1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy will ensure that Radius will maximise income through the effective management of our current tenant's rental accounts including licensee and leaseholder accounts. Rental income is Radius' main source of income with effective and efficient management of rent and associated charges vital to the successful functioning of Radius. To ensure we maximise our rental income Radius will have a clear, consistent, and cost-effective approach to income collection.

1.2 This policy will cover Radius' approach to dealing with the management of our rental accounts and the recovery of current tenant rent arrears. The approach to dealing with former tenant arrears is set out in Former Tenants Arrears and Credits Policy (HPO016).

1.3 To maximise rental income this Policy must be read in line with Radius arrears procedures:

- Preventative Arrears Procedure (HPR049)
- Arrears Recovery Procedure (HPR050)
- Legal & EJO Action for Arrears Recovery Procedure (HPR051)

2.0 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of this policy are to:

- Have preventative measures in place to prevent arrears accruing.
- Assist tenants to sustain their tenancies by ensuring appropriate support and advice is provided to tenants around paying their rent.
- Maximise rental income and manage debt.
- Provide guidance for staff on effective management, recording and reporting of current tenant rental accounts.
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements, court and Enforcement of Judgement (EJO) protocols.
- Guide staff through the process of recouping debt and/or possession of land.

3.0 Roles

3.1 All staff involved in the arrears processes (preventative, recovery and legal) must ensure that all actions or contact with the tenant is recorded on the housing management system.

3.2 Admin will review and action the Universal Credit (UC) and Rate Rebate Landlord Portal to verify claims and set up Alternative Payment arrangements via the UC Portal.

3.3 Housing Officers will support the tenant by promoting tenancy sustainment at tenancy commencement (including rent payments in advance), referrals to supporting agencies and maintain two-way communication with the Income Officer.

3.4 Income Officers must ensure personal contact with tenants in arrears. They will complete all arrearsrecommendations, monitor rental accounts weekly, commence legal action when required and take appropriate action in line with the relevant arrear's procedures.

3.5 Senior Housing Officers and the Area Housing Manager with rental income responsibility will provide support and guidance to their team, carry out weekly and monthly performance checks and carryout audits in line with the department's annual audit schedule.

4.0 Support, Advice & Advocacy

4.1 Tenants are to be encouraged to contact Radius immediately if they experience any problems paying their rent to discuss the problem and agree a repayment arrangement. Tenants should also be advised to report any changes to their circumstances including changes to their household composition to Radius and relevant benefit agencies as this could affect their entitlement to benefits.

4.2 We will continually promote Radius' in-house Financial Inclusion Service to tenants. This service aims to support tenants with advice and assistance they may need to maximise their income. Referrals are available for all Radius tenants both via a member of staff or directly by the tenant(s) to the Financial Inclusion Team.

4.3 The focus on referrals will be predicated on early intervention to avoid unmanageable debts building up with personal contact. Ensuring tenants are provided with the assistance they may need to maximise their income and/or budget their income more effectively.

4.4 Officers will make best use of the financial inclusion service and make referrals to this service in a timely manner to support our tenants and avoid increasing rent arrears.

4.5 Any referrals for both in-house and to external agencies must have explicit consent from the tenant(s) and recorded on their tenancy diary.

5.0 Preventative Action

5.1 Arrears prevention is a key objective for all staff in Radius involved in income collection. Our intention is to prevent debt occurring wherever possible and to minimise this debt by implementing actions to control any rise in debt.

5.2 Communities staff have a key role to pay at the start of tenancy to ensure that:

- Tenants are aware of all the charges which they are responsible for
- Information and assistance is provided in relation to any support that a tenant can receive through the benefits system.
- Tenants understand the requirements of Universal Credit and what it means for them.
- We continue to support tenants through the transition and to sustain their tenancies.
- Referrals to specialist welfare benefit advice and support services to promote financial inclusion, maximise income and minimise the adverse impact of welfare reform.

5.3 Radius will also ensure that there are various of methods of payments available to our tenants.

6.0 Arrears Recovery

6.1 When arrears occur, it is important that cases are identified and actioned as early as possible to avoid increasing debt. The Officers will monitor rent accounts on a weekly basis and follow our escalation process in Arrears Recovery Procedure (HPR050) to avoid debt increasing.

6.2 For staff to monitor rent accounts efficiently and effectively we will use arent analytics tool to identify those accounts that require action to address a payment issue. Staff

are required to action all recommendations flagged by our rent analytic tool using our housing management system.

6.3 Officers are required to maintain contact with tenants in arrears throughout the escalation process, offer advice where necessary on budgeting and benefits claims, and aim to make an arrears repayment agreement with the tenant where possible. Radius will use a range of contact methods including telephone, email, SMS, letters, and home visits to engage with tenants.

6.4 Radius will work with tenants to reduce their arrears and sustain their tenancy. Where an arrears repayment agreement is not possible Officers will follow the escalation process, up to and including eviction, to recover any rental income that is owed to us.

6.5 All actions taken in line with the Arrears Recovery Procedure (HPR050) should be recorded accurately on our housing management system.

7.0 Legal & EJO Action for Arrears Recovery

7.1 Actions will progress through our escalation process which may include Court action and eviction.

7.2 Where all attempts of arrears recovery have been exhausted, Radius can proceed to the Enforcement of Judgements Office (EJO). This action can be taken only in cases where Radius has leave of the court to enforce any orders and is a last resort for Radius due to the implication that enforcement has on our tenants.

8.0 Training & Resources

8.1 Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to relevant staff based on their involvement in the preventative and arrears recovery processes set out in this policy, associated current tenant rent account procedures and software.

9.0 Accounts in Credit

9.1 Accounts in credit of more than £500 will be checked quarterly by the Income Officer. If the Income Officer is satisfied that all relevant checks have been made and that the tenant is due a refund, this will be arranged promptly via finance. Full details must be recorded on the housing management system.

10.0 Cash Payments

10.1 The Association is committed to minimising the risks associated with the handling of cash. To encourage secure and auditable payment methods, tenants are expected to make payments by Direct Debit, standing order, debit card, bank transfer or via Allpay. The Association will accept cash payments up to a maximum of £1,000 per transaction.

10.2 Where a payment exceeds £1,000, the payment will not be accepted directly in cash by the Association. In such circumstances, the tenant will be required to make the payment through the Association's authorised third-party payment provider, Allpay, or by bank transfer.

10.3 Any transaction considered unusual, suspicious or inconsistent with the tenants circumstances may be reported to the Income Manager who will liaise with the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO) and dealt with in accordance with the Association's Anti-Money Laundering Policy.(RH007)

11.0 Performance Management

11.1 Radius will ensure effective measures are in place to report on and manage the performance of income collection for current tenant rent arrears. This includes audits to establish areas of best practice and improvement opportunities.

11.2 The Customer Excellence Committee will receive quarterly reports on current tenant arrears and legal action.

12.0 Further Reviews

12.1 This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless prompted at an earlier date.

Associated Policies & Procedures

HPR049	Preventative Arrears Procedure
HPR050	Arrears Recovery Procedure
HPR051	Legal & EJO Action for Arrears Recovery Procedure
HPO016	Former Tenant Arrears & Credits Policy

Associated Forms

HF301	Refund Request Form

This Policy has been screened and complies with Section 75.