



Blackpool Coastal
Housing

Customer Volunteer Expenses Policy

March 2024

INSPIRING PEOPLE TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Document Information

Issue Date	05/03/2024	
Version/Issue Number	1.1	
Document Status	Published	
Effective From Date	05/03/2024	
Scope of Document	BCH policy for involved customers claiming out of pocket expenses for volunteering activities.	
Objective	Rules and guidelines relating to the payment of travelling, subsistence and related expenses.	
Who needs to know?	Customers, Involvement & Communications Team, Senior Management Team.	
Documentation		
Where Ratified		
Review Frequency	Triennial	
Document Sponsor	Name	Vikki Piper
	Job Title	Chief Operating Officer
	Directorate	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Policy Owner	Name	Suzanne Tomlinson
	Job Title	Involvement and Communications Manager
	Department	Involvement and Communications
	Contact	suzanne.tomlinson@bch.co.uk

Amendment Record

Date	Issue No.	Section/Page	Details of Change	Authorised By
05/06/2026	1.1	3.1 Travel Expenses	Mileage rate amended from 45p per mile to 55p per mile in line with HMRC guidance for staff.	Suzanne Tomlinson

Amendment Notes

- Documents at draft status are to use letter designations to denote issue status: a, b, c etc.
- Documents at full issue status are to use number designations to denote issue status after full revision: 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, etc.
- For an amendment to a full issue document you are to use number designation to denote issue status: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, etc.
- On full issue the draft amendment record should be deleted from the above table.
- Notification of the amendment must be sent to the person maintaining the Central Register.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Purpose of the Policy	5
3. Expenses Which Can Be Claimed	5
4. Claiming Expenses	8
5. Expenses Which Cannot Be Claimed	8
6. Incentives.....	9
7. Equality and Diversity	9
8. Monitoring and Review	9

1. Introduction

Blackpool Coastal Housing is committed to supporting our customers (tenants and leaseholders) to influence and be involved in our services. It is important customers are not out of pocket as a result of being involved or volunteering on behalf of BCH. This is a barrier to customers becoming involved in the service. We will reimburse customers for reasonable expenses incurred as a result of being involved.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that customers have open and transparent guidance for claiming eligible expenses when volunteering on BCH business.

This Policy applies to all volunteers (excluding board members) claiming expenses for BCH activities and must be adhered to at all times. Board Members should refer to BCH Staff Expenses Policy.

The general principles on which the Policy is based are as follows:

- i. Expenditure must have been incurred
- ii. Reimbursement will relate as far as is possible to actual expenditure incurred
- iii. Expenditure must be capable of passing the tests of justification and reasonableness
- iv. Proof of expenditure must be provided when claiming
- v. Attendance at chargeable training courses, conferences or out of town meetings or events where travel expenses will be incurred must be approved by the Involvement and Communications Manager
- vi. Any events that require overnight accommodation or rail travel must be approved by the Involvement and Communications Manager and booked by the Involvement and Communications Team
- vii. When claiming mileage expenditure employees must have a current valid licence, be medically fit to drive and have a roadworthy vehicle

Any questions of interpretation of travelling, subsistence and related expenses should be referred to the Involvement and Communications Team.

3. Expenses Which Can Be Claimed

3.1 – Travel Expenses

We encourage our customers to use the most economical and sustainable methods of transport they can. We ask customers to walk or to use public transport where possible and if a car/taxi journey is needed, we encourage car/taxi sharing.

However, we understand that some tenants, particularly those who have a disability, may be limited in their travel options and that taxi travel may be the only available option in some cases.

Where possible, BCH will pre-arrange travel through our accounts with transport providers to reduce the need for residents to pay for taxi or train travel and then have to claim it back.

BCH will also consider the times, dates, locations and people attending meetings and events when arranging venues to help reduce travel costs where possible.

Travel by rail

Where possible, BCH staff will pre-book rail journeys for customers.

Where customers purchase their own rail tickets, in order to be reimbursed they must supply BCH with a receipt for their journeys and fill in an expenses claim form.

When booking rail travel, both staff and customers should purchase the best value ticket available, taking account of any mobility issues.

Travel by bus

Bus journeys will be reimbursed as long as the tenant or leaseholder supplies BCH with a valid ticket. If the ticket is needed for a return bus journey, BCH staff will take a photograph of the ticket or make a photocopy of it to allow the resident to use the ticket for their return journey.

Travel by taxi

Arrangements for taxi travel should be made by BCH staff, using a taxi account arranged by The Involvement and Communications Team. Taxi sharing is encouraged and expected wherever possible.

In order to be reimbursed for taxi travel customers arrange for themselves, this must first be agreed by the Involvement and Communications Team and customers must supply BCH with a receipt for all journeys.

Travel by private car or van

All mileage claims will be paid at the current [HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\) mileage rate](#) of 55p per mile for cars and vans.

Car parking fees will be reimbursed if the tenant supplies a valid parking ticket to BCH. Parking fees can only be claimed for the duration of the meeting or event (including a reasonable amount of time allowed to travel to and from the meeting venue).

Travel by motorcycle

All mileage claims will be paid at the current [HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\) mileage rate](#) of 24p per mile for motorcycles.

The additional passenger incentive for cars and vans does not apply to motorcycles.

Customers are liable for parking their vehicles responsibly. Parking or speeding fines and clamping charges will not be reimbursed.

3.2 – Food and Drink

BCH will provide adequate refreshments at meetings depending on duration. If any residents have special dietary requirements, they must let the Involvement and Communications Team aware before attending any meetings.

If BCH asks customers to provide their own food and drink, this will be reimbursed with a valid receipt and on a case-by-case basis. If you are unsure if your expenses will be reimbursed, please contact the Involvement and Communications Team before any expenses are incurred.

3.3 – Childcare Expenses

BCH will reimburse reasonable childcare expenses and recognises this will vary depending on the situation.

Choosing who should look after a child is a matter for the parent(s) or primary carer(s).

Customers can only claim childcare costs for care provided by a registered childcare provider. These costs must be agreed with BCH in advance.

BCH will not reimburse:

- the costs of care provided by unregistered providers
- claims for events where children are welcome to attend or where in house childcare is available
- claims for school age children during school hours

BCH will only reimburse childcare costs for children aged 16 and under.

3.4 – Other Expenses

From time to time, BCH may involve customers in project groups and/or task and finish groups which could result in residents incurring expenses not detailed in this policy.

BCH will consider all other expenses on a case-by-case basis. Customers should contact BCH's Involvement and Communications Team or clarification and approval before any expenses are incurred.

All other expenses BCH agrees to reimburse must be supported by dates, times and valid receipts.

4. Claiming Expenses

Residents will need to complete and sign an expenses claim form and provide valid receipts. Expense claim forms and care expense forms will be provided to customers by BCH's Involvement and Communications Team.

All expenses claims must be authorised by a member of BCH's Involvement and Communications Team.

Claims must be submitted within 3 months of the date the expense was incurred or the journey was made. Expense claims submitted more than two months after the event will not be accepted.

All expenses will be reimbursed by direct payment into the tenant or leaseholder's bank account via BACS transfer. Customers will be asked to put their bank details on the expenses claim form. These details will be stored securely and will be correctly disposed of by BCH's Business Support Team.

We will aim to reimburse direct payments within 10 working days of receiving the expenses claim, but this may take longer in some cases, including if claim forms are not completed correctly or receipts are not provided.

5. Expenses Which Cannot Be Claimed

BCH will only pay for actual costs incurred as a result of customers being involved or volunteering with BCH. If a resident receives more from BCH than the actual costs they have incurred, this could be considered as a payment, reward or benefit-in-kind for which they may be classed as an employee. This payment could be subject to tax and may impact the resident's entitlement to benefits.

Specifically, BCH will not reimburse customers or leaseholders for any of the following:

- Parking fines
- Speeding fines
- Clamping charges
- Any expense claims where a valid receipt or mileage claim are not provided to BCH
- Any expenses that customers would have incurred regardless of their attending a BCH meeting or event
- Any claims made more than 3 months after the date the expense was incurred or the journey was made
- Loss of earnings for attending a BCH meeting or event
- Printing or mailing costs (BCH will print and distribute documents)
- Equipment costs (BCH will supply residents with any equipment they need)
- Internet costs
- Telephone costs (BCH may supply residents with pre-paid mobile phones in some instances if they are needed as part of their work, for example if carrying out a mystery shopping exercise)
- Vehicle insurance, tax and maintenance costs

6. Incentives

Although BCH values the contribution customers make to the housing service, for tax and legal reasons we will not, at any time, pay residents or provide regular rewards for their time.

7. Equality and Diversity

BCH is committed to promoting equality and diversity in everything it does. We provide a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is valued, included and respected. We foster good relations among our communities.

We are clear discrimination, harassment and victimisation in any form are not acceptable. Our motivation is more than needing to fulfil our statutory duty. It is an important part of BCH's culture.

Through the implementation of this policy we will ensure all customers are treated fairly, regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

8. Monitoring and Review

All expense claims in relation to tenant involvement must follow this policy.

It is the tenant or leaseholder's responsibility to ensure their claim is accurate and they must confirm this by signing the declaration on their claim form.

Expense claims will be checked by BCH's Involvement and Communications Team and are subject to further internal audit by BCH at any time. BCH reserves the right to make checks at any time to verify any expense claims. A claim may be refused if there is any doubt as to its validity.

Fraudulent or inflated claims may result in the tenant or leaseholder being suspended or excluded from future resident involvement activities, and from future expenses being reimbursed.

This policy will be reviewed every three years. Customers will be consulted as part of each review.