

# Resident Expenses Policy and Procedure

## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1 In order to promote and sustain the involvement of residents in all levels of Catalyst Housing Group (CHG) activities, it is the policy of CHG to reimburse reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred by residents whilst attending meetings organised by, or carrying out other activities on behalf of, CHG. These 'out of pocket expenses' will usually be restricted to dependant care costs and travel expenses.
- 1.2 In order to support and facilitate the capacity building of our residents', it is the policy of CHG that the group will pay part or all of the cost of training courses, seminars, and conferences on behalf of residents with prior agreement of the relevant budget holder. Where these activities require it, CHG may also pay the cost of accommodation and give a subsistence allowance or reimburse food expenses on behalf of residents.
- 1.3 It is the policy of CHG to offer 'thank-you' or incentive vouchers to participants in focus groups. 'Thank-you' or incentive payments should always be paid in the form of vouchers. It is not normal practice to offer the cash value of the voucher as an alternative, except in exceptional circumstances. Vouchers will be purchased for specific usage and will, therefore, only be purchased as and when required.
- 1.4 CHG will not reimburse expenses incurred in the course of meeting the requirements of one's tenancy; e.g. in the attendance of meetings with one's housing officer, or in the viewing of a property.
- 1.5 CHG would not normally reimburse costs incurred through attendance at events organized and run by residents themselves; although funding for such events may be provided by CHG in other ways.
- 1.6 To ensure the correct and appropriate use of CHG funds, it is necessary to ensure that all expenses paid are monitored and accounted for, with supporting valid supplier receipts.

## 2. Scope of the policy

- 2.1 The term 'resident' is used in this document to describe tenants, shared-owners, and leaseholders of CHG. It applies in part to people living in schemes managed but not owned by CHG, and to people whom are not residents of CHG but are in receipt of floating support.
- 2.2 The term 'involvement staff' is a generic term used in this document to describe both resident Involvement Officers/Managers and Community Development Officers/ Managers, or any other staff member to whom the responsibility falls to arrange for expenses payments to be made to residents.
- 2.3 The term 'care expenses' is used to describe both childcare expenses and care of vulnerable adult expenses - for those residents who may provide full time care for a vulnerable adult relative e.g. a partner, a parent, or an adult child.
- 2.4 This policy details the procedures for payment of expenses to:
  - residents who participate in meetings and activities organised by or on behalf of CHG, such as regional resident's forums and focus groups
  - residents attending training courses, seminars or conferences for which part or all of the cost is to be met by CHG

### 3. Legal / Regulatory Framework

- 3.1 The Regulatory Code, 2.3.3 States: '*Housing Associations must maintain the highest standards of probity in all their dealings: conducting their business so they are accessible and transparent to residents and other stakeholders;*'

### 4. General Resident Expenses Procedures

- 4.1 Travel - Travel would normally be by standard class rail or bus or by private car or taxi where suitable public transport is not available.

If a private car is used, mileage allowance will be paid at the same rate as the Catalyst Housing Group (CHG) non-essential car user allowance. Mileage should be paid according to the rate at the time the journey was undertaken, with prior consent from the budget holder.

For all other journeys, travel costs will be reimbursed provided a valid receipt is submitted which proves the travel journey including cost, time and date.

- 4.2 Care Expenses - Care expenses will be made by invoice or upon receiving receipts from a valid registered carer, in line with CHG's procedures for staff, and with prior consent from the relevant budget holder.

All arrangements for care, other than if crèche provision is made by CHG, are solely the responsibility of the parent or guardian. Therefore, in such circumstances it is the parent or guardian's responsibility to ensure that proper checks are made where necessary.

- 4.3 Incentive Vouchers - 'Thank-you' or incentive payments should always be paid in the form of vouchers. It is not normal practice to offer the cash value of the voucher as an alternative, except in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement from a relevant budget holder. The limits for the amount to be paid in vouchers have been set at £10 minimum and £20 maximum per session, dependant on the nature of said session. The actual value of incentive vouchers offered may vary from session to session and will be at the discretion of the regional resident involvement staff, within the limit set out above.

*NB: Please note that rewards or prize draws are given at the total discretion of the responsible CHG budget holder and are therefore, not subject to the above limits.*

- 4.4 Telephone Expenses - Residents who are sometimes required to make business calls using their home or mobile telephone on behalf of and with prior agreement from the relevant CHG budget holder, should claim reimbursement of such call costs by entering the amount to be claimed on an expense claim form (see Appendix 2) attaching the fully itemized telephone bill in question and explaining the purpose of the call. CHG will not bear any part of the rental cost of a land-based or mobile telephone line; nor will CHG bear the cost of any private calls. Such costs should be deducted from the total amount of each bill and only the net amount, representing only business calls (and the VAT thereon), should be included on the expense claim form.

- 4.5 Subsistence Allowance - Sometimes residents attending all day conferences/ seminars/ training sessions will require meals which are not provided as part of said session, residents should be either:

- Given a subsistence allowance of a value appropriate to the occasion consistent with CHG's current arrangements for staff.
- Or reimbursed the cost following submission of receipts not exceeding the taxable limits.

Subsistence allowance will only be given where prior agreement has been arranged with the appropriate budget holder.

- 4.6 Accommodation Costs - Where residents require over-night accommodation due to attendance at training courses or seminars, this should normally be arranged by CHG staff. The accommodation should be of reasonable quality and where possible payment will be made direct by CHG to the hotel, either through submission of an invoice or direct payment from members of staff. Reimbursement will be made only for the cost of the room, breakfast, and any evening meals not covered by the subsistence allowance. Any such costs will be made with prior agreement from the relevant budget holder.

Residents should be made aware that the items of a personal nature, such as mini-bar drinks, newspaper and video hire will not be reimbursed by CHG. Where these items are included in the bill, the cost will be deducted from other related expense claims or the resident will be asked to pay back the money to CHG.

- 4.7 Evidencing money spent – In all scenarios listed above, the money paid out to residents in cash, cheque and/or vouchers should be documented on the form in Appendix 1 or 2 of this document, attaching any valid original receipts or tickets, this must be signed by both the resident and the relevant budget holder.

Reimbursement forms must be completed immediately after the event and a cheque will be drawn in the next weekly cheque run.

Copies of the forms should be kept until the end of the current financial year at minimum.

**Please Note: A 'budget holder' is a senior manager within Catalyst Housing Group**

