

Sundry Account Policy



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1 Aims

1. This policy sets out Jigsaw Group's (the Group) approach to the collection of debt on all sundry accounts.
2. The policy makes clear that payment of a sundry account is the responsibility of the customer even after they may have ended their tenancy or contract. The Group is committed to taking a proactive approach to prevent debts arising by offering appropriate and timely advice and assistance to its customers.
3. The Group will effectively pursue all monies owed to it in the most effective manner and will take swift action against willful non-payers, which may include recovery action via the Courts.

2 Scope

4. The policy applies to the collection of monies owed to members of the Group other than current tenant rent, service charge, personal charges, leaseholder arrears, garden and garages rents and former tenant arrears of any kind.
5. The Group's approach to the collection of sundry accounts is via two systems.
 - **Sundry Debtors** have invoices raised and collected via the Group's Finance System examples of these include billable services provided to Local Authorities, contract income and recharges to staff members.
 - **Tenant Sundry Debtors** are raised and collected via the Group's Housing Management System. Examples of these debts include court costs and rechargeable repairs..
6. For the purposes of this policy, distinction is made between Sundry Debtors and Tenant Sundry Debtors.
7. The value of invoices raised can range significantly from a few pounds to many thousands of pounds, and therefore, taken together the value of all these sundry accounts is considerable.
8. For the purposes of this statement, a 'debt' is any monies owed to the Group which has not been paid by the due date.

3 Policy Statement

9. The function and objectives of this policy are to ensure a good overall control of debt, maximise cash flow and to provide a cost effective service.
10. This is achieved by:
 - Ensuring Group Financial Regulations in relation to the collection of debt are adhered to,

- Actively chasing debt in accordance with the Sundry Debt Procedure Guide,
- Ensuring debtors are made aware of the Group's payment terms,
- Raising invoices in a timely and accurate manner,
- Ensuring invoices raised are valid and reflect services provided,
- Ensuring customers pay in accordance with the agreed terms,
- Maintaining and developing good customer relationships by adopting three principles considered to be best practice in enforcement activity, namely that at all times the Group's actions will be proportional, consistent and transparent,
- Taking a similar approach in cases with comparable circumstances to achieve similar ends by aiming to achieve consistency in the advice given, use of powers available to the Group and recovery procedures used. Consistency does not mean uniformity and staff must take account of all relevant factors when dealing with individual cases,
- Securing prompt payment and therefore minimising bad debts,
- Dealing with and resolving queries promptly,
- Offering efficient and flexible payment methods,
- Being mindful of any vulnerability or safeguarding issues,
- Taking prompt and efficient recovery action,
- Terminating services for non-payment where appropriate,
- Developing teamwork with all Service Areas including budget holders,
- Regular management reporting and performance measurement,
- Consistently implementing the policy.

4 Implementation of the Policy

11. The Group Income Team has the primary responsibility for the recovery of sundry account debts for the Group.

4.1. Sundry Debtors

Objectives

- To ensure prompt billing and recovery of all sundry debts
- Resolve any disputes relating to the invoice promptly

12. The objectives will be achieved by:

- Invoices will be raised promptly via the Group's Finance System. All requests for invoices are to be raised on the **Sales Invoice Request Form** saved in the Group's Document Management System. The form is to be completed ensuring the appropriate budget code is quoted and emailed along with supporting documents to: group.incometeam@jigsawhomes.org.uk
- All communication with customers will be in accordance with the Group's Contact Strategy.
- All records of contact will be maintained and recorded promptly and accurately on the Group's Income Management System,
- Ensure that payments are made within the terms of the agreement,
- Ensure appropriate liaison with the budget holder and the debtor to resolve dispute matters and negotiate alternative payment terms.

4.2. Tenant Sundry Debtors

Objectives

- To maximise the collection of sundry debts owed by current tenants,
- Ensure prompt action is taken to notify tenant sundry debtors of the outstanding debt,
- Make appropriate agreements if the debt cannot be paid in full,
- Offer incentives (as determined in the procedure guide) where applicable,
- Resolve any issues relating to the sundry debt promptly.

13. The objectives will be achieved by:

- Notifying at the earliest point, to provide tenant sundry debtors with the opportunity to address the debt,
- Use a wide variety of contact methods including (but not limited to) letters, statements, emails, automated calls and text messaging to generate contact,
- Ensure that at all points of contact that all debts are discussed for example the sundry debts should be discussed if a tenant contacts the Group about current rent or to report a repair,
- All records of contact to be maintained and recorded promptly and accurately on the Group's internal Housing Management System,
- Discussion with the tenant sundry debtor of their ability to pay and ensuring that payment of the sundry debt is not to the detriment of rent payments,
- Determine the issues surrounding any disputes that have been raised and negotiate payment terms,

- Signposting to the Citizens Advice Bureau and other external agencies,
- The Group will treat all joint tenants as jointly and severally liable for sundry account debts,
- Where a tenant sundry debtor has either not engaged or not maintained a satisfactory payment arrangement, consideration is to be made to take formal court action to pursue the debt.

14. Where a tenant owing sundry debts vacates their property, the recovery of sundry debts falls under the **Former Tenant Arrears Policy**.

4.3. Writing off Debt

15. A regular write-off exercise ensures that resources can be focused on accounts where there is a good prospect of recovery.
16. There will be instances where, despite all reasonable efforts or due to circumstances, it is not possible to pursue a debt further and the sundry account debt should be submitted for write-off.

Sundry Debtors

17. A sundry debt is submitted by the Group Income Team for approval of write-off, in the following circumstances:
- Management (Assistant Director or above) has made a decision to write off the debt,
 - It is uneconomical to pursue the debt due to the value outstanding,
 - The customer has obtained a Bankruptcy or a Debt Relief Order and the moratorium period for this order has expired,
 - The company or organisation no longer exists and there are no outstanding monies due via the liquidation process.
18. Once the write-off has been approved by an Assistant Director or above and in line with the approval limits as per the Group Financial Regulations, the invoice will be credited on the Group's Finance System and recorded as bad debt.

Tenant Sundry Debtors

19. A debt is submitted by the Group Income Team for approval of write-off, in the following circumstances:

- The customer has obtained a Bankruptcy or a Debt Relief Order and the moratorium period for this order has expired. If at the point of the moratorium period expiring the outstanding current arrears level is lower than what is stipulated in the order the Group will write off only the lower amount,
- Sensitive cases which have been assessed by the relevant Operational Director

20. The referrals for write-off will be contained in a schedule containing the following:

- Account reference,
- Balance outstanding,
- Action taken to recoup debt,
- Reason for write off request,
- Age of the debt.

21. Once the write-off has been approved in line with the approval limits set out in the Group Financial Regulations in the Housing Management System / Tenant Sundry Debtors Authorisation Limits table, the transaction will be input on the Group's Housing Management System and recorded as a write-off adjustment.

5 Monitoring and Delivery

22. Performance is monitored by the Group Income Team Manager by undertaking quality checks on the work completed by the Group Income Officers and by monitoring Key Performance Indicators.

23. The Group Income Team are set cash collection targets each financial year which are monitored on a four weekly basis.

24. Monthly reports will be produced and sent to budget holders to monitor any debt raised for Sundry Debts and to highlight the age of the debt.

6 Confidentiality and Data Sharing

25. The Group will treat all information we receive from Sundry Debtors in relation to this policy in confidence and in accordance with its Group **Data Protection Policy**. The Group's processing of personal data, including sharing with third parties, will only take place where there is a lawful basis to do this.

7 Equality and Diversity

26. Where appropriate the Group will provide alternative formats for contacting customers to overcome communication barriers such as language barriers, hearing or visual impairments.
27. When implementing the policy and any associated procedures the Group will ensure that it complies with the Equality Act 2010.
28. Though implementation of the policy, the Group will not discriminate on the grounds of any protected characteristic, namely: age; disability; gender; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; maternity; race and ethnicity; religion or belief and sexual orientation.

8 Complaints and Appeals

29. Any complaints regarding failure to follow this policy and or associated procedure or about the way a customer has been treated in relation to this policy will be dealt with through the Group's Complaints Policy.

9 Legislation and Regulation

30. This policy is linked to the following:
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - The General Data Protection Regulation

10 Related Policies and Procedures

31. This policy has links to other Group Policies and Procedures:
 - Complaints Policy
 - Current Rent and Service Charge Collection Policy
 - Group Financial Regulations
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Former Tenant Arrears Policy
 - Sundry Debt Procedure guide
 - Sales Ledger Procedure guide

11 Document Control

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