

Income management and prevention of arrears policy

VERSION [1.2]

Sections Amended	Date of update	Approved by
Combination of relevant legacy YHG & Radian policies to create Abri policy	December 2020	SLT
Point 3.7 remove reference to 'mandatory grounds'	June 2022	Director of Housing & CI
Minor changes 3.4 mentioning specific teams internally and 3.9 change to wording.	January 2024	Head of Specialist Residential Services 19/01/2024

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Income management and prevention of arrears policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to the management and prevention of rent arrears.

2. This policy applies to...

- 2.1 All accounts for which customers are contractually obliged to make payment for rent, service charges and sundry debts owed to Abri.

3. Policy

Our policy is to:

- 3.1 Provide early intervention services on sign up to assist with benefit applications, tenancy advice and set up of payment method (i.e. direct debit where appropriate)
- 3.2 Ensure that monies owed to Abri are recovered in an efficient and effective manner.
- 3.3 Assist 'vulnerable' customers (including those on a low income) to maintain their tenancy by sign posting them for appropriate support.
- 3.4 Tenancy support for all customers may be offered at any stage and may be provided by a Welfare Benefits Officer or Tenancy Sustainment Officer depending on the customer's needs. Where Abri cannot provide Tenancy Support, we will signpost the customer to external agencies such as Citizens Advice. Abri do not offer debt advice so all support for this service will be by way of signposting to appropriate external agencies/organisations.
- 3.5 Monitor and report on performance and compliance on a weekly and monthly basis with performance being reported to the relevant performance monitoring committee.
- 3.6 Offer cost effective methods of payment and deliver self service processes to meet our customers' need. And where necessary pursuing DWP alternative payments arrangements.
- 3.7 Use all available remedies to collect income owed, including legal action. Application for forfeiture and Warrant of Eviction to be as a last resort and not before all other reasonable steps have been taken and proven unsuccessful.
- 3.8 Any large payments offered to Abri will be dealt with in line with Abri's Anti-money Laundering Procedure.
- 3.9 Where appropriate, and in line with the compensation payment procedure, compensation payments will be offset against outstanding debts to Abri.

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- 3.10 Communicate effectively with customers to ensure the contractual obligation to pay in line with the terms of their tenancy is clear.
- 3.11 Recover arrears resulting from overpayment of benefits i.e. Housing Benefit or Universal Credit where this debt has been passed on to Abri.
- 3.12 Recover legal costs where these have been awarded by the courts as part of a court order.
- 3.13 Pursue former tenant debt with consideration given to appropriate and proportionate methods available including the use of debt collection agencies.
- 3.14 Debts deemed to be uncollectable will be written off in line with Abri's Financial Regulations.
- 3.15 Ensure all information we store regarding the recovery of rent arrears will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 or any replacement legislation or regulation.

4. Legal & Regulatory Framework

- The Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Housing Acts 1985, 1988
- DWP Alternative Payments Arrangements
- Equality Act 2010

5. Related Policies

- Group Financial Regulations
- Equality Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy

6. Related Procedures

- Anti-money Laundering Procedure
- Former Tenants Arrears Procedure
- Managing rent arrears incl Bankruptcy Orders & Debt Relief Orders Procedure
- Rent Management Procedure
- Rent Refund Procedure
- Domestic Abuse Procedure
- Mental Capacity Procedure

7. Appendices

None.