



PEAKS & PLAINS
Housing Trust

The Trust

Involved Customer Expenses Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Trust recognises the valuable role that customers (tenants, leaseholders and shared owners) play in matters relating to their homes and neighbourhoods, promoting accountability, transparency, providing feedback on and improving services, as well as developing future services.
- 1.2. It must be stressed that whilst guidelines are provided within this policy it is the customer's responsibility to ensure that expenditure is reasonable at all times. The Trust will not reimburse expenses incurred that do not comply with this policy.
- 1.3. Whilst involved customers act in a voluntary capacity, it is not expected that they should be out of pocket when acting on Trust business.
- 1.4. Involved customers expenses will not be treated as earned income and therefore not be subject to income tax and national insurance if they are paid at the tax free limits i.e. 45p for first 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter. If any personal tax liability should arise as a result of involved customers activities, the Trust will pay the liability on behalf of the tenant including the liabilities resulting from the payment.
- 1.5. Expenses that may be claimed and the procedure for claims, authorisation and reimbursement are set out in this policy.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to all of the Trust's involved customers and outlines what they are entitled to claim in relation to expenses and the process for claiming these. It aims to ensure that customers are reimbursed for expenses that are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessary in order to carry out the duties of their role as an involved customer.

3. LEGAL & REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1. There is no legal or regulatory requirement to have an expenses policy however it is considered best practice to provide involved customers with a fair reimbursement process for expenses.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. **Wholly, Exclusively and Necessarily:** Expenses that have been incurred are exclusively, and solely for the Trust purposes and are essential for carrying out their roles.
- 4.2. **Subsistence:** expenses include meals and any other necessary costs of travelling for example parking charge

5. OUR POLICY

5.1 Approval and Authorisation

- 5.1.1 All claims must be submitted in a timely manner, on the appropriate claim form (Appendix B) and be signed by the claimant.
- 5.1.2 Claim forms must be submitted to the Customer Voice and Communications Team within two months of the relevant meeting taking place. Late claims will not be accepted and entitlement to the expense claim will be lost.
- 5.1.3 All submissions must include relevant receipts, invoices and other supporting information, for mileage claims this includes details of every journey undertaken.
- 5.1.4 Claims will be processed and paid into the claimants' bank account within 28 calendar days of submission of the claim. The Trust does not offer other options for payment of the claims.
- 5.1.5 Involved customers remain responsible for the accuracy of the claims they submit. If the claim form is unsigned or unclear it will be returned to the claimant for completion/clarification, rather than processed for payment. If involved customers are unclear how to complete the claim form, they should consult the Customer Voice and Communications Team.
- 5.1.6 If a claim or part of a claim is disallowed the involved customer will be informed within 10 working days and given a reason, the Trust shall pay any/all undisputed amounts of the claim as outlined in the payment process. If the involved customer does not agree with a decision to disallow a claim, they then have 10 working days to ask for the matter to be reconsidered by the Customer Voice and Communications Team and Head of Business Assurance, whose decision on the subject will be final.

5.1 **Travel Expenses**

- 5.2.1 The Trust will reimburse any reasonable costs of necessary travel when on pre-approved involvement activities as set out in **Appendix A**.
- 5.2.2 All involved customers should travel to meetings, training and events by the most cost-effective mode of transport as agreed with relevant manager, considering journey time, potential for car sharing, accessibility needs as well as monetary costs.

5.3 **Car/Motorcycle Travel**

- 5.3.1 Where it is cost effective to make a journey to involvement activity by car or motorcycle, a mileage allowance is available. The mileage for every journey must be recorded with the claim on the expense claim form (See appendix B). Rates for casual car, bicycle and motorcycle users are set out in **Appendix A** and are as per HMRC allowances and rates.
- 5.3.2 Where mileage claims are over £25.00 per journey, they should be capped at the cost of a standard class rail fare equivalent.
- 5.3.3 Payment of speeding or car parking fines is the responsibility of the involved customer concerned.

5.4 **Taxis**

- 5.4.1 The rate for travel by taxi will be the amount of actual fare shown on a receipt or they will be booked by the Trust using the contracted taxi provider.

5.5 **Public transport including trains**

- 5.5.1 The Trust will normally pay standard-class rail fare. However, this may be substituted by discounted first class rail or other transport, provided the cost does not exceed the cost of a standard-class fare for the same journey.
- 5.5.2 Involved customers should make reasonable efforts to inform the Customer Voice and Communications Team in advance of the journey, to enable the Trust to benefit from the best rates possible, by booking in advance or arranging discount railcards. Involved customers can make their own train travel arrangements and claim back costs using the form included in this policy (**Appendix B**).

5.6 **Accommodation**

- 5.6.1 Overnight accommodation shall be considered when the participant's personal circumstances such as length of stay away from home, mobility and/or any disability are taken into account.
- 5.6.2 The accommodation should be limited to a single occupancy room with en-suite facilities and is subject to the limits shown in **Appendix A**.
- 5.6.3 In all cases, where an overnight stay is appropriate, the Trust shall arrange, and make payment for such accommodation in advance.

5.7 **Subsistence** (includes meals and any other necessary costs of travelling)

- 5.7.1 Expenses to reimburse the actual costs of subsistence are also payable to involved customers where, due to carrying out an approved duty, there is an absence from the usual place of residence for a period of time of more than 4 hours and within the time periods as described in the following paragraphs.
- 5.7.2 Claims for subsistence expenses should provide details of the approved duty and the time of departure from, and arrival at, the normal place of residence. Receipts should be provided with the claim. Guests will not be paid for except carers of involved customers by completing the expense form in appendix B.

5.1.1. The following rates apply for periods of absence:

- Breakfast – if the absence from the usual place of residence is for one hour or more before 9.00am – the cost of the meal (receipted) limited to the rate set in Appendix 1 if not taken in Hotel.
- Lunch - if the involved tenant is absent from the usual place of residence between 12 noon and 2.00 pm – the cost of the meal up (receipted) to the rate set in Appendix 1
- Evening meal and beverages, if the absence from the usual place of residence is for more than 4 hours ending after 7.00 pm – the cost of the meal (receipted) up to the rate set in Appendix 1 after 6.30 pm (or the Table d'hôte price of the hotel where the involved customer is staying in if this is more than the set rate); and
- Meals paid for by the Trust as entertainment or as part of training events will not be considered under this policy.

5.2. **Carers**

5.2.1. Carers expenses will be paid in respect of costs necessarily incurred by involved customers in arranging care for:

- A child or children under the age of 15
- A dependent requiring care

5.2.2. The involved customer claiming for the cost of a carer must notify the Trust of the identity of the carer, who for a claim to be made, must not be a member of the claimant's immediate family or household nor be funded by any other means.

5.2.3. Involved customers who need a carer themselves to fulfil their duties as an involved customer, can claim the carers expenses in line with this policy as if the Carer was an involved customer, provided the expenses are not already funded and have occurred directly and exclusively as a result of the involved customer fulfilling their duties.

5.2.4. The rate of carers' expenses is set out in Appendix 1.

5.9 **Incentives, Rewards and Training**

The Trust may offer incentives as a reward when consulting with customers on policies, strategies or changes to service. For example, customers may be entered into a prize draw for a voucher, given vouchers for attending sessions or the Trust may offer food at meetings.

5.9.1 If the Trust determines a customer requires or would benefit from training in order to complete tasks for involvement activities, the Trust will cover the costs of the training, as well as:

- Travel to and from the training venue
- Childcare or carer costs necessary to enable the customer's attendance,
- Where not included, meals at the training

6. BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

- 6.1 The right to travel and subsistence expenses will be removed whilst an involved customer is suspended from customer voice activity for breach of the Code of Conduct or for any other reason.

7. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

- 7.1 The purpose of the policy is to address the financial barriers stopping customers from engaging in customer voice activity.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics have been carefully considered when writing this policy to ensure that it is inclusive regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender reassignment, disability, religious belief, pregnancy or anyone who is in a civil partnership or married.
- 7.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and has been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team.

8 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 8.1 The Executive Management Team is responsible for approving the policy.
- 8.2 The Customer Voice and Communications Manager is responsible for the authorisation of expense claims from involved customers.

The authoriser must satisfy themselves that the mileage and expenses are reasonable, legitimately incurred with adequate supporting information as set out in this policy before approving the claim.

8.3 Involved Customer's responsibilities

All claims must be submitted in a timely manner, on the appropriate claim form (Appendix B) and be signed by the claimant.

9 MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 9.1 All expense claims are authorised by the Customer Voice and Communications Manager
- 9.2 Expenses form part of the annual budget, these are reviewed with budget holders.
- 9.3 Rates will be reviewed annually by the Executive Management Team and Finance Team or when HMRC rates are amended..

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 This has been through customer consultation and supported by Challenge Group. Internally, All Managers (AMT) and the Senior Management Team (SMT) have been consulted about this policy.

11 REVIEW

- 11.1 The policy will be reviewed, and approved by EMT, at least once every three years.

12 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Customer Voice Strategy
- Customer Code of Conduct

POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Name:	Involved Customer Expenses Policy
Status:	Final/Approved
Approved by:	Executive Management Team
Drafted By:	Customer Voice and Communications Manager
Date approved:	29 November 2024
Next Review Date:	December 2027

APPENDIX 1 – INVOLVED CUSTOMERS EXPENSES POLICY / EXPENSE RATES 2024/25

These rates will be reviewed annually and approved by the Executive Management Team.

TRAVEL	
Travel by Motorcycle	24p per mile
Travel by Private Motor Vehicle	45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter
Hybrid Car mileage will be paid at the rate above	

Where claims are over £25.00 per journey, they will be capped at the cost of a standard class rails fare equivalent.

Travel by Taxi where appropriate	The actual fare shown on a receipt or taxi's will be booked by the Trust using their contracted taxi provided.
Travel by Public Transport	Will not exceed standard rail fare

Accommodation	
outside M25	Limited to £100 (or best available rate) per night
Inside M25	Limited to £150 (or best available rate) per night

SUBSISTENCE	
Breakfast	Limited to £10.00
Lunch	Limited to £10.00
Dinner	Up to £20 after 6.30pm (or table d'hôte price)

CARERS AND CHILDCARE	
The rate of carers' expenses is	£12.00 per hour*

*Based on real living wage hourly rate Living Wage Foundation | For the real cost of living (to be adjusted should this rate change).

INTERNET / BROADBAND	
The rate is for involved customers that are standing members of the Trust's Challenge Group, where digital communications are being reviewed by the group on behalf of the Trust	Limited to £10.00 per month

APPENDIX B – EXPENSE FORM