



Internal Audit Briefing Note

Author: Lesley Bilsborough

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Circulation:

Assistant Director Housing Services

Service Manager – Repairs, Maintenance  
and Customer Experience

## Independent Review of Decant Information

### 1. Background

In the response from the Housing Ombudsman for a complaint, Order 2 stated that:

*Within 8 weeks of the date of this report, the landlord must provide evidence that it has conducted an independent review of this case – this should be done by someone independent of the service area or landlord.*

*The review must identify from January 2023:*

- a. how many other requests for temporary moves were received*
- b. how many were refused*
- c. the duration of the move, and*
- d. how many complaints were raised by residents regarding decants/temporary moves and the outcomes – broken down for 2023/24 and 2024/25*
- e. that the review was shared with its governing body for scrutiny as well as with us.*

Following further correspondence with the Housing Ombudsman, it was confirmed that *“the review should be conducted by an individual external to the housing service; however, we will accept a review by another team within the council. The stage 2 response was issued by a Principal Auditor, and therefore, it is essential that the review remains independent of anyone who has had prior involvement with the case”* and the deadline was extended until 16 September to allow appropriate reporting.

This review has been undertaken by an Audit Manager within the Internal Audit Service, who has not been involved in the initial complaint. The work has been conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK public sector and specifically its requirements in relation to independence.

---

### 2. Information provided

For points a and c above, the Lettings Team provided a spreadsheet of 37 temporary decant cases, with lengths ranging from 888 to 4 days. The average length was 286 days. The start dates for these cases are between January 2023 to June 2025.

Further information was requested on the reasons for the decant and its duration for the 8 longest cases. For one of these cases, the decant was due to hoarding and not repairs. Reasons for longer decant periods include the scale of repairs involved and the individual circumstances of the tenants, and it was evident from details provided that cases are kept under review.

For point b above, the Allocation and Accommodation Manager confirmed that the Lettings Team would not have this information as they only become aware of cases once a decant form has been completed. The Responsive Repairs Manager stated a request for a decant would be assessed by a member of the Responsive Repairs Team and if it is justified, the decant form will be completed and sent to the Lettings Team. However, if the request is not justified so not progressed, it is not recorded.

For point d, the Tenant Voice and Customer Experience Manager confirmed that there have been three Stage 1 complaints regarding decant/temporary moves in 2023/24 and 2024/25, in addition to the complaint in question. Two of these three complaints were escalated to Stage 2.

The outcomes of these complaints were as follows:

- A Stage 1 complaint raised in August 2024 was about the move to the decanted property as there was a delay in connecting the gas supply. It was upheld due to an error in ordering the gas test. The Stage 2 complaint was not upheld as the Stage 1 investigation was deemed thorough.
- A Stage 1 complaint raised in April 2023 was about the delay in arranging alternative accommodation. The Stage 2 complaint was partially upheld, acknowledging that the customer care standard was not met, and a goodwill payment was offered.
- A Stage 1 complaint raised in March 2024 was about damage caused to the property which led to the decant and also about the length/location of the decanted stay. This mainly dealt with the contractor's insurers and was resolved through correspondence and evidence submission.

There was a separate additional Stage 2 complaint raised in November 2024, which included an element about a decant (not included in Stage 1), with the following outcome:

- Overall, this complaint was not upheld. The specific finding relating to the decant was that while the possibility of a decant was discussed, it

was not promised and ultimately deemed unnecessary due to the short timeframe for works.

---

### **3. Review findings**

From review of records and sample testing, the review found that reliance can be provided on the decant figures provided and the Stage 1 and 2 complaints overview.

For point b, it was confirmed that this information is not currently available. The Housing Ombudsman's decant expectations for landlords do not specifically include the recording of decisions not to proceed with a decant. However, recording decisions demonstrates transparency in the landlord's actions and allows for accountability if questions or disputes arise later.

---

### **4. Review recommendation**

It is recommended that decisions made by the Responsive Repairs Team not to proceed with a decant are recorded. The Responsive Repairs Manager has agreed to implement this recommendation with immediate effect.

---

### **5. Conclusion**

With the exception of refused decants, the information requested by the Housing Ombudsman has been collated and found to be satisfactory through independent review.