

TENANCY SUSTAINMENT POLICY

Written by:	Head of Housing	Version:	1
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1	Introduction
1.1	<p>This Tenancy Sustainment Policy sets out Waverley Housings proactive approach to sustaining tenancies and commitment to ensure we support our tenants to enjoy their house as a settled home. Tenancies which fail, impact on Waverley Housings resources and can have negative impact on Tenants who may end up homeless and have difficulties securing alternative accommodation. As such, tenancy sustainability is a fundamental part of Waverley Housings commitment to work in partnership to support tenants and create sustainable communities.</p>
1.2	<p>The Tenancy Sustainment Policy describes how Waverley Housing will manage its approach to tenancy sustainment.</p>
1.3	<p>The Policy emphasises early intervention, flexibility, streamlined activity, partnership working, holistic and trauma informed approach to engaging and working with tenants at risk of losing their tenancy.</p>
1.4	<p>Failed tenancies are a waste of resource as every additional property becoming empty incurs significant costs. It can also be devastating for the tenant and their family who may end up homeless, back living with family or find it difficult to secure another tenancy. We consider that a tenancy has 'failed' if it ends by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Eviction. b) Abandonment. c) Early termination (a tenancy which lasts under 12 months). <p>We recognise that there may be other less obvious reasons why people give up their tenancies such as domestic abuse (DA), we will therefore work with the Borders Housing Network to address the collective support we can provide those at risk of DA and other forms of harassment.</p> <p>We also recognise that people may terminate their tenancy early for positive reasons such as finding a new job or moving in with their partner.</p>
2	Purpose, Aims and Objectives
2.1	<p>To ensure that all tenants are provided with opportunity and support to enjoy their house as a home along with Waverley Housings commitment to prevent homelessness and proactively manage its tenancies with compliance to Scottish Government guidance and statutory duties to 'ask and act'.</p>
2.2	<p>Research shows that there are several reasons why tenancies typically fail. Listed below are the most common reasons:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) anti-social behaviour by others b) housekeeping issues/difficulty with furnishings etc c) drug or alcohol addiction problems d) mental health issues e) domestic abuse f) leaving care g) learning difficulties h) poverty i) fuel poverty j) extreme youth or immaturity k) no established local networks (particularly for new immigrants) l) families with support needs <p>The overarching purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff are aware of the risks, that they proactively identify and then manage those at risk of tenancy failure.</p>
2.3	<p>Objective of minimising tenancy failures</p> <p>To minimise tenancy failures, we will seek to develop pre tenancy, during tenancy and post tenancy measures to assist us in identifying tenants at most risk of abandoning their tenancies or developing problem tenancies.</p> <p>We will seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) satisfy applicants' choice of where they want to live – where this is reasonably possible. b) participate in, Mutual Exchanges and make use of Local Lettings Plans where appropriate to maximise choice of housing options and sustainable communities. c) develop annual lettings plan to not only understand housing demand but the needs of the communities we work in. d) at the commencement of a tenancy, give as much information as reasonably possible on tenancy sustainment and address any areas of concern the new tenant may have. e) engage with external agencies re support needs/packages, managing risk and ensuring our tenants access appropriate support where possible. f) refer new tenants with limited or no resources to furniture initiative projects, community care grant and identify options for those who may be able to provide a basic furniture pack. g) provide a starter pack of basic essentials for new tenants with limited or no resources through our third sector partners. h) ensure that the applicant is aware of all their responsibilities as a tenant and the contact details for their Housing Officer. i) carry out a settling in visit within 6 weeks of the date of entry to review any tenancy issues or support needs. j) identify any possible changes in support needs required to sustain a tenancy – such as addressing referrals for medical adaptations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> k) make referrals to our Welfare Benefit Adviser to access advice on welfare entitlement, income maximisation and household budgeting, and initiate early intervention in the case of financial crisis or poverty. l) maintain regular, personal and sustained contact with 'at risk' householders; and work in partnership with specialist support agencies who work with vulnerable client groups and the statutory authorities. m) ensure that we risk assess tenancies and intervene appropriately. n) carry out annual new tenant visits to all new tenants on or around the anniversary of the first year as a tenant of Waverley Housing. o) ensure that all tenants have been contacted at least bi-annually. p) as part of our community engagement, we will carry out meaningful walkabouts and meet with tenants to identify estate management and neighbourhood issues impacting on their enjoyment of their home. q) we will case review all failed tenancies within the first 12 months.
2.4	<p>Aims of targeting interventions</p> <p>To ensure that we maximise our resources and achieve the best outcome, we will make best use of our data, and information obtained at the pre tenancy stage, and we will identify those household types that may need help or assistance at times to sustain their tenancies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) households who have previously been homeless. b) those with learning difficulties, mental health issues, or personality disorders. c) older people with support needs. d) those with alcohol and/ or drug use issues. e) young parents. f) people who have suffered previously from domestic abuse or other types of violence. g) households suffering from either racial and non-racial harassment. h) ex-offenders. i) those with disabilities who may or may not have support needs. j) households with histories of financial exclusion or multiple debts. k) young people setting up home for the first time – particularly those leaving care. l) families with support needs. m) hoarding or poor property conditions.
3	Additional approaches
3.1	<p>Our aims are to minimise tenancy failure, preventing homelessness, emphasis on creating homes not simply allocating houses, and promoting stable and sustainable communities through the work that we do. This includes work that is not seen as generic housing management but is integral to engaging and building positive relationships with tenants and the local community. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) identifying funding for local initiatives to engage and support tenants.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) proactive approach to identifying funding opportunities. c) working in partnership with the Border Housing Network and Scottish Borders Council including SBC Child and Adult Protection procedures http://www.sb-cpc-procedures.org.uk/. d) engaging and working with community groups to support and benefit from our involvement in the services we promote and provide our tenants. e) working with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and engaging with initiatives that respond to tenancy sustainment.
3.2	<p>Our tenancy sustainment activity will offer the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) housing options advice b) support pre tenancy through identifying risks and tenancy support requirements c) tailored plans/action plans for households with hoarding/housekeeping issues d) tenancy management that recognises the priority of early intervention first and enforcement as a last resort e) direct advice and assistance in complex benefit issues f) engagement with those hard to reach tenants through our Community Engagement Plan in the areas we identify needing the most support g) as a service listening and engaging with our tenants at an individual level and within their home and community h) we will provide assistance to tenants in crisis through our Tenancy Sustainment Fund or any other funding we are able to obtain to tenants in crisis
3.3	<p>Waverley Housing will take steps prior to and from the commencement of a tenancy which will identify issues and assist in sustainment by making sure issues which could affect tenancy sustainment such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rent Arrears. b) Anti-Social Behaviour. c) Social Isolation. d) Tenancy management. e) Managing the home (general maintenance, report a repair, utilities and garden maintenance). <p>are identified and addressed prior to and throughout the tenancy.</p>
4	Responsibilities
4.1	<p>Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the Head of Housing, however operational responsibility for compliance with this policy lies with staff responsible for providing a comprehensive, high quality customer service, including but not limited to the re-letting of properties, managing tenancies, engaging with tenants and providing advice and assistance.</p>
5	Monitoring & Reviewing
5.1	<p>This Policy will be reviewed on a 5 yearly basis or as necessary in terms of changes in legislation.</p>

6	Legislative & Regulatory Requirements
6.1	<p>Waverley Housing will comply with all relevant legislation and associated regulations, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, 2010 & 2014 b) The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 c) The Welfare Reform Act 2012 d) Equalities Act 2010 e) Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 f) Children (Scotland) Act 1995 g) Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 h) Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 i) Data Protection Act 2018 j) Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 k) The Scottish Social Housing Charter
6.2	<p>Waverley Housing will meet the requirements of the Scottish Tenants Charter as it relates to tenancy sustainment and the services we provide:</p> <p>1: Equalities</p> <p>Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) they support the right to adequate housing. b) every tenant and other customer has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services. <p>2: Communication</p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides. <p>3: Participation</p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with. <p>6: Estate Management, Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbour Nuisance and Tenancy Disputes</p> <p>Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

	<p>7/8/9: Housing Options</p> <p>Social landlords work together to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them. b) tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options. <p>Social landlords have a role to prevent homelessness and should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) people at risk of losing their homes get advice and information on preventing homelessness. <p>10: Access to Social Housing</p> <p>Social landlords ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and on their prospects of being housed. <p>11: Tenancy Sustainment</p> <p>Social landlords ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations. <p>13: Value For Money</p> <p>Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.
7	Reporting
7.1	Waverley Housing will report bi-annually to the Board of Directors on Tenancy Sustainment activity, areas of concerns, mitigations and achievements.