



Temporary & Emergency Relocation Policy

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Purpose: This policy explains how Accent will support customers if they need to move from their home, either temporarily or permanently. This is often called a 'decant' or 'decanting'. We will ensure we meet our legal and regulatory responsibilities, doing all we can to reduce disruption and provide clear, practical support throughout the process.

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	Scope	4
3.	Definitions.....	4
4.	References	5
5.	Policy Review	5
6.	Our Approach	6
7.	Temporary & Emergency Moves	7
8.	Permanent Moves	8
9.	Alternative Accommodation	9
10.	Customers Belongings	10
11.	Customer Responsibilities	11
12.	Payments & Compensation	11
13.	Complaints & Concerns	13
14.	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	13
15.	Exceptions	13

1. Introduction

There may be occasions when a customer needs to move from their home, either temporarily or permanently. We understand that this can feel disruptive, unsettling and sometimes distressing, particularly where the move is unexpected or happens at short notice.

Accent will take a caring and supportive approach throughout the process. We will work closely with customers to explain what is happening, why a move may be needed, what options are available and what support we can provide. We will take account of individual circumstances, vulnerabilities, caring responsibilities, work, education, pets and support networks.

Our approach is guided by Accent's values of being Caring, Inclusive, Smart and Driven. We will treat customers with dignity, empathy and respect, and aim to make the process as clear, fair and manageable as possible.

We will communicate openly, honestly and regularly throughout the process, providing a named colleague and making sure customers know what to expect, who to contact and how any concerns can be raised.

Previous versions of this policy was referred to as Accents 'Decant Policy'.

2. Scope

This policy applies to customers and other lawful occupants living in homes owned or managed by Accent.

This applies to:

- Social housing tenants
- Market and Intermediate Rent tenants
- Rent to Buy tenants

Shared owners, leaseholders and freeholders are not covered in this policy, unless emergency circumstances mean support is needed. Accent will provide support to customers on these tenures, on a case-by-case basis.

This policy does not apply to management transfers or mutual exchanges, further information on these can be found in our Allocations and Lettings Policy.

3. Definitions

Decanting - the process of moving a resident out of their principal home either temporarily or permanently.

A **'decant'** or **'move'** refers to a household temporarily or permanently moving from their principal home into alternative accommodation while an issue or situation is resolved.

An **'emergency move'** refers to a move that takes place following an emergency, such as flood or fire, where there may be a risk to life, or where customers cannot return to their home until urgent works are completed (including damp and mould works being required (Awaab's Law)).

A **'non-emergency move'** refers to a move that takes place to enable work on the home to be carried out that cannot be done with customers in occupation.

A **'permanent move'** refers to a situation where customers are moved out of their home with no intention of returning.

A **'temporary move'** refers to a situation where customers are moved out of their home, with an intention for them to return as soon as possible.

'Principal home' refers to the customers permanent home - where they hold a tenancy agreement or lease for.

'Alternative accommodation' refers to the accommodation the tenant moves into on a temporary basis following a move.

A **'license to occupy'** A short-term occupancy agreement without full tenancy rights and without granting legal ownership or exclusive possession of a property.

4. References

Accent Policies and Procedures can be found in the [Corporate Library](#).

- Decants Procedure
- Complaints and Compensation Policy
- Customer Safety Policy
- Cyclical Planned Maintenance Policy
- Customer Inclusion and Support Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Emergency Planning and Response Policy
- Local Lettings Plans
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- Land Compensation Action 1973
- The Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) England Regulations 2023

5. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required by legislative, regulatory, or organisational changes. Any amendments will be communicated to relevant colleagues.

6. Our Approach

Accent will only ask a household to move from their home when this is necessary, and usually where there are concerns about safety, wellbeing or essential works that cannot be completed whilst customers remain in their home.

Decisions to move a household will be taken carefully. Household members include those named on a tenancy or lease agreement and include any known dependents. Where appropriate, advice will be taken from external organisations, such as the Local Authority, where this helps us make the right decision and keep customers safe.

Temporary or emergency relocations may take place for the following reasons:

Emergency moves:

- Where a customer's home has been seriously affected by an incident such as a flood, fire, explosion, infection or infestation, and it is not safe or suitable to live in.
- Where we have been advised that the home is not safe for customers to remain in.
- Where staying in the home could place the household's health, safety or wellbeing at risk, or where there are safeguarding concerns. This includes situations where urgent damp and mould works are needed under Awaab's Law.

Non-emergency moves:

- Where significant work is needed to a customer's home and it would not be safe, practical or reasonable for customers to remain there whilst the work is carried out.
- Where Accent are selling, demolishing, significantly redeveloping or refurbishing a property.

When considering to relocate a household we will:

- Act quickly when we identify a risk in a customer's home, so that household members can be moved to safe accommodation.
- Listen to customers, understand their individual circumstances and work with them to identify the most appropriate solution wherever possible.
- Provide clear information about any work that is needed, why it is required, how long it may take and what options are available for a temporary, or permanent move.
- Answer questions and provide other helpful information to affected customers, so they know what to expect and who to contact.
- Offer support and advice throughout the period, including a named Accent colleague who will keep customers informed and act as their main point of contact.

- Consider the needs of each household individually, recognising that every customer's circumstances will be different.
- Keep the time away from home as short as possible, so that disruption and inconvenience are reduced wherever we can.
- Where possible, help customers stay with their pets during a temporary move. If this is not possible, and friends or family are unable to help, support with suitable pet boarding, such as kennels or a cattery.
- For planned, non-emergency moves, complete a Decant Needs Assessment with customers before the move. This will help us understand any individual needs and agree a tailored support plan.
- When looking for alternative accommodation, consider individual circumstances wherever possible, including distance from work, education, family, caring responsibilities, schools and support networks.
- Take account of any vulnerabilities, or support needs within the household and provide additional support where this is appropriate and possible. We will work to make sure customers are not unfairly affected because of their circumstances.
- Where we are unable to offer another Accent property, work with local authorities and other partners to help identify the most suitable accommodation and support available.

For planned, non-emergency moves, this policy applies to social and affordable housing customers, including those living in supported or independent living homes and licensees. Different arrangements may apply where large-scale regeneration work is taking place. Customers who rent from an Accent leaseholder are not eligible for a move under this policy. We will inform the leaseholder of the proposed work in order that they can support their tenant and signpost them to any appropriate support where possible.

All colleagues involved in managing temporary and emergency moves will work in a professional, compassionate and respectful way. Customers will be treated fairly, kept informed and supported throughout the process.

Our Temporary and Emergency Moves Panel will regularly review cases to make sure this policy is being followed, customers are receiving the right support, and progress is being made as quickly as possible so customers can return home.

7. Temporary & Emergency Moves

Where a move is temporary, Accent will do everything we reasonably can to keep the time customers spend away from their home as short as possible. Customers will be given a named contact, or named contacts, who will keep them updated and provide support throughout the move.

Customers who need to move temporarily, or in an emergency, will be made one carefully considered offer of suitable alternative accommodation. We will take

account of the household's needs, any vulnerabilities, location preferences, availability and associated costs before making the offer. If a customer chooses not to accept a reasonable offer of temporary accommodation, they may need to contact the relevant local authority for help finding alternative temporary accommodation.

Customers can contact Accent outside normal business hours through our emergency out-of-hours service if there is an emergency at their home or if they have urgent concerns about an existing temporary move. We will also provide customers the details of external partners, agencies or support organisations which may be able to assist.

Moves linked to planned maintenance projects will only happen in exceptional circumstances, such as where there is a specific customer need or the disruption would be particularly significant. Where this applies, we will identify the need for a move during the consultation stage, so customers are informed as early as possible.

In some cases, the temporary accommodation arranged by Accent may be a hotel. If emergency works take longer than expected, we may need to end a hotel booking and offer other suitable temporary accommodation. If this happens, we will explain the reason clearly and support customers with the change.

For safety reasons, customers will not usually be able to access their main home during the temporary move unless this has been agreed in advance by appointment. This helps us keep customers, colleagues and contractors safe whilst work is taking place.

Customers who are temporarily moved will still need to pay rent, service charges, council tax and utility charges for their main home during the temporary move. Customers will not be charged rent for any alternative accommodation provided by Accent.

8. Permanent Moves

In some circumstances, a household may need to move permanently to another home. This may happen where it is not possible for customers to return to their current home, or where repairs, improvement works, redevelopment or other changes are expected to take a significant amount of time.

A permanent move means the household will move out of their current home and will not return to that property. Where this happens, Accent will do everything we reasonably can to support customers who hold a tenancy with us to move into suitable alternative accommodation on a permanent basis.

We understand that being asked to leave your home permanently can be unsettling and emotional. We will contact customers as early as possible to explain why a permanent move is needed, what the process will involve and what support is

available. Customers will be given a named Accent contact, or named contacts, who will keep them informed and support them through the move into their new home. We will also provide customers of external partners, agencies or support organisations which may be able to assist.

When a customer moves permanently into a new Accent home, they will sign a new tenancy agreement for that property. Wherever possible, we will protect their security of tenure and offer the same tenancy type as their current home. This means customers keep the same rights and responsibilities, such as Right to Buy or succession rights, where these apply. If this is not possible, we will explain clearly what this means before any move takes place. The rent for the new home will be based on the tenancy type offered.

Customers who need to move permanently will receive up to two carefully considered offers of suitable alternative accommodation. When making these offers, we will take account of the household's needs, any vulnerabilities, location preferences, availability and associated costs. If suitable accommodation is not available directly from Accent, we will support customers to explore alternative housing options with other landlords.

Customers who need to leave their home permanently will be given priority for internal management moves, so they can be rehoused as quickly as possible.

9. Alternative Accommodation

Before making any offer, we will take account of the household's individual circumstances and do our best to identify accommodation that is suitable and practical. This may include, but is not limited to:

- The distance from work, education or training.
- The distance from family, caring responsibilities or support networks.
- Customer preferences about location, where possible.
- The needs of any vulnerable household members.
- Availability and associated cost of alternative accommodation.
- The expected length of time a customer may need to be away from their home, where the move is temporary.

The type of accommodation we consider will depend on the circumstances, availability and the needs of the household. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Bed & breakfast accommodation.
- Hotel accommodation.
- Short term lets.
- Accent owned accommodation.
- Staying with family/friends, where this is suitable and agreed.
- Accommodation provided by another landlord or Local Authority.
- Respite care, where this is appropriate.

If a customer chooses to stay with friends or family during a temporary move, Accent will not make payments directly to the customer, friend or family member for this arrangement. Instead, where the customer's home is uninhabitable, we may apply a credit to the customer's rent account for the period they are unable to live there.

Depending on the type of temporary accommodation provided, customers may be asked to sign a licence to occupy rather than a new tenancy agreement. We will explain what this means before the temporary move takes place, so customers understand their rights and responsibilities while they are living there.

For permanent moves, any offers of alternative accommodation will be made in line with our Lettings Policy and any relevant documents, including Local Lettings Plans.

Where a customer is living in a home that is larger than their household needs, we may offer a smaller home, provided it is suitable for the household. We will always consider the customer's circumstances and explain the reasons for any offer made.

In exceptional circumstances, such as an emergency temporary move, we may need to offer accommodation that does not fully meet our usual Lettings Policy requirements. This would only happen where we need to provide safe accommodation quickly. If this happens, we will explain the reasons clearly and continue to support the household.

We want to work with customers in a collaborative and supportive way whenever a move is needed. We will make every effort to support customers before, during and after the move, including providing clear information, regular updates and practical support where appropriate.

We will always try to resolve concerns through discussion and support. However, if a customer or household member does not agree to leave their main home when a move is needed for safety, repair or other essential reasons, we may need to take legal action as a last resort. This could include asking the court for permission to move the household or to take possession of the home, including where offers of suitable alternative accommodation have been refused. If the court grants possession, customers may be expected to accept any accommodation offered through that process.

10. Customers Belongings

During a temporary move, customers may need to leave some belongings in their main home or use storage facilities. We understand that personal belongings are important, and we will take reasonable steps to help keep them safe. This may include securing the home, or arranging storage with a suitable third-party storage provider.

Where belongings need to be stored away from the home, Accent will arrange and pay for the removal, storage and return of the customer's possessions when they are able to move back home. We will explain the arrangements clearly so customers know what will happen and when.

To help keep the home secure while customers are away, and to allow any required work to take place safely, we will usually request customers permission to change the locks during the temporary move. We will explain this to customers and confirm how access will be managed.

We will take care when handling customers' belongings. However, there may be occasions where personal possessions are damaged during a move, storage period or associated works. If this happens, we will provide support and guidance to help customers understand what steps can be taken. Further information is available in our *Supporting Customers – Damage to Personal Possessions* guidance.

Accent will consider claims for damage or compensation where there is evidence that Accent has been negligent. We may ask to inspect damaged items before making a decision. Where compensation is appropriate, the amount will usually be based on the cost of repairing the item or, where repair is not possible or reasonable, the replacement value.

If the damage was caused by a contractor or another third party, Accent will contact them directly and work with them to seek an appropriate resolution.

11. Customer Responsibilities

Customers (named tenants or leaseholders as per the tenancy agreement or lease) are responsible for the following:

- Packing and moving belongings, unless Accent has agreed to provide support or make other arrangements in advance.
- Providing access to the home when needed, so inspections, safety checks, repairs or moving arrangements can take place.
- Making sure everyone in the household understands that a move is needed and knows what arrangements have been agreed.
- Moving out on the agreed date where the move is planned and not an emergency.
- Taking reasonable care of personal belongings, fixtures and fittings during the move.
- Removing any DIY or home improvements where this is needed to allow required works to be completed. We will explain this clearly where it applies.
- Making suitable arrangements for pets to leave the main home during the move. Customers should speak to us as early as possible if they need support with this.
- Telling Accent about any vulnerabilities, support needs or household circumstances that may affect the move, so we can consider what help may be needed.

12. Payments & Compensation

Statutory Home Loss Payments

Where customers qualify for a statutory home loss payment, we will make this payment when they are required to move permanently from their home. This is a

fixed amount set by legislation. The payment recognises the impact, distress and disruption that can be caused when a household must move permanently.

Additional Payments, Expenses and Compensation

We will consider requests for additional payments, expenses or compensation individually, taking account of each customer's circumstances. If a customer thinks they may need to incur an expense linked to the move, they should speak to Accent first so this can be discussed and agreed in advance. Customers will need to provide receipts or other evidence so we can review and arrange any agreed payment.

Disturbance Payments

Disturbance payments are intended to help qualifying customers with reasonable costs linked to a move. We will look at each case individually and take account of the household's circumstances before agreeing any payment.

These payments may help with costs such as (but not limited to):

- Removal services
- Storage facilities
- Disconnecting and reconnecting of essential appliances
- The redirecting of Royal Mail services
- Providing suitable adaptations where these have been recommended by an occupational therapist
- Reasonable travel expenses
- Respite care, where this is appropriate

The amount paid will depend on the circumstances of each case. Customers will need to provide receipts or other evidence so we can review and arrange any agreed payment. Where customers need to move more than once, we will consider disturbance payments for each move.

Food Allowance

Where customers are temporarily moved into accommodation that does not have cooking facilities, and meals are not included, Accent will support with reasonable food costs. We will look at each case individually, taking account of the household's circumstances. Support is usually limited to £25 per day for each known adult household member and £15 per day for each known child under the age of thirteen.

Household Costs

Customers will usually remain responsible for gas, electricity, water, council tax and any other utility costs linked to their main home during a temporary move. Where Accent provides temporary accommodation, we will usually cover the utility costs for that accommodation, where these apply. We will explain any payment arrangements clearly, so customers understand what they are responsible for and what Accent will cover.

If you are a shared owner or leaseholder, your buildings or home insurance may cover some costs linked to the move. We may ask you to contact your insurance provider directly, and we will explain this clearly where it applies.

13. Complaints & Concerns

We will use customer feedback, complaints, compensation claims, customer insight and learning from the Housing Ombudsman to help us improve how we manage moves and support customers through the process.

If customers are unhappy or have concerns about the need to move, we will listen, try to understand their concerns and work with them to resolve or reduce those concerns wherever possible. Customers are encouraged to raise any worries as early as they can, so we have the best opportunity to help.

If a customer remains unhappy, they can raise this through our Complaints Policy. We will explain how to do this and support customers to access the process where needed.

14. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Accent is committed to ensuring decisions to move customers under these circumstances is fair, inclusive and accessible for all residents.

We recognise that residents may experience these types of moves differently depending on their individual circumstances, protected characteristics, support needs and lived experiences.

We will:

- make reasonable adjustments where required.
- provide information in accessible formats where needed.
- consider language, communication and cultural needs.
- consider the needs of disabled residents and those with health conditions.
- consider caring responsibilities, education and employment commitments.
- consider safeguarding concerns and support requirements.
- ensure decisions are made fairly and without discrimination.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy and will be reviewed alongside future policy reviews.

15. Exceptions

We recognise that every customer's circumstances are different, and there may be situations where we need to consider flexibility in how this policy is applied.

Where there are vulnerabilities, support needs or exceptional circumstances, we will consider these carefully and on a case by case basis. Any decisions will be made with empathy, fairness and respect, so that customers are treated compassionately and their individual needs are properly considered.

