

Selby District Council - Decoration Allowance Policy (2022)

The overall aim of this policy is to assist tenants with the financial cost of decorating their homes and, in doing so, assist in the effective maintenance of the Council's housing stock. Allowances are a contribution towards the cost of materials and equipment needed to carry out internal decoration works and should provide tenants with choice when decorating their home.

A decoration allowance does not remove the need for staff, carrying out work on behalf of the Council, to take adequate care to ensure that damage does not occur. It also does not remove the need for tenants to adequately insure the contents of their homes from damage. There are various low cost options available, but tenants of Selby District Council do have the opportunity to purchase exclusive household Contents Insurance, arranged with Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance plc. Further information can be found at <https://www.selby.gov.uk/house-insurance> or tenants can speak to their Neighbourhood Officer for more details.

1. When will an allowance be made?

- 1.1 A decoration allowance may be awarded in one of the following circumstances:
 - a) An allocated Council property is deemed 'hard to let' by the Housing Tenant Services team because of its poor decorative condition or has been refused by applicants on multiple occasions on the basis that it is in poor decorative condition; OR
 - b) Following any planned maintenance or improvement work carried out by the Council where it is deemed necessary for a decoration allowance to be given.
- 1.2 Poor decorative condition may mean the wallpaper is considerably torn, the walls are badly marked or smoke stained, the woodwork has been badly chipped/ painted, the paint is peeling from the woodwork or has been painted a strong colour that is not easily covered up, and so on. This list is not exhaustive and final judgment would be made by the Council's Housing Tenant Services team.
- 1.3 When a tenant is not satisfied with a responsive repair and damage caused to internal decoration through this process, they should go through the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

2. When a decoration allowance will not be awarded

- 2.1 A decoration allowance will not be awarded in the following circumstances:
 - Where a tenant, family member or visitor has caused the damage.
 - Where the tenant has neglected the interior decoration of the property.
 - To change the interior decoration of a property because it is not to the new tenant's personal taste (unless a new tenancy and the decoration is a strong colour, as assessed by the Housing Tenant Services team, which would prove costly to change, for example black).
 - To act as payment following an incident which the tenant should have been insured for.
 - Where a new tenancy is beginning as a result of mutual exchange.
 - Where the Council, or its contractor, has completed decoration.

3. The process – new tenancy

- 3.1 In allocating a property via North Yorkshire Home Choice, the Housing Tenant Services team may decide it is classed as 'hard to let' due to its poor decorative condition.
- 3.2 Whether or not the decorative condition of a property warrants a decoration allowance, and if so how much is to be awarded, will be at the discretion of the Housing Tenant Services Team Leader or the Neighbourhood Officer Supervisor.
- 3.3 This process will take place prior to allocation and the prospective tenant is not expected to make this request themselves, although such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4. The process – major and improvement work

- 4.1 Tenants undergoing major works (most commonly electrical re-wires, installation/complete replacement of central heating systems or substantial internal damp works) will automatically be awarded a decoration allowance on completion of the work. This list is not exhaustive and the Council reserves the right to define other works as such at the sole discretion of the Property Services Manager.
- 4.2 Once the work has been completed, a decoration allowance will be awarded to the tenant to compensate for the damage caused to the property's decoration as part of the major works process.
- 4.3 This award will be calculated depending on which rooms within the property require decoration, amounts capped at:
 - Kitchen: £28.50
 - Hall or stairs: £28.50
 - Hall, stairs, and landing: £43.00
 - Lounge: £41.00
 - Bedrooms:
 - 1 bedroom property: £35.00
 - 2 and 3 bedroom properties: £60.00
 - 4 bedroom property: £72.00
 - Bathroom: £25.50
 - WC: £15.00
- 4.4 For improvement works, such as a kitchen or bathroom replacement, basic decoration works to the appropriate room only shall be completed by the Council or contractors working on their behalf. The Council's decoration service will take the form of application of magnolia emulsion paint to walls, white emulsion to the ceiling, and white gloss paint to woodwork.

5. How will the decoration allowance be provided?

- 5.1 Tenants will be provided decoration allowance in the form of a voucher or pre-loaded card for stores including, but not limited to: 'Wilko' 'B&Q' and the 'Community Furniture Store.'
- 5.2 Only certain items can be bought with these vouchers which relates to products used for household decoration including, but not limited to:
 - Paint - gloss, emulsion matt and silk

- Woodcare - varnish
- Paint stripper
- Brushes, rollers, roller kits and trays
- Protective sheets
- Sandpaper
- Masking tape
- White spirit
- Sealants and sealant gun
- Fillers
- Wallpaper, scrapers and paste

5.3 Voucher cards will either be given directly to a tenant or sent in the post to their home address. They will also be provided with a 'Letter of Authority.' When making any purchase in store, the card, 'Letter of Authority' and ID must be shown.

5.4 Where the cost of chosen materials exceeds the amount of decoration allowance, the tenant will be expected to pay the difference. The voucher card cannot be exchanged for cash.

5.5 Once issued to the tenant, decoration allowances become the tenant's responsibility. Lost or stolen voucher cards (or damaged and defaced card presented as evidence) will only be replaced at the discretion of either the Housing Tenant Services or Property Management Team Leader, following appropriate enquiries.

6. Additional considerations

6.1 The Council may, at their discretion, wish to inspect a tenant's property to confirm that the decoration allowance has been spent appropriately. If this is the case, tenants will be given adequate notice at a time that suits them.

6.2 If at such an inspection, the voucher/card allowance has been spent and the decoration of the property is unchanged; or the tenant is unable to demonstrate that they have purchased decoration materials, either through their presence or relevant receipts, the Council may look to recharge the tenant for some or all of the value of the decoration allowance.

6.3 Any tenant who is not satisfied with the manner in which the Council, its contractor(s) or an approved retailer has dealt with any aspect of this service can go through the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

7. Monitoring

7.1 The Policy will be reviewed every 12 months to ensure that the financial amounts cited within it remain appropriate, taking into account inflation.