



Recharge Policy

October 2020

MONITORING, APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
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Approved by	Executive Team and Board
Approval date	<TBC
Review Frequency	The Policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with legislative or regulatory changes. Due October 2023

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Contents

	Page
1. Purpose of the Policy	3
2. The Policy	3
2.2 Rechargeable Repairs and Services	3
2.3 Vulnerability	4
2.4 Payments and Recovery	4
2.5 Right of Appeal	5
2.6 Roles and Responsibilities	5
3. Legislative and other Guidelines	5
4. Performance and Success Measures	6
5. Links to First Choice Homes Strategic Delivery (SDP) Plan	6

1. What is the purpose of this Policy?

First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) seeks to provide excellent services to our customers, whilst maximising value for money. We have a responsibility to ensure that our expenditure is targeted at legitimate repairs and services; as a result, repairs or services that are required due to damage, neglect or inaction by customers, former customers or their visitors will be recharged.

2. The Policy

2.1 The policy applies to all properties owned and managed by FCHO. It sets out the type of activity FCHO will recharge for, the circumstances in which this will be done, and how these recharges will be recovered. It applies to all FCHO customers and has the following aims and objectives.

- To set out the circumstances in which FCHO will recharge a customer.
- To ensure that there is a fair, consistent and transparent approach to recharging customers. To set out the required payment arrangements and recovery arrangements.
- To provide guidance on the circumstances where discretion may be exercised.
- To contribute towards the efficient and effective management of FCHO's assets.

Rechargeable Repairs and Services

2.2 There are a number of ways that FCHO will identify recharges, these could include but are not limited to:

- Following a report to the Contact Centre.
- Upon attendance at a property to carry out a repair.
- Upon inspection or home visit.
- Following an emergency call out - out of hours.
- During a Pre-termination inspection.

2.2.2 The following services will be recharged to customers if FCHO are required to complete the works:

- Removal of fly tipping.
- Provision of lost or additional fobs for access to buildings.
- Lock changes requested due to lost keys.
- Garden clearances if this is a public health issue or potential nuisance.
- Removal of waste/rubbish left by a customer when their tenancy ends.
- Completing repairs that are customers' responsibility.
- Repairs that are required due to a customer making unauthorised alterations to the property which need rectifying.
- If access is not granted on a pre-arranged appointment FCHO reserves the right to charge for abortive costs. This will only be done once an

investigation has taken place into the circumstances of the missed appointment.

2.2.3 FCHO requires all customers to pay a minimum £50.00 in advance toward the cost of a recharge. In certain circumstances FCHO may decide to waive this advance payment-these circumstances may include, but are not limited to the following:

- To the family of a customer who has passed away if there is no estate.
- When a customer goes into residential care and has no means to pay.
- Where a customer has been a victim of a crime (including domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour), has reported the crime to the Police and obtained a crime reference number or valid supporting evidence.
- If a faulty security fob needs replacing and it is returned.
- Items left in an empty property (e.g. carpets and fitted wardrobes) where FCHO have agreed that they can be offered to the new customer.

2.3 Vulnerability

2.3.1 FCHO will aim to treat vulnerable customers sympathetically and sensitively, ensuring that the service offered is appropriate and reflective of their needs and circumstances. In some cases, due to a customer's circumstances, advance payment for recharges may not be requested. Some examples may include:

- Severe/multiple debt problems.
- Mental health condition.
- Customers who are receiving support from our Community Impact team.

2.4 Payments and Recovery

2.4.1 Unless the repair is a health and safety issue FCHO will request payment in advance.

2.4.2 The cost of the recharge will be a minimum of £50.00. If the amount to be recharged is greater than £50.00 the customer can choose to pay more.

2.4.3 For remaining recharges an invoice will be raised and sent to the customer or former customer for payment. Payment is due within 28 working days. The Income Collection team will agree all arrangements to pay outstanding recharges.

2.4.4 When an invoice is not paid within 28 working days FCHO will take action to recover the costs in line with recovery procedures.

2.4.5 In some exceptional circumstances, FCHO may consider waiving a recharge. This will be dependent upon the circumstances. Each case will be reviewed on its own merit by a Manager within the Contact Centre. This will be administered in line with write offs for rent or sundry accounts.

2.5 Right to Appeal

- 2.5.1 If a customer is unhappy with the decision to recharge for a repair or service they have the right to appeal within 14 working days from the date the invoice was issued. All requests to appeal should be referred in the first instance to tellus@fcho.co.uk
- 2.5.2 The customer will receive written confirmation of the appeal decision within 10 working days.

2.6 Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.6.1 **Contact Centre** will order or request any repairs or services required following a discussion with the customer. They will discuss if a repair or service is rechargeable and take at least the minimum required advanced payment before progressing. They will also administer requests for appeals.
- 2.6.2 **Property Care** will be responsible for carrying out responsive and void works to the property.
- 2.6.3 **Neighbourhood Care** will be responsible for the removal of fly tipping, they will also clear gardens of rubbish and undertake maintenance if a recharge is identified.
- 2.6.4 **Income Collection Team** will ensure that any recharges taken in advance are allocated correctly and will be responsible for raising invoices. They will contact the customer for any monies outstanding.
- 2.6.5 **Finance Team** will ensure that all invoices are generated and weekly reporting is available to monitor the recovery rates.
- 2.6.6 **Neighbourhood Services** will work closely with the customer and key stakeholders to address any tenancy management issues that may arise from recharges identified.

3. Legislation and other Guidelines

- 3.1 As a registered provider of social housing, FCHO's provision to customers is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. The Home Standard, states that:

Registered providers shall ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas. This should demonstrate an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money.

4. Performance and Success Measures

4.1.1 Performance will be monitored by using the following measure as outlined in the table listed below:

Performance Measure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Recovery Rate	10%	15%	18%

5. Links to First Choice Home's Strategic (SDP) Plan

This policy links to the area of 'Excellent Landlord' within the Strategic Delivery Plan and could impact on the following measures:

KPIs:

Excellent Landlord - Percentage of overall satisfaction
Percentage of overall complaints received
Percentage of rent collected

Business Assurance - Compliance measures

The policy links to the following strategic risk:

Failure to meet landlord health, safety, and compliance requirements.