Co-ownership

Bereavement Support Policy

co-ownership.org

Introduction

The death of a customer is a significant life event that can have practical, legal and financial implications for families, personal representatives and others responsible for administering an Estate. We are committed to supporting with compassion and fairness while protecting the interests of both the Estate and Co-Ownership.

This policy sets out Co-Ownership's approach to supporting families and personal representatives following the death of a customer. We recognise that those administering an Estate are often managing legal, financial and emotional responsibilities at the same time. Our aim is to provide clear guidance, reduce unnecessary financial burden where appropriate and ensure a consistent approach throughout the administration of the Estate.

Scope

This policy applies where there are no surviving Co-Ownership customers following the death of the customer(s). It outlines the support available to those responsible for administering the Estate and the arrangements that apply while the Estate is being managed.

Where there is a surviving Co-Ownership customer, the provisions of this policy do not apply. Support will instead be provided in accordance with Co-Ownership's existing customer processes.

Guiding principles

- **Respond with compassion:** We recognise that every bereavement is different and will treat families and personal representatives with empathy and respect.
- **Provide clarity:** We will explain the process, responsibilities and available options clearly, providing a named point of contact wherever possible.
- **Protect customer data**: Where authority has previously been given for a third party to discuss a customer's account, this authority will cease on the customer's death. Co-Ownership will only discuss the account with the person(s) legally authorised to act on behalf of the Estate, in accordance with our legal and data protection responsibilities.
- **Reduce unnecessary financial pressure:** Where appropriate, we will provide a period of bereavement rent relief to allow reasonable time for the administration of the Estate.
- **Protect the home:** We will work with families and personal representatives to ensure properties remain secure, maintained and appropriately insured while the Estate is being managed.

- **Support timely resolution:** We will work collaboratively with personal representatives to support the sale, transfer or purchase of the property in a timely and practical way.

The process

We understand that dealing with a bereavement and working through someone's Estate can be difficult. Our aim is to make this process as straightforward as possible with a simple process outlined below.

1. Notifying us

You can notify us via our website, email or phone that a customer has died.

To enable us to manage the account appropriately please provide the following information:

- A copy of the customer's death certificate
- The name and contact details of the executor(s), administrator(s) or personal representative(s) responsible for administering the Estate
- Solicitor details, where applicable
- Preferred contact arrangements for managing the Estate

2. What Co-Ownership will do

Within two working days Co-Ownership will:

- Acknowledge the notification
- Provide a named point of contact
- Explain the next steps and what to expect from Co-Ownership
- Clearly outline any information or documentation required and why it is needed
- Agree preferred communication arrangements
- Where a solicitor or third-party representative is acting on behalf of the Estate, we will work with them while ensuring appropriate authority to act is confirmed.

We recognise that some documentation may not be immediately available following a bereavement. We will work with personal representatives to agree what information is needed and when it can reasonably be provided.

We will confirm if rent relief has been approved and when it will be applicable to.

3. Bereavement rent relief

When a home owned with Co-Ownership becomes vacant through the death of the last Co-Ownership customer, we will suspend rent for a maximum period of up to twelve months (or sooner if the home is transferred, sold or the interest in Co-Ownership is bought out) to allow the Estate reasonable time to administer the property.

To avail of a rent relief period, the personal representative must confirm the following:

- That the home is vacant
- That they remain responsible for ensuring that the property remains secure and take reasonable steps to prevent damage or deterioration
- Demonstrate that appropriate buildings insurance remains in place
- That they are managing utilities and essential services to the home (including service charges and rates) and that the equity sharing lease is complied with
- The Estate is actively progressing the sale, transfer or other resolution of the property, providing confirmation of this as required

Rent relief is dependent on confirmation of the conditions outlined above. Once this information is received, Co-Ownership will confirm in writing that rent has been suspended on the property from that date and when the rent will begin to fall due again.

Co-Ownership reserves the right to inspect the property where reasonably required to ensure the property is being appropriately maintained and protected.

If there are any concerns about the property or circumstances change, we ask that you contact us. If someone moves into the home, even temporarily, we require that the nominated representative to advise Co-Ownership and rent would become due.

We reserve the right to charge rent if the conditions outlined above are not met or the representatives fail to act to administer the Estate.

4. Supporting you through the process

We understand that administering an Estate can feel overwhelming. Co-Ownership will provide clear guidance on the options available and help personal representatives understand the steps involved regarding the property.

Support will include:

- **Explaining the sale process** and the steps involved in bringing the property to market and completing the sale.

- **Arranging an equity valuation** to establish the current market value of the property and explain how any proceeds would be distributed, including the amount due to Co-Ownership.

- **Explaining buy-out options** where a family member or other eligible person may wish to explore taking ownership of the property.
- **Signposting to probate, legal, financial or other specialist advice** where additional support is required.

5. After the 12-month period

The bereavement rent relief period is intended to provide reasonable time for the Estate to progress the sale, transfer or buy-out of the property. At the end of this period, rent will recommence where the property has not been sold, transferred or otherwise resolved. We will write to you and let you know the current monthly rent at that time.

Any credit or arrears balance on the rent account for the home will be settled to the Estate when the property is transferred.

We recognise that some circumstances may cause delays outside of the personal representative's control. We will write to you ahead of the expiry of the rent relief period to understand the current situation with respect to the property. If there are circumstances that may impact the progress of the Estate, we encourage personal representatives to contact us.