures.)

4.4 Former tenancy arrears recovery and write offs

Cill Dara HA’s former tenancy arrears recovery policy is to make reasonable efforts to recover the debt, based on the size of the debt:

Where forwarding address is known	
< €10	Write off
€10 - €200	Make 1 attempt at recovery, then write off
€200 - €400	Make 2 attempts at recovery, then write off
> €400	Consider referring to debt collection agency
Where forwarding address is NOT known	
< €400	Write off
> €400	Consider referring to debt collection agency

We will:

- Search our own records extensively when trying to trace former tenants
- Notify the local authority of former tenants that owe us money
- Consider using debt collection agencies where we have unsuccessfully made attempts to collect the debt from the former tenant or where the whereabouts of the former tenant is not known
- Follow the appropriate procedures to seek permission from the Board to write off the debt where the debt is unrecoverable. Former tenant write off debts will be submitted to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee twice a year.

Where a tenant has died, we will write off the debt if:

- It is less than €400
- There is no response from the next of kin or Executor of the Will and the debt is less than €500;

- Otherwise, recovery of the debt will be sought from the deceased tenant's estate.

4.5 Vulnerable tenants

- We recognise that some of our tenants may be vulnerable. Although it is a legal obligation for all tenants to pay their rent, we will do our best to identify and understand the needs of our vulnerable tenants. Where vulnerabilities impact on the ability to pay rent, we will make every effort to secure direct rent payment. We will also actively engage with tenants' support workers.
- We will draw upon all resources available to minimise arrears and prevent evictions, whilst complying with current Data Protection legislation and guidance.
- All frontline officers will receive training on our Safeguarding procedures to ensure that appropriate processes are followed where any safeguarding issues are identified.

5.0 Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 We will apply this policy consistently, fairly and with professionalism. We do not discriminate against any person on grounds of their age, gender, disability, gender reassignment/transgender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or any other matter that may cause a person to be treated with injustice.
- 5.2 We will use plain language and make information available in different formats and languages on request.

6.0 Data Protection and Confidentiality

- 6.1 This policy will be operated in line with our Data Protection Policy.

7.0 Complaints

- 7.1 We aim to provide excellent services but recognise that we do not always get things right. We have a Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy which we use actively to address service failures and to inform service improvements.

8.0 Compliance

- 8.1 We have developed this policy and associated procedures with due regard to Regulatory requirements and key legislation.
- 8.2 As a registered Tier 2 Approved Housing Body, we work hard to ensure that we are fully compliant with the requirements of the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority. The current Regulatory Standard that applies to this policy is the Performance Standard.
- 8.3 Key legislation relating to this policy is as follows:
- a) Residential Tenancies Acts (2004-2021)

9.0 Linked Policies, Procedures and Guidance

- 9.1 The following CDHA strategies, policies, procedures and guidance that relate to this policy are as follows:
- a) Tenancy management (policy and procedure)
 - b) Allocations and Lettings (policy and procedure)
 - c) Safeguarding (policy and procedure)

10.0 Responsibilities

- 10.1 All relevant employees have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied as intended. Including, but not exclusively:
- a) Reporting any areas of concern or non-compliance to their manager.
 - b) Keeping accurate records.
 - c) Attend training to ensure they have the required knowledge and skills to deliver the service.
- 10.2 Board will ensure that:
- a) CDHA has an overview of this policy and reviews it in a timely manner to assess its effectiveness and appropriateness.

- b) CDHA has the necessary arrangements and resources to implement and monitor operational effectiveness.
- c) Former tenant debt is written off in accordance with agreed policy and procedure.

10.3 Managers will ensure that:

- a) This policy is implemented through agreed operational procedures, monitored and reported.
- b) Resources are deployed and monitored effectively.

11.0 Key Performance Indicators

We will monitor and report on the following key performance indicators to check that our services are delivering the intended outcomes.

Performance Indicator	Performance Target <i>(where applicable)</i>	Measure reported to Board?
Current tenancy arrears		
% income collected (rent and service charges)	To be agreed	Yes
Arrears as a % of annual rent roll	To be agreed	Yes
Trend against previous quarter/year	n/a	Yes
Number of RTB 28-day warnings	n/a	No
Arrears level at service of RTB 28-day warning	n/a	No
Number of Notices of Termination served <i>(owing to rent arrears)</i>	n/a	Yes
Arrears level at service of Notice of Termination	n/a	Yes
Number of evictions <i>(owing to rent arrears)</i>	n/a	Yes
Tenants in arrears with no repayment agreement in place	n/a	No
Number of broken repayment agreements	n/a	No
Former tenancy arrears		
Arrears as a % of annual rent roll	To be agreed	

Write offs as a % of former tenant rent arrears debt	n/a	
Former tenancy arrears collected as a % of former tenant debt	To be agreed	
Number of cases referred to debt collection agency	n/a	

12.0 Policy review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or earlier to take into account changes in legislation, regulation, service improvements and related initiatives.