

## Tenancy Sustainment Policy

**Policy Number: HM09**

<b>Prepared By</b>	Linda Sneddon, Housing Manager
<b>Procedure Created</b>	August 2016
<b>Effective Date</b>	
<b>Review Date</b>	August 2021
<b>Reviewed By</b>	Lee Valantine and Caroline Hotchkiss
<b>Posted on Website</b>	March 2021

CORPORATE FIT	
Corporate Strategy	✓
Risk Register	✓
Business Plan	✓
Regulatory Standards	✓
Equalities Strategy	✓
Legislation	✓

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Statement of Objectives**

The Tenancy Sustainment Policy aims to ensure that the Association provides an effective housing operations service that complies with its landlord obligations in respect of tenancy sustainment.

Our objectives include minimising tenancy breakdown, preventing homelessness and promoting stable and sustainable communities through:

- Prevention – ensuring that prior to and from the commencement of any tenancy, steps are taken to identify issues which could affect tenancy sustainment.
- Tenancy Support – liaising with and signposting to appropriate agencies to ensure that individually tailored support is provided where required throughout a tenancy, catering for the changing needs of household members; and
- Partnership Working – establishing partnership arrangements with agencies, especially local authorities, who are able to assist in sustaining tenancies where appropriate.

### **1.2 Compliance with Regulatory Standards**

In terms of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, the Scottish Housing Regulator has identified a number of key indicators relevant to tenancy sustainment by which it will measure landlord performance, including the following:

- Housing options – people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them, tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options, and people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.
- Access to social housing – 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 their prospects of being housed.
- Tenancy sustainment – 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 organisation.
- Homeless people – homeless people get prompt and easy access to help, and advice are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.
- Value for money – tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

### **1.3 Expected Outcomes**

Key outcomes of operating an effective Tenancy Sustainment Policy include:

- minimising tenancy breakdowns, such as abandoned tenancies and evictions.
- preventing homelessness.
- promoting stable and sustainable communities; and
- minimising void levels, void rent loss and associated void costs.

## **1.4 Informing and Involving Stakeholders**

We will promote our Tenancy Sustainment Policy through our newsletter, website and tenancy handbook. Where we plan to make significant changes to the policy, we will consult tenants through short-life working groups or the Clyde Valley Residents Network in line with our Customer Engagement Strategy.

## **1.5 Corporate Fit**

Legislation and best practice

We will comply with all relevant legislation and associated regulations, including:

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, 2001 and 2010.
- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.
- The Welfare Reform Act 2012; and
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Common law, statute and the contractual obligations within our tenancy agreement set out our responsibilities as landlord and those of our tenants.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Policy is consistent with our:

- Housing Options Strategy
- Corporate Plan.
- Business Plan.
- Housing Allocation Policies.
- Arrears Policy.
- Estate Management Policy Guide / Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- Welfare Benefits / Income Maximisation Policy.
- Risk Management Strategy; and
- Standing Orders and Delegated Authority Policy.

### **1.5.2 Equalities**

Our Tenancy Sustainment Policy complies with CVHA's Equality Policy to ensure equality of treatment for all tenants without discrimination or prejudice. At all times CVHA will therefore consider all tenants, regardless of sex, faith or religion, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, mental or physical health, disability or marital status.

### **1.5.3 Confidentiality**

CVHA recognises that confidentiality is important to tenants and will treat their tenancy information in the strictest confidence under the Data Protection Law and in line with CVHA's Openness and Confidentiality Statement.

### **1.5.4 Business Plan and risk management**

Our Business Plan depends significantly upon generating revenue from the properties that we rent. We therefore seek to mitigate against business risk through managing our housing operations, tenancy sustainment and related services in an efficient, effective and economic manner so that we minimise our void levels, void rent loss and associated void costs.

### 1.5.5 Housing Options Strategy

Our Housing Options Strategy will deliver a clear and consistent approach to the delivery of a person centred service which will meet our main objectives of the sustainment of our tenancies and communities.

The key goals within our Strategy are:

- Sustaining housing status and preventing housing crisis
- Empowering Customers to make Informed Choices
- Identifying all options across all tenures
- Meeting all housing and underlying needs through strong partnerships
- Assisting customers to meet their housing aspirations

### 1.5.6 The Board

The Customer Services Director has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Tenancy Sustainment Policy and the Customer Services Manager is responsible for key aspects of the day-to-day service delivery with delegation of specific tasks to appropriate staff.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, Key Performance Indicators (see Appendix 1) will be used to measure tenancy sustainment and a number of associated outcomes. We will routinely review and analyse the outcomes and make recommendations where changes are required.

The Board will receive regular updates on the implementation of the Tenancy Sustainment Policy so that they can have reasonable assurance that it is operating effectively in practice. The Audit and Risk Committee may also seek assurance in this regard.

## **2. Key Principles – Tenancy Sustainment Policy**

### **2.1 Allocating tenancies**

We let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need, makes best use of available stock, maximises choice and helps sustain communities. We seek to promote housing options for applicants through working collaboratively with local authorities and other social landlords, through participation in Common Housing Registers and nomination agreements.

The Tenancy Sustainment Policy seeks to promote sustainability of tenancies and as such assist with the sustainability of communities. However, the provision of a tenancy is not in itself sufficient to make a tenancy successful and there are other factors to consider so that once a tenancy starts it does not fail.

### **2.2 Roles and responsibilities**

Every tenant is responsible for managing their tenancy and complying with their tenancy conditions. However, we have a role to play in identifying tenants or households with particular needs or who may otherwise be vulnerable, and to refer them to a relevant external agency for appropriate advice and assistance.

Such referrals will be made where, in the professional opinion of Association staff, a tenant or household has particular needs or may otherwise be considered vulnerable and where this may potentially affect their ability to sustain their tenancy.

### **2.3 Failed tenancies**

We consider that a failed tenancy is one that ends by eviction, abandonment or where early tenancy termination occurs (i.e., a tenancy which lasts less than 12 months). A tenancy which falls into this category can incur substantial additional costs for the Association including rent loss (through void period and possible former tenant arrears), cost of relet repairs (including possible rechargeable repairs), staff resources associated with the lettings procedure and in some cases legal costs.

Research shows that there are a number of reasons why tenancies typically fail and listed below are the most common reasons:

- anti-social behaviour by others.
- drug or alcohol addiction problems.
- mental health issues.
- domestic abuse.
- leaving care.
- learning difficulties.
- poverty.
- fuel poverty.
- extreme youth or immaturity.
- no established local networks (particularly for new immigrants); and
- families with support needs.

### **2.4 Minimising tenancy failures**

In an effort 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.

We will seek to:

- satisfy applicants' choice of where they want to live – where this is reasonably possible.
- participate in Common Housing Registers, Mutual Exchange and Local Lettings Initiatives, where appropriate, to maximise choice of housing options.
- 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.
- engage with external agencies re support needs/packages.
- refer new tenants with limited or no resources to furniture initiative projects who may be able to provide a basic furniture pack.
- provide a starter pack of basic essentials for new tenants with limited or no resources.
- ensure that the applicant is aware of all their responsibilities as a tenant and the contact details for their Tenancy Sustainment Officer.
- carry out a settling in visit within 8 weeks of the date of entry to review any tenancy issues or support needs.
- identify any possible changes in support needs required to sustain a tenancy – such as addressing referrals for medical adaptations.

- make referrals to our income maximisation service to access advice on welfare entitlement and household budgeting, and initiate early intervention in the case of financial crisis or poverty.
- 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.

## **2.5 Households at risk of tenancy failure**

Particular household types may need help or assistance at times in order to sustain their tenancies, including:

- households who have previously been homeless.
- those with learning difficulties, mental health issues, or personality disorders.
- older people with support needs.
- those with alcohol and/ or drug use issues.
- young parents.
- people who have suffered previously from domestic abuse or other types of violence.
- households suffering from either racial or non-racial harassment.
- ex- offenders.
- those with disabilities who may or may not have support needs.
- households with histories of financial exclusion or multiple debts.
- young people setting up home for the first time – particularly those leaving care; and
- families with support needs.

## Clyde Valley Housing Association

## Tenancy Sustainment Policy – Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators	Target
Settling-in visits within 8 weeks of date of entry (OP10)	≥ 95%
Percentage of medical adaptations budget committed (OP13)	100%
Former tenant arrears as a percentage of net debit (OP16)	≤ 0.75%
Annual number of abandoned tenancies (OP31)	≤ 20
Number of designated low demand properties (OP32)	≤ 10%
New tenancies sustained 12 months after date of entry	≥ 95%
New tenancies sustained 24 months after date of entry	≥ 90%