Customer Involvement Expenses Policy

Cornwall Housing

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CORNWALL HOUSING

Policy control sheet

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Notes

This document details what support customers can expect from Cornwall Housing when participating in consultation about their housing service

Non-legal influences on this policy

The regulatory framework for social housing in England
Cornwall Housing Management Agreement
Secure tenants conditions of tenancy
Tenant Participation Compact

Legal influences on this policy

1985 Housing & Planning Act
1986 Housing & Planning Act
2011 Localism Act

Other documents linked to this policy

Tenant Participation Compact
Tenant Participation Strategy
Tenant Participation Core Standards

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1. The importance of involvement

Cornwall Housing and Cornwall Council recognise the importance of residents being involved in decisions that affect their homes and lives. We want to encourage involvement and out-of-pocket expenses can deter residents from becoming involved. This policy sets out how we reimburse genuine out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of involvement. It sets out when we will reimburse expenses, and what is needed in order to claim.

2. What is covered

This is not a reward scheme; Cornwall Housing (CHL) does not pay customers to become involved. CHL covers the extra costs that customers face as a result of becoming involved. Reimbursed out-of-pocket expenses are not earnings, and therefore no tax or national insurance is payable on the expenses reimbursed, nor should they affect entitlement to state benefits.

3. Who can claim

All Cornwall Council and Cornwall Housing tenants, leaseholders and other customers of Cornwall Housing can claim out-of-pocket expenses resulting from involvement.

4. How to claim

Complete the Customer expenses claim form in order to make a claim for expenses. A copy can be obtained from our website, from our engagement staff, or at the meeting itself. We will provide support in completing the claim form where needed by claimants, including providing a translation or a different format upon request.

Customers are encouraged to claim on the day of the meeting or within the month that the expense was occurred. Claims will normally be paid in cash on the day, although in certain circumstances payments may be made direct to a bank account. We require receipts or proof of spending and can help with establishing what would be sufficient proof.

5. Liabilities

CHL do not reimburse any fines incurred, for example speeding or parking. Where customers use their own vehicle to transport passengers they must ensure that this is not in breach of their insurance and that they stay within parking and other legal requirements. The act of reimbursing genuine out-of-pocket expenses does not in any way imply contract, or any other form, of employment, paid or unpaid.

6. Qualifying events

We will reimburse expenses for any meetings which CHL has arranged specifically for the purposes of involvement or governance and explicitly invited a customer to attend. Whilst CHL may in certain circumstances pay

subsistence costs incurred while attending meetings (e.g. where an overnight stay is required) this has to be explicitly agreed in writing with CHL engagement team before the expenses are incurred.

For certain meetings, such as the complainants or their advocates attending a Complaints Appeals panel, separate arrangements apply; you can find further details about this below under 'Examples of meetings not covered by this policy'.

The CHL engagement team will decide whether a meeting is a qualifying event and ensure that customers know whether expenses can be reimbursed. Occasional exceptions may be made so that customers can attend a non-qualifying meeting, but this is at CHL's discretion.

7. Examples of meetings covered by this policy:

- Tenant forum meetings
- Focus groups
- Tenant training
- Board committee meetings

8. Examples of meetings not covered by this policy:

- Local fun days and customer events – unless a customer is volunteering with CHL at the event
- Public and neighbourhood meetings - unless a customer is volunteering with CHL at the event
- Complaints Appeals panel - unless a customer is a volunteer on the hearing panel for that complaint
- Meetings arranged by tenants and residents associations or other customer groups
- Council meetings – unless a customer has been specifically invited by the council or CHL to observe or participate in that council meeting

9. Qualifying expenses

Reasonable qualifying expenses are:

- **Travel costs**, although in some circumstances we will arrange the travel for the meeting. For example, CHL may decide that a shared taxi or train is the most cost effective travel option. When claiming mileage we confirm mileage payable based on a route planner such as RAC or AA.
- **Care costs** for children or adult dependants by approval in advance.
- **Other costs** as set out below and by prior arrangement.

Full details of expenses are contained in the table on the following pages.

Expense	Amount	Details
Transport – getting to and from our meetings and training		
Car	Mileage as per HMRC's approved mileage rates for volunteers. (45p per mile for 2013.14)	You will need to provide details of the addresses you travelled between. Where someone not participating in the meeting drives a participant to enable them to attend, we will reimburse total mileage at the non-passenger rate.
	Passenger mileage 5p per mile will also be paid for each person who is participating in the meeting and is given a lift.	If you want to claim for passenger miles you will need to record how far each extra passenger travelled with you.
Motorbike	Mileage as per HMRC's approved mileage rates. 24p per mile for 2013.14	You will need to provide details of the addresses you travelled between. We will not reimburse passenger mileage for a motorbike claim.

Parking	Cost of parking at face value of the parking ticket.	We will reimburse parking for the duration of the meeting, including reasonable time to get to and from the car. We will need the copy or to photocopy the parking receipt.
Bus	Cost of ticket at face value	We will need the copy or to photocopy the bus ticket.
Taxi	Arranged by CHL, no reimbursement available.	Unless they are used as part of travel from a train or plane to a conference or out of county training venue, Taxis are available by prior arrangement only and will be organised by CHL. Eligibility is limited to: • Lack of suitable public transport • Group travel (where cost effective) • Late night travel • Mobility or specialist care needs • Exceptions as approved by the engagement team
Car ferry	Cost of ticket at face value	We will need the copy or to photocopy the ferry ticket.
Train	Cost of ticket at face	We will need the copy or to photocopy the

	value	train ticket. Out of county journeys must be booked by CHL.
Minibus, coach, or plane	Arranged by CHL, no reimbursement available.	Other transport may be booked by CHL because a journey is long, or many residents are travelling to the same venue.
Other expenses – other costs you may encounter		
Care costs	Cost of care where the resident is the carer of a dependant (a child or an adult who is unable to look after themselves). This must be discussed with the engagement team and an acceptable sum for the actual care costs should be agreed in advance.	We can reimburse the customer who has paid for the care. We will need the copy or to photocopy the care receipt to reimburse you.
Meals and refreshments	Arranged by CHL	Drinks and refreshments will be provided at all meetings to which customers are invited to participate. Meals, or buffet food, will be provided where meetings or travel to and from meetings cross mealtimes. You are responsible for informing us of any special dietary requirements or food allergies.
	Costs of meals and refreshments at external training, conferences and other CHL activities	Where CHL cannot provide refreshments customers may be permitted to buy their own meals and

	Maximum costs in line with those for staff of Cornwall Housing, details provided when required. This must be discussed and agreed with the engagement team prior to expenses being incurred.	refreshments. We will need the copy or to photocopy the receipt(s) to reimburse you.
Phone calls	No reimbursement available	We do not reimburse the costs of phone calls. Access to a CHL phone will be provided if it's needed for a particular CHL engagement activity.
	Cost of calls by prior arrangement only	Reimbursement may be agreed at our discretion where using a phone is necessary for the involvement – for example, performing research or mystery shopping for the Tenants' Scrutiny Panel
Stationary	Other arrangement in place, no reimbursement available	We do not reimburse the costs of stationary and consumables. All resources required will be provided for meetings or tasks arranged by CHL
Internet access	Broadband costs This must be discussed and agreed with the engagement team prior to expenses being incurred.	We only reimburse costs for broadband for very involved customers involved in activities like our Board or tenants' forum. We will need the copy or to photocopy the itemised receipt to reimburse you.

	Arranged by CHL	Some very involved customers who are eligible for broadband costs but do not have their own broadband may have their internet arranged by CHL.
Computer Access	Arranged by CHL	Very involved customers who do not have a computer are eligible for a desk top computer at the engagement team's discretion.
Computer software	No reimbursement available	All CHL computers have the required software. We do not reimburse the cost of software for customers personal computers.
Printers and printer ink	Other arrangement in place, no reimbursement available	We do not reimburse the costs of printing. All papers required will be provided for meetings or tasks arranged by CHL.

10. Monitoring and review

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice and current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all engagement polices.

Alternative formats

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If you would like this information on audio CD, audio tape, Braille, large print, any other format or interpreted in a language other than English, please contact:-

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