

The YMCA logo is rendered in a bold, blocky, grey font. It is positioned at the top center of the page, set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors including pink, yellow, green, blue, and red.

Housing Rental Income Management Policy & Procedure

**Effective from:
24 February 2023**

APPLICATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines how we manage our housing rental income and covers all YMCA St. Paul's Group (the Charity) residents.

The procedures contained within this document set out the four different stages and processes involved in collecting and recording rental income, preventing rent arrears and proactively managing arrears effectively:

- ▶ At referral
- ▶ At move in
- ▶ During support delivery
- ▶ If arrears occur

This document applies to all legal entities within the Group.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Being able to manage a rent account is one of the key skills residents will need to be able to go on to live independently. If we are not equipping residents with that skill, we are failing in our duty to support them to develop the skills they need to live independently, and are likely contributing to the revolving door of homelessness by increasing the likelihood of them being evicted from future homes.
- 1.2 As such, we see rental income management as a support function.
- 1.3 The key principles of this policy and procedure are prevention of arrears occurring and responding proactively if they do occur.
- 1.4 This policy also works on the principle that there is no reason not to issue a resident a rent letter at the correct time according to the procedure. Failure to give residents the most up to date information as to the condition of their rent account is physically denying them the knowledge they need to manage their rent accounts effectively.

2. Equality Impact Assessment

- 2.1 Financial abuse is one area where we must ensure we are protecting vulnerable adults.
- 2.2 By having a clear policy and procedure on rental income, we minimise the risk of staff or others abusing residents financially.
- 2.3 We also ensure that staff do not discriminate against residents by ensuring that every worker within the Charity follows the same procedure. We ensure that timings in relation to the issuing of formal proceedings for arrears are followed and staff are not making decisions based on value-based judgements.

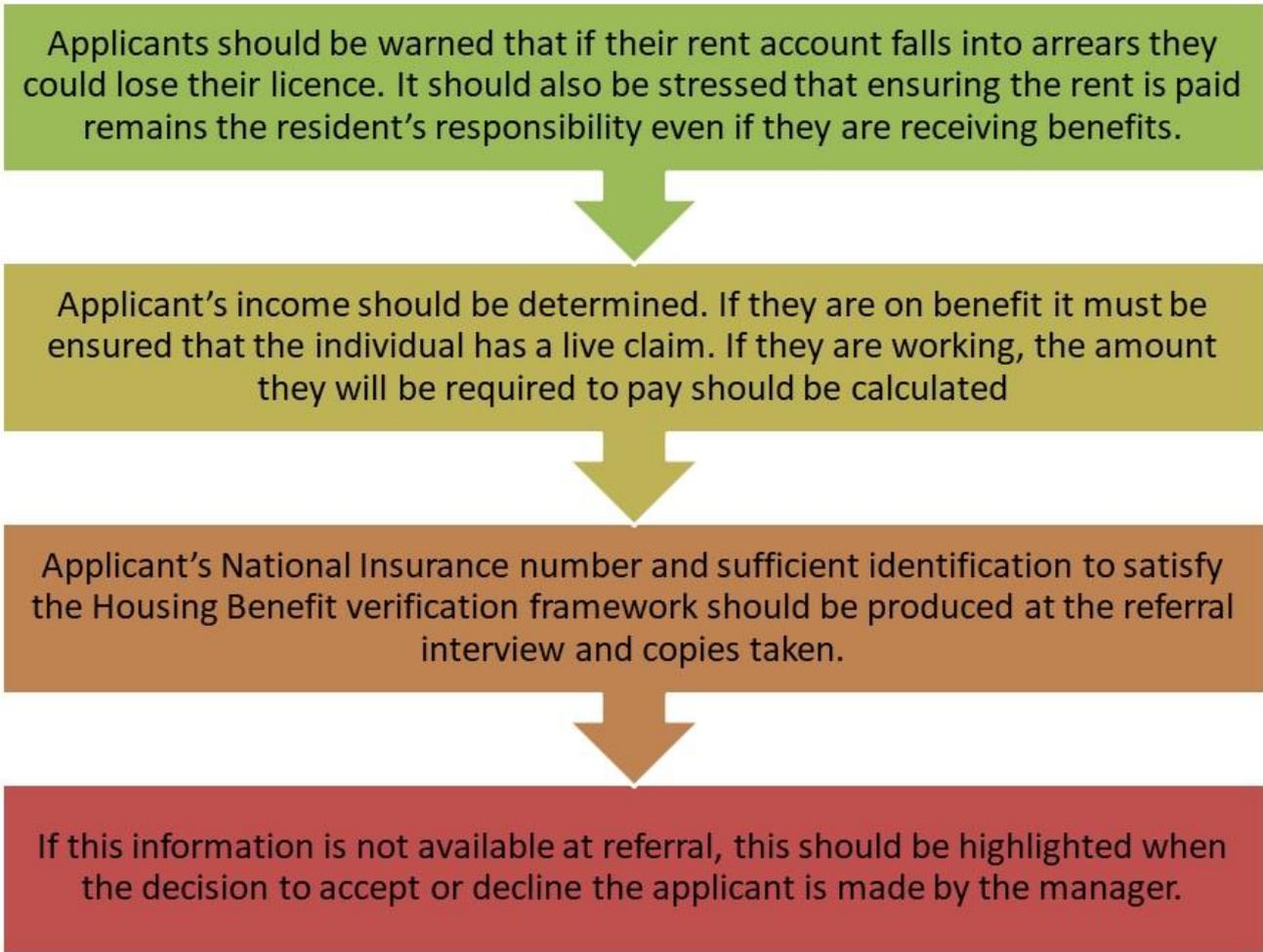
3. Definitions

- 3.1 NTD – Notice to Determine
- 3.2 NOSP – Notice Order Seeking Possession
- 3.3 S21 – Section 21 Notice

3.4 Staff – refers to either support staff or a member of the Rent and Tenancy Administration Team where relevant. Allocations of responsibility for post holders will be defined in the relevant job descriptions.

4. Rental Income Management Procedures

4.1 Procedure at Referral Stage (prior to moving in)



Guidance on the referral stage:

- (a) At this stage, it is extremely important to explain to applicants the importance of ensuring that the rent is paid and kept up to date. Applicants should be warned that if their rent account falls into arrears they could lose their licence. It should also be stressed that ensuring the entire rent (including all service charges) is paid remains the resident's responsibility even if they are receiving benefits. This means it is their responsibility to advise both the relevant benefits office and YMCA St. Paul's Group if there are any changes in their circumstances.
- (b) If the applicant's National Insurance number and sufficient identification to submit a benefit application is not available at referral, this should be highlighted when the decision to accept or decline the applicant is made by the manager. The general rule is to decline the application if the relevant information is not available. Exceptions to this

are where there is some other substantial reason why it is in the best interest of both the applicant and YMCA to provide accommodation.

4.2 Procedure at Move In

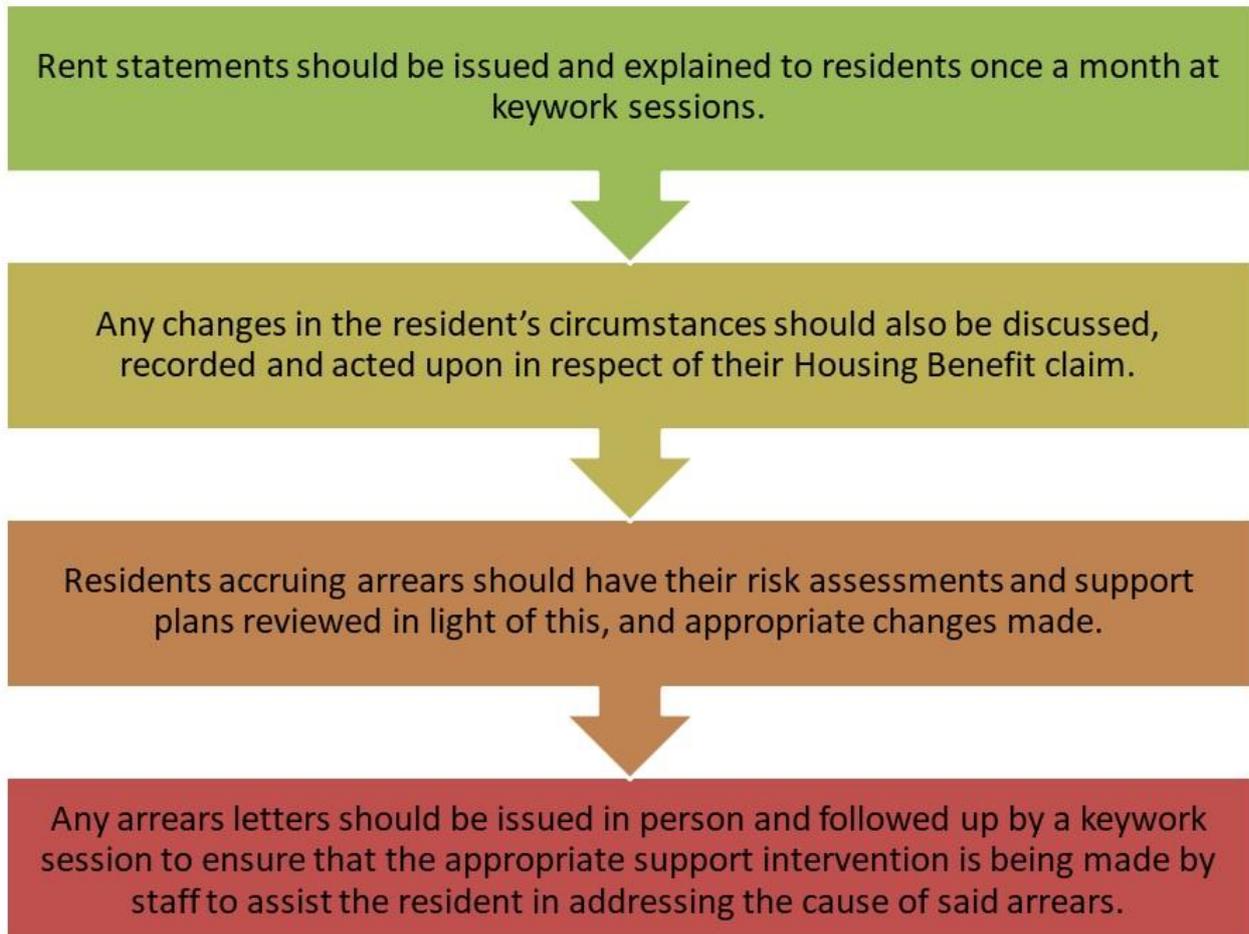


Guidance on the move in stage:

- (a) Working residents should provide 4 weeks' worth of pay slips if paid weekly, 2 months if monthly, a bank statement covering the last 3 months and a week's rent in advance.
- (b) During the move-in process, the staff must stress the importance of keeping a clear rent account; describe the arrears procedure and the possible implications should the resident fall into arrears.
- (c) In particular it should be made clear that:
 - ▶ the resident is fully responsible for all accommodation charges;
 - ▶ the resident is responsible for the success of the Housing Benefit claim by providing information to the Housing Benefit office which is factual and correct and within local timeframes;
 - ▶ the resident is responsible for informing YMCA St. Paul's Group and the Housing Benefit office of any changes in their circumstances that could affect their claim;

- ▶ that non-payment will affect resident's move on options;
 - ▶ YMCA St. Paul's Group has a responsibility (under s.14 of the Fraud Act 1997) to notify the Housing Benefit office of any material change of circumstance as soon as they become aware of it;
 - ▶ arrears letters will be sent and, at the appropriate point, a notice to regain possession of the tenancy will be issued if arrears start to accrue;
- (d) Staff must ensure that the HB application form is completed correctly with the resident
- (e) All HB application forms are completed online, on the day the resident moves in. Copies of the application should be downloaded and saved onto the residents Inform file. A confirmation email or confirmation reference number that the form has been completed should also be saved onto the residents Inform file.
- (f) After four weeks from the move in date, staff should contact the local Housing Benefit office to confirm that the claim is being processed and to find out wherever possible if any outstanding information is required.
- (g) If further information is required, staff should take responsibility for ensuring the resident is aware of the potential consequences of failing to ensure that all the relevant information reaches the local Housing Benefit office within the specified time limits (usually four weeks from the date of the submission of the Housing Benefit claim).

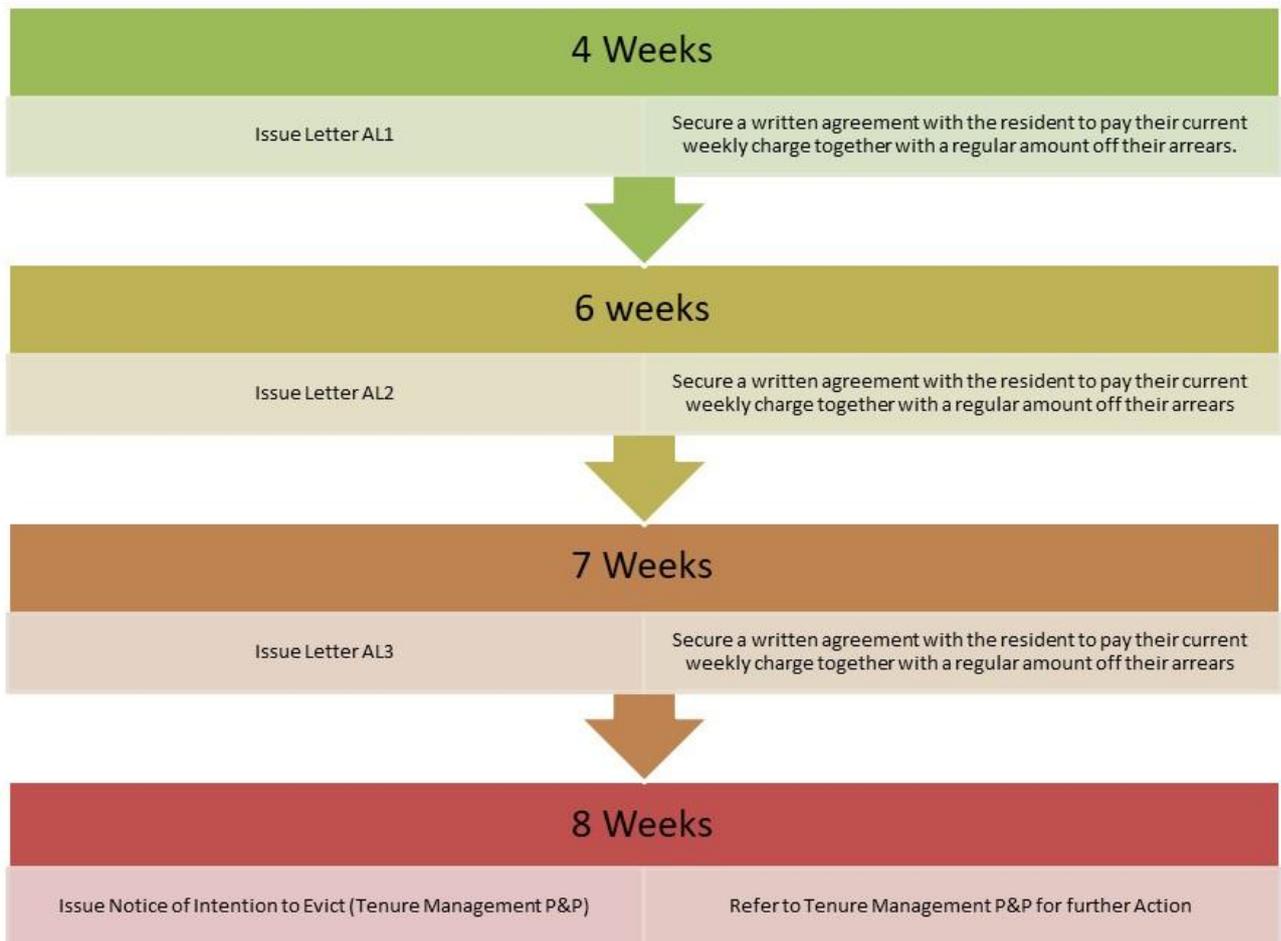
4.3 Procedure during Support Sessions



Guidance on support stage:

- (a) Staff should remind the resident that a complaint is not a valid reason not to pay rent. The YMCA will respond to any complaints as quickly as possible (please refer to our complaints policy for further information).
- (h)
- (i) During the move-in process, the staff must stress the importance of keeping a clear rent account; describe the arrears procedure and the possible implications should the resident fall into arrears.

4.4 Procedure on managing Arrears



Guidance on managing the arrears process:

- (a) Residents with bank accounts must be encouraged to complete a Standing Order Mandate.
- (b) The procedure for arrears must be followed in all cases. The only acceptable deviation from the arrears process is at the point of eviction where a manager can decide not to evict based on a thorough assessment of risk and the potential to recover the monies owed.

- (c) Individual staff should monitor residents' rent accounts weekly, and provide four weekly reports to their line manager on rental income management actions.
- (d) As soon as a resident's rent account falls into arrears, every effort must be made to secure a written agreement (arrears repayment agreement or also referred to as payment plan) with the resident to pay their current weekly charge together with a regular amount off their arrears. This amount should be realistic and based on the resident's ability to pay. This involves assessing the minimum amount that will be acceptable to YMCA St. Paul's Group and the maximum amount that the resident can reasonably afford.
- (e) Any repayment agreements reached, must be uploaded to the resident's file on Inform.
- (f) Where an agreement has been obtained, formal action should only be suspended once a payment has been made. If a payment is missed then formal action should be continued at the point it was suspended.
- (g) If a resident makes an agreement to pay at any point in the procedure, but then breaks that agreement, the arrears process continues at whichever point it was halted.
- (h) For actions at eight weeks of arrears, staff should refer to the Tenure Management Policy and Procedures for guidance on issuing the correct notice type.

5. Performance Reporting

- 5.1 Teams will be subject to periodic performance reporting against compliance with the Rental Income Management Policy and Procedures.
- 5.2 The process will be aligned to team performance, and run on a weekly and 4 weekly cycle to correspond with arrears reporting.
- 5.3 The following criteria will be applied:
 - ▶ Housing project achieving a green traffic light for current customer arrears – No audit
 - ▶ Housing project achieving an amber traffic light – a light touch audit of four customer files
 - ▶ Housing Project achieving a red traffic light – a more in-depth audit of eight customer files
- 5.4 Managers will be required to self-audit files and provide commentary to the Head of Housing, Care & Support.
- 5.5 The Head of Housing, Care & Support or their appointed representative will then re-audit these files as part of the performance management process.
- 5.6 Actions identified through the audit will then be communicated to the line manager of the team manager for follow up in one to ones.

APPENDICES

- Arrears Letter AL 1
- Arrears Letter AL 2
- Arrears Letter AL 3
- Arrears Repayment Agreement