

## HM 17 / Tenancy Sustainment Policy

**Purpose of Policy:** The purpose of this Policy is to maximise levels of Tenancy Sustainment

Policy Monitoring Details	
<b>Department</b>	Housing Management
<b>Author</b>	Carolyn Hughes
<b>Status</b>	Association
<b>Date Board Approval</b>	Approval not required, presented to Board January 2023
<b>Update</b>	
<b>Planned Review Date</b>	January 2028
<b>Regulatory Outcomes Being Achieved</b>	Scottish Social Housing Charter 2 Communication 6 Neighbourhood and community 7,8,9 Access to housing and support 11 Tenancy sustainment 13 Value for money
<b>Tenant Consultation Required</b>	Yes
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment</b>	Initial
<b>HRA Implications</b>	Article 8 of the Human Rights Act requires that occupier is given respect for their home. This Policy seeks to ensure that all tenants have maximum opportunity to sustain their tenancies
<b>Legislation References</b>	Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 Human Rights Act 1998

### 1. Purpose of this Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to maximise levels of tenancy sustainment. Successful tenancy sustainment will:
- Improve tenants' lives by ensuring that they can live in their homes without facing the prospect of having to leave for adverse reasons, such as eviction on the grounds of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, or abandonment of properties;

- Prevent homelessness through proactive tenancy management, offering direct support or signposting to tenants to other advice and/or support agencies; and
  - Reduce Association costs in respect of managing empty properties, specifically repair costs, rent loss, and staff resource.
- 1.2 At all stages of a tenant's relationship with the Association, we will be proactive in offering advice and assistance (either directly or through signposting to other agencies) to help address any issues they may be facing. We will also work in partnership with local authorities, other housing associations and advice/support agencies.
- 1.3 Our approach will focus on three key areas:
- Early intervention;
  - Preventing homelessness; and
  - Other initiatives.
- 1.4 The Association considers that a tenancy has not been sustained if it ends within 12 months of its commencement. We use the definition set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) in the Annual Report on the Charter (*percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than one year*) to assess our effectiveness and performance in this area.

Notwithstanding the use of the SHR measure of tenancy sustainment, we are committed to preventing tenancies ending in eviction or abandonment at any stage of the tenancy.

## **2 Approach to Tenancy Sustainment**

### **Early Intervention**

- 2.1 There are 2 aspects to early intervention:
- Action prior to a tenancy start and at the beginning of the tenancy; and
  - At any point during a tenancy, early identification of and reaction to any emerging issues.

### **New Tenancies**

- 2.1 The Association has in place measures to ensure that any potential issues that could impact on a tenant's ability to sustain their tenancy are identified and addressed at the earliest possible stage.

#### **2.2 Pre-Tenancy Interview**

The key purpose of the pre-tenancy interview is to discuss the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant and to identify if there are any concerns about an applicant's ability to sustain a tenancy.

2.3 Where there are specific concerns, we will seek to identify how these might be addressed.

- Discuss the concerns with the prospective tenant, focusing on what might be put in place to address the issues of concern;
- Discuss with local authority/existing support;
- Where support is not already in place, consider if it can be accessed;
- Support the applicant to access assistance with furnishing the property;
- Provide assistance through the Tenancy Sustainment budget;
- Agree a monitoring plan, including regular visits to commence from the start of the tenancy.

Where there are significant concerns, these will be discussed with appropriate staff, the local authority, and any relevant support agencies to agree if a tenancy offer would be appropriate.

#### 2.4 **Tenancy Start**

Further measures will be put in place when the tenancy starts, including:

- New tenant visit within 6 weeks of the tenancy start date;
- Plan to address any issues identified at the new tenant visit;
- Provision of welfare benefit advice, if required;
- Provision of energy advice, if required;
- Programme of regular monitoring visits, if appropriate;
- Liaison with any support agencies involved with the tenant.

### **All Tenancies**

#### 2.5 **Preventing Homelessness**

The Association is committed to supporting the local authority to address homelessness within the city. This includes undertaking to provide offers of secure tenancies to those assessed as statutorily homeless. In addition, the Association seeks to prevent homelessness by working with tenants to address any issues that could potentially put their tenancy at risk.

2.6 The Association will work with the local authority, other housing associations and any relevant support agencies in seeking to prevent homelessness.

2.7 Appropriate and targeted action will take account of individuals' needs. This may include, but is not restricted to, the following:

#### 2.8 **Financial:**

- Early intervention action when there are rent arrears on a tenant's account;
- Provision of welfare benefits advice;
- Provision of debt advice;
- Provision of energy advice;
- Support to access independent advice;
- Support to apply for external grant funding that may be available.

## **2.9 Anti-Social Behaviour:**

- Referral to external agencies for support;
- Effective working relationships with:
  - Police;
  - Local authority;
  - Support agencies;
  - Mediation services.
- Appropriate use of Tenancy Sustainment Budget.

## **2.10 Other Initiatives:**

- Adaptations;
- Tenancy sustainment fund;
- Customer engagement.

The Association will also seek to address the specific needs of tenants who may need additional support or assistance. This is likely to be through signposting to other organisation who can offer additional services or opportunities. This could include, but is not exclusive to:

- Older people;
- People with disability;
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- First-time tenants.

Where the most effective solution to an issue would be for a tenant to move, we will offer housing options advice and may consider a management transfer (in accordance with the Management Transfer Procedure).

## **2.11 Eviction Policy**

The Association has in place an Evictions Policy that specifies the Association will only take eviction action when all other options have been exhausted.

# **3 Tenants at Risk**

3.1 Throughout the life of a tenancy, there may be factors other than rent arrears or anti-social behaviour that could indicate that a tenant that may require assistance to prevent tenancy failure. This could include, but is not restricted to:

- Property/garden condition;
- Suspected hoarding;
- Gas servicing access issues;
- Non-engagement with support;
- Vulnerable customers identified by neighbours/external; agency/Property Services staff or contractors;
- Mental health issues;

- Drug or alcohol addiction issues;
- Suspected sub-lets;
- Repeated no access for repairs or planned maintenance works.

#### **4 Engagement with Tenants**

- 4.1 We will seek to engage with any tenants we identify as being at risk of tenancy failure.
- 4.2 We will identify and respond to the needs of tenants who may benefit from alternative means of communication, including:
- Provision of written information in alternative format (such as large print) or languages;
  - Access to interpretation services, either through telephone service or in person;
  - Access to signed interpretation.

We will also take account of any adjustments that are required to take account of a tenant's disability or support needs.

#### **5 Related Policies**

- 5.1 This document should be read in conjunction with the Policies noted below:
- HM01 Rent Collection and Arrears
  - HM02 Allocation Policy
  - HM13 Evictions Policy

## Glossary of Terms

<b>TERM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Tenancy Sustainment	Tenants remain in their homes for as long as they wish to
Negative Tenancy Ends	Where a tenancy ends due to eviction or abandonment
Secure Tenancies	Tenancies that offer a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement
Statutorily Homeless	Where the local authority has assessed an applicant as homeless within the relevant legislation; the local authority is obliged to provide temporary accommodation until a secure tenancy can be accessed
Scottish Housing Regulator	The body responsible for monitoring the performance of Registered Social Landlords