



INCOME MANAGEMENT:

CIH charter for housing



INCOME MANAGEMENT: CIH CHARTER FOR HOUSING

There has never been a more challenging time to be a social landlord: the roll out of universal credit, welfare reforms and the rent reduction from April 2016 continue to put financial pressure on landlords and tenants alike. More than ever, landlords need to ensure that their core services - especially income management - are efficient, effective and fit for purpose in this new operating landscape.

The CIH **income management charter** is a flexible framework that helps you develop an excellent approach to managing internal income collection. It helps organisations to identify what outcomes a good quality income management service can deliver. It is intended to be used as a self assessment tool and to support internal challenge and service improvement - through tenant scrutiny, peer or independent review for example.

The charter focuses on income management – to include rental income, service charges and sundry debts. It does not cover investment or grant income. However, the underlying principles may be adapted to cover these areas.

By signing up to the CIH income management charter, you are making a public commitment to deliver a high quality approach to income management, which balances the needs of the business against outcomes for tenants.

There are five core principles underpinning the **income management charter** for housing

1. It has been developed using sector expertise
2. It is flexible and can be tailored to suit the outcomes that matter to you and your tenants
3. It is focused on outcomes, not on processes
4. It drives sector-led improvement
5. It complements existing frameworks or initiatives

How do we sign up for the charter?

Initial sign-up is voluntary, based on self-assessment – at this stage you will be recognised as ‘working towards’ meeting the commitments of the charter. To be recognised as fully meeting the commitments of the charter, you will need to undergo an independent accreditation carried out by CIH consultancy. When you pass this you will be publically recognised as meeting the commitments of the charter and will receive the charter stamp and certificate.

What are we signing up to?

	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
1	We recognise that effective income management is integral to everything we do as a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is strong corporate commitment, leadership and accountability to deliver an effective approach to managing our income streams• Our approach to governance and risk management enables us to understand and plan for potential challenges to our income streams• We have a whole organisational approach to income management - it is not just seen as the function of the income collection team• We have robust governance and scrutiny arrangements in place to challenge and drive performance• We are flexible and quick to respond to any economic, legislative and regulatory changes that will impact on the way we manage our income• Our whole organisation understands the importance of income collection in terms of our overall financial viability

What are we signing up to?

	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
2	We equip everyone involved in income management with the right skills, capacity and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commit sufficient time, capacity and resources to ensure we can consistently and effectively collect income • We have a structure in place that has the right people, with the right skills in the right jobs to ensure effective income management • We invest in training and development to ensure that staff at all levels have the appropriate knowledge, skills and flexibility to manage income recovery efficiently and effectively • We have (or are proactively working towards) reliable and flexible IT systems that provide real time payment information, self serve options for tenants and we support our staff to manage income effectively • We have robust, flexible procedures that enable staff to use their judgement and that reflect the best interests of both our tenants and the business
3	We provide an accessible and accountable income management service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have created a payment culture and tenants understand the need to pay their rent, service charges and other sundry debts; and the impact on them and the business if they don't • We offer a range of options for tenants to pay their rent, service charges and other debts, to balance the needs of our tenants and our business • We treat people fairly regardless of age, disability, gender assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation • We take all complaints about the services we provide seriously. This is demonstrated in our overall approach to handling complaints, which are regularly monitored against targets and contribute to the process of continual learning • We collect relevant and meaningful information about tenants, which helps us to tailor our income management approach accordingly. Information collected is safely stored and used in accordance with data protection requirements

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	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
3	<i>[Continued]</i> We provide an accessible and accountable income management service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide a range of jargon-free communication options which give clear and concise information on service standards, payment methods, and how to get help. Information is available in different languages and formats (on request) • We have clear policies, procedures and processes in place for delivering the income management service, which set out the aims of the service and the roles and responsibilities of all parties. Policies and procedures are developed in consultation with stakeholders • We use our existing knowledge about our tenants as well as responding to new information and circumstances to ensure that vulnerable tenants and other high-risk groups are appropriately supported
4	We deliver a fair and consistent approach to income management that reflects a commitment to creating sustainable tenancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our approach to income management balances prevention, support and recovery • We have appropriate resources in place to minimise the risk of rent arrears by carrying out a robust approach to prevention, including pre-tenancy work • We provide a range of tenancy support services, both in-house and through partnership working, which cover money and financial inclusion advice and employment support • We ensure that our approach is proportionate and flexible, taking into account individual circumstances, while upholding the values of our organisation • Our overarching ethos is one that encourages and supports tenant independence with a focus on enabling them to pay their rent • We consider affordability alongside what we need to deliver and improve services when setting our rent and other charges • We ensure that appropriate and timely referrals are made to homelessness and other advice services when we do take enforcement action

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	Core commitment	We can demonstrate that
5	We ensure that a value for money approach is embedded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for money is understood and embedded in our work. It is part of our performance management framework, determines how we allocate resources and is widely communicated to staff and tenants who are encouraged to identify opportunities to improve value for money We understand the cost of delivering our income management service balanced against the impact of our activities and assess and re-configure our approach regularly We understand how our cost and performance compares with other similar or local landlords and we use that information to improve our service
6	We continually strive to understand and improve our performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have an effective performance management framework in place to report, monitor and review performance. Our income recovery targets are challenging, subject to regular review and contribute to ongoing improvement Tenants are encouraged and able to hold us to account about how we manage our income management service. We provide our tenants with regular information in an agreed format on our costs, performance and satisfaction, to enable them to make evidence-based, value for money judgements. We use information obtained from tenant scrutiny to inform and drive service development We encourage feedback about our income management service including comments, compliments and complaints, and meaningful satisfaction information. We use this feedback intelligently to continuously review and improve our service Good practice is sought and adopted from within and outside the sector

If you think your organisation meets all of the above criteria, why not apply for the CIH income management accreditation to receive formal sector recognition as one of the leaders in the delivery of effective income management services? **Find out more and apply at: www.cih.org/**