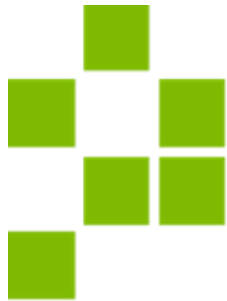


Decant Policy



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

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| Owner | <i>Jim Brennan (Head of Tenancy and Estate Management Services)</i> | | |
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| Purpose | <i>The purpose of this Decant Policy is to set out the principles and procedures that Sandwell Council will follow when it becomes necessary to move tenants or groups of tenants from their permanent homes. This may occur either temporarily, to allow essential works to be carried out on their current home, or permanently, if their home is deemed unsafe for continued occupation.</i> | | |

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Decant Policy is to set out the principles and procedures that Sandwell Council will follow when it becomes necessary to move tenants or groups of tenants from their permanent homes. This may occur either temporarily, to allow

essential works to be carried out on their current home, or permanently, if their home is deemed unsafe for continued occupation.

- 1.2 Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that the decant process is carried out in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner, with a focus on providing a customer-centred approach. This policy aims to ensure that tenants are fully supported throughout the decant process, with clear information about the assistance available and the steps involved.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all general needs tenants, tenants in extra care schemes, and owners within leasehold properties.

3. What is a Decant to Sandwell Council?

- 3.1 A decant may be required under various circumstances, including but not limited to:
 - Emergencies, such as fire, flood, or health and safety risks.
 - Scheduled major works that render the property uninhabitable.
- 3.2 If necessary repairs and improvement works cannot be carried out while the tenant remains in the property, or if it would be unreasonable for the tenant to endure disruption caused by the works, the Council will arrange alternative accommodation.
- 3.3 Throughout the decant process, affected tenants will be engaged from the outset. We will ensure that:
 - The reasons for the decant and its necessity are clearly explained.
 - Tenants are provided with a named point of contact for the duration of the process.
 - Alternative accommodation options are discussed and explored.
 - A reasonable offer of alternative accommodation is confirmed and agreed upon.

- Tenants are informed of the potential actions that may be taken if a reasonable offer of relocation is declined.

4. Policy Statement

Minimising Disturbance

4.1 Wherever possible, we aim to carry out necessary works while tenants remain in their property, ensuring minimal disruption. If the work cannot be completed while the tenant stays in their home, we will strive to make the decant period as short as possible. When determining whether a tenant can remain in their property during works, the following factors will be considered:

- The health and safety of those living in or visiting the property.
- The wellbeing of the household.
- The proposed timescales and scope of the works.
- Any reasonable adjustments are applied to account for the individual needs of the tenant (as per Reasonable Adjustment Policy)

4.2 If a tenant is required to move, we will ensure that a suitable alternative property is offered based on their needs. Where a tenant's home has been specially adapted, we will ensure that the alternative accommodation is similarly adapted. For example, if a tenant is living in a property larger than their housing needs, they may be decanted into a smaller, suitable property in line with our Housing Allocations Policy.

4.3 In the case of an emergency decant, temporary accommodation may be arranged, which could be less suitable than the tenant's original property.

4.4 During the decant process, it may be determined that a tenant cannot return to their original home and the tenant needs to be relocated permanently, such as when:

- The property has significant structural issues.
- The property is being sold or disposed of.

- In these instances, a direct offer of accommodation will be made in line with the Housing Allocations Policy.

Assistance and Payments

4.5 Sandwell Council will provide assistance to tenants that we decant.

We will:

- arrange for the removal and storage of personal items, with costs covered by Sandwell Council
- arrange for appliances such as the tenant's cooker and washing machine to be disconnected and reconnected, with all associated costs paid for by Sandwell Council
- cover the cost of the disconnection/re-instatement of your landline telephone and internet
- cover the cost of the disconnection/re-instatement of your satellite television
- we will also cover the costs for the redirection of mail for the period of the decant
- cover laundrette costs (if you are rehoused in a hotel or B&B)
- in some cases we may reimburse for the cost of new appliances, for example if the existing cooker cannot be connected to the new energy supply

4.6 If the decant is permanent, tenants may also be entitled to a statutory home loss payment, in accordance with the Home Loss Payments Legislation and Home Loss Policy.

Tenancies

4.7 The tenant's original tenancy type will remain unchanged throughout the decant process. If the tenant is moved temporarily, the rent charged to the tenant at the temporary accommodation will not exceed the rent paid at their original property.

In cases of emergency or when the repair work will be completed in a few days, a temporary stay in a hotel may be the most practical option. If a tenant is placed in a hotel, the Council will cover the hotel costs and the Council Tax for the decanted property. The tenant will still be responsible for paying rent on their original property.

4.8 Council Responsibilities During a Decant

Before the Move:

- Provide clean, safe, and suitable temporary accommodation that meets household needs.
- Arrange disconnection/reconnection of appliances and transport or storage of belongings.
- Conduct a pre-move inspection of your home and provide written information, including a move plan and key contacts.
- Give weekly updates on the progress of works and any changes to timelines.

During the Decant:

- Carry out essential repairs and respond to maintenance issues in the temporary home.
- Provide a dedicated contact for queries.
- Signpost tenants to welfare or financial support services if needed.

Upon Return:

- Ensure your permanent home is clean, safe, and ready, with all agreed works completed.
- Reconnect appliances and return stored items.
- Carry out a joint inspection to confirm satisfaction with the works.
- Assist with final arrangements at the temporary property.

4.9 Tenant Responsibilities During a Decant

Before the Move:

- Discuss suitable accommodation with the Council. You may choose to stay with family or friends.
- Decide what to take, store, or leave, and record contents for reference.
- Notify relevant parties of your temporary address and arrange post redirection and service changes.
- Allow access for inspections and preparatory works.

Tenancy Agreement:

- Sign a temporary tenancy agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council.

During the Decant:

- Pay Council Tax for the temporary property (not your original home).
- Maintain the property in good condition and report repairs as needed.
- Keep in contact with the Council and update on any changes.

Upon Return:

- Leave the temporary home in its original condition (allowing for fair wear and tear).
- Notify services of your return and assist with the move back.
- Attend a joint inspection of your permanent home.

5. Development of Policy

- 5.1 Sandwell Council recognises the importance of clear and effective communication in ensuring decants are carried out efficiently and customers are supported throughout the process. To achieve this, the Council are consulting residents on an updated draft version of this policy, providing opportunities to submit feedback both online and in person.
- 5.2 Incorporating resident input into the development of this policy enables the Council to enhance its approach to decants, ensuring that the services provided meet the needs of tenants and leaseholders.

6. Related Documents

- 6.1 The Decant Policy will align with our existing policies and strategies but will also influence and guide a range of supporting or inter-related policies and procedures.

6.2 This will ensure that the management of our assets is part of a wider approach to delivering high quality services and places for the benefit of our residents. The key documents that should be read in conjunction with this policy include:

- [Sandwell Council Plan 2024 – 2027](#)
- [Sandwell Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028](#)
- [Sandwell Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy 2025-2030](#)
- [Tenant Handbook](#)
- [SMBC Tenancy Conditions](#)
- [Leaseholder Handbook](#)
- [Property Compliance Policy](#)
- [Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#)

7. Legal Framework

7.1 Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that its Decant Policy aligns with all relevant legislation and statutory requirements. Through the implementation of this policy, the Council seeks to fulfil its legal duties and responsibilities, including (but not limited to) compliance with the following:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Health and Social Care Act 2012
- The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards

7.2 The Council will ensure that all reasonable adjustments are made in accordance with the above legislative and regulatory requirements. This commitment supports the principles of fairness, equality, and accessibility for all residents, particularly those with disabilities or additional needs.

8. Equality and Diversity

8.1 Sandwell Council will ensure equal and fair access to our services; we will do this by taking into consideration the individual needs of

our tenants, their family or other persons living with them. We will ensure that individual needs are considered throughout the reasonable adjustments process and make changes where necessary.

8.2 The Council will treat people fairly and with dignity and respect.

8.3 All staff are trained in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion to embed understanding about where we may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, and ways of working to accommodate resident's individual needs. This is mandatory training which is monitored by our Learning and Development Team. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework also meets our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

8.4 Reasonable Adjustments

Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that disabled tenants are not disadvantaged during the decant process. We aim to provide fair and equal access to all our services, including during decant, and will carry out Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that no one is excluded or unfairly treated.

We recognise that each individual's needs are unique, and reasonable adjustments will be considered based on these needs. We will discuss the specific requirements with the tenant and work together to identify what may be reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. We will not make assumptions about whether a disabled person requires any adjustments or about the type of adjustments needed.

Tenants can request reasonable adjustments to support them during the decant process through any of the following channels:

- In person
- In writing (e.g., by email, post, or text)
- By telephone
- Via a family member, provided they have permission to make the request on behalf of the tenant
- A member of staff may suggest reasonable adjustments if they are aware that it will support the tenant's needs

We will handle all requests with sensitivity and confidentiality, treating each situation on a case-by-case basis. We will listen to the tenant's needs and make every effort to meet their requests for adjustments whenever possible. If, for any reason, we are unable to fulfil a request, we will clearly explain why.

In most cases, we will be able to implement reasonable adjustments with minimal delay, ensuring that disabled tenants are fully supported throughout the decant process.

For more information, please refer to Sandwell's [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#).

9. Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 This Policy will be reviewed every five years or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, management, a major incident or if it is no longer suitable.

10. Policy Document Version Control

| Version | Date | Description | Updated By | Approved By |
|---------|------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 1.0 | | | | |
| 2.0 | | | | |