

Revenue Services Policy

1. Introduction

Bolton At Home is committed to maximising its income stream by means of effective and efficient collection of rent and other charges, and by proactive prevention and recovery of rent arrears.

It is also committed to preventing and minimising poverty and debt amongst its customers, and aims to support customers to maximise their income.

We do this by taking a balanced approach between enforcement and support, and by considering each case individually, within the framework of a robust and transparent policy.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is

- To set out the guidelines and framework for the day to day operation of the Revenue Services team;
- To outline how the Revenue Services team will comply with legal and Statutory Requirements, and meet Business Objectives of maximising income to the Business.

3. Scope

This policy outlines the underlying philosophy driving the Revenue Services team, and sets out the guiding principles which inform the practices of the day to day work of Revenue Services.

The policy states our aims and goals for both Bolton At Home and for our customers, and outlines our approach as to how we will meet these.

It applies to all current and former Bolton At Home tenants, including Leaseholders and Shared Ownership tenants, and Garage tenants.

This policy will inevitably be affected by external factors, e.g. political change, a changing economic climate, emerging good practice in the sector and legislation. It is intended that this policy will be flexible, and able to accommodate any such changes within its existing scope. It will be reviewed informally on an ongoing, real-time basis, and also within a formal framework within the timescale specified in [Section 11](#).

4. Policy

The Policy is based on three key principles:

1. The need to maximise the rental income to Bolton At Home, and thus protect the revenue stream;
2. The need to support our customers to maximise their income, minimise their debts, and prioritise their rent payments;

3. The necessity to identify the support needs of our customers, in order to offer intervention and support, with a view to ensuring rent payments are made, tenancies are sustained, and where possible, homelessness is prevented.

The foundation which informs and governs the work of the Revenue Services team is that of a *Balanced Approach between Enforcement and Support*. This is delivered by developing and embedding a culture which pays heed to the following principles:

- Being mindful at all times of the three key principles (above), of which the most important is protecting the revenue stream to the business.
- An emphasis on prioritising rent payments, embedded throughout the service;
- Early identification of rent arrears, and a proactive approach to arrears recovery;
- Excellent communication and referrals processes with our internal and external partners, particularly the Money Advice and Tenancy Support teams;
- Providing a range of contact methods and options to customers, with an emphasis on face to face contact where possible;
- Ensuring fair access to our services to all our customers, compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- A sympathetic but firm approach to rent arrears. This is exemplified by comprehensive advice and support being offered in the areas of budgeting and income maximisation, coupled with the timely implementation of legal remedies where necessary and appropriate;
- The utilisation of all legal and other remedial tools available to Bolton At Home, including both mandatory and discretionary grounds for Possession, as deemed appropriate, as specified in the Housing Act 1988.
- The use of a 'Trace and Collect' facility when utilising the services of a Third Party Debt Collection agency, in instances of internally untraceable Former Tenant Arrears cases;
- Compliance with the Pre-Court Protocol, which guides and governs our actions in advance of taking legal proceedings;
- Adopting a 'case management' approach, with due regard to individual customers' circumstances; and a willingness to negotiate and to offer payment arrangements, with specific regard to the income and benefit entitlement of each household;
- Writing off Former Tenant Arrears which are deemed to be unrecoverable.

5. Retention Period

Where a debt remains on a Former Tenant account, details of the debt and the account will be retained for a period of up to 20 years. While these debts are statute barred after a period of 6 years, Bolton At Home reserves the right to recover these debts as a condition of rehousing, should the former tenant reapply for housing within a 20 year period.

6. Equality analysis

The Equality Analysis has been completed, and is appended to this document.

7. Responsibility

The Head of Revenue Services has overall responsibility for the content, revision and implementation of this Policy, the management of which is delegated to the Revenue Services Managers on a day-to-day operational basis.

The Rent Officers and the Rent Assistants (FTAs) are responsible for the implementation of, and adherence to, this Policy, in the course of their daily work.

All Revenue Services staff have individual and collective responsibility to implement this Policy.

8. Consultation

An Income Management Resident Focus Group was convened in 2017, and consulted as part of the recent Housing Quality Network (HQN) Accreditation process. The outcomes of this consultation have been used to identify a number of potential improvements to the Income Management service, which have fed into and informed this Policy Document.

We will consult with our customers, whose comments and review will facilitate ongoing feedback into the Revenue Service. Feedback will be utilised in the development of our service, and will have the potential to influence policy and procedure.

9. GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018

Bolton at Home (BH) are committed to effective handling of personal data in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and good practice. Accordingly, all workers should adhere to the guidelines set out in BH data protection policies and training, data sharing agreements and data processor contracts.

10. Legislation

This Policy is written in accordance with the provisions of the Legislation listed below, and all Revenue staff take responsibility for compliance with the following legislation:

- * Housing Act 1988
- * Welfare Reform Act 2012
- * Equality Act 2010

11. BH related policies

This policy links to, and should be considered and implemented with regard to, the following Bolton At Home Policies:

- Money Advice Policy
- Rent Setting Policy

12. Monitoring, review and evaluation

This Policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis, by means of management review and reflection, and customer feedback. It will be reviewed in 3 years' time.

Date approved	25 April 2019
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