

## Tenancy Sustainment Policy

<b>Purpose:</b>	To establish DPHA's policy and set out our position on Tenancy Sustainment
<b>Review Date:</b>	
<b>Guidance:</b>	The Scottish Social Housing Charter
<b>Regulatory Standards:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.</li> <li>2. The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.</li> <li>3. The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford</li> <li>4. The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.</li> </ol>
<b>Other relevant Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti Social Behaviour Policy</li> <li>• Allocations Policy</li> <li>• SST and SSST</li> <li>• Income Arrears and Debt Management Policy</li> <li>• Estate Management Policy</li> <li>• Repairs Policy</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Policy</li> </ul>
<b>Date reviewed by Policy Review Working Group (PRWG):</b>	20 February 2019
<b>Date approved by Management Committee:</b>	14 August 2019

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Dalmuir Park Housing Association (DPHA) is committed to providing an effective housing service to all tenants and service users in relation to tenancy sustainment. The purpose of this policy is to minimise tenancy breakdown, prevent homelessness and promote stable and sustainable communities.

1.2 Tenancy Sustainment is a generic term for the prevention of tenancy breakdown or a 'failed tenancy'. Failed tenancies can impact negatively upon the stability of the neighbourhood, the tenant's welfare and the resources of the Association. It can also have additional negative effects for the tenant who may become homeless or find it difficult to secure another tenancy because of issues relating to their former, failed tenancy.

1.3 We consider that a tenancy has not been sustained if it ends within 12 months of the tenancy beginning. We use the definition set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator in the Scottish Social Housing Charter, Indicator 20; Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, to assess our effectiveness in this area. We try to prevent tenancies ending in:

- Eviction, which is a last resort
- Abandonment, at any time
- Early termination (a tenancy which last under 12 months)

We recognise that there may be other reasons why people give up their tenancies such as domestic abuse or other forms of harassment. We also recognise that people may terminate their tenancy for positive reasons such as purchasing a home, finding a new job or moving in with a partner.

1.4 The cost of a failed tenancy is high for both the tenant and the Association. Every failed tenancy represents:

- Rent loss whilst the property is empty
- Costs incurred to re-let the property

In some cases

- Legal Expenses
- The cost to the person who finds themselves in need of accommodation and may now have additional issues to overcome such as Former tenancy debt.

## **2.0 AIMS OF THE POLICY**

2.1 The key aims and objectives for the Tenancy Sustainment Policy are:

- To minimise tenancy terminations through evictions and abandonments
- To promote partnership working in ways of providing support and advice for tenants and service users
- To preventing Homelessness

- To build stable and sustainable communities
- To minimise costs associated with void levels such as void rent loss

### **3.0 LEGAL AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

3.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter has identified outcomes which relate to landlord performance in relation to Tenancy Sustainment. They are:

- Housing Options
- Access to Social Housing
- Value for Money

Specifically, Outcome 11 – Tenancy sustainment which states:

*‘Social landlords ensure that 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.’*

This outcome covers how landlords on their own, or in partnership with others, can help tenants who may need support to maintain their tenancy. This includes tenants who may be at risk of falling into arrears with their rent, and tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibilities.

### **4.0 TENANCY SUSTAINMENT IN PRACTICE**

4.1 The Association’s Allocation Policy will compliment areas of the tenancy sustainment policy and is set up to ensure that preference is given to those in the greatest housing need, making best use of our available stock, maximising choice and helping sustain communities. In addition, we will seek to promote housing options for applicants through working collaboratively with the Local Authority, other local social landlords and partner agencies.

4.2 We carry out accompanied viewings to all our empty properties. This provides an opportunity to explain the characteristics of the property and the local area, and for the prospective tenant to raise any concerns or issues. It also provides another opportunity to ensure that any support needs are identified and addressed to allow the tenant to move in and be able to live in the property.

4.3 We will offer pre-tenancy advice on matters such as tenancy responsibility, rent payments and eligibility for housing benefit to prospective tenants when completing a Housing Options form at the initial application and at offer stage.

This interview will also allow applicants to provide as much information as possible in their preferred type and location to maximise choice.

4.4 We will endeavour to identify the varying needs of individuals during the Housing Options interview, at offer stage and/or at tenancy sign up stage, thereby promoting early intervention, partnership working and ensuring that the appropriate support and

referrals are made. Where an existing tenant is at risk of losing their home or is failing to sustain their tenancy, we will carry out an interview to ascertain what support if any the Association can provide or if support is required from other agencies.

4.5 We will carry out new tenant visits 6-8 weeks following tenancy sign up to identify and/or tackle any potential tenancy and vulnerability issues that could jeopardise tenancy sustainment.

4.6 We will strive to maximise tenants' income and tackle debt problems through partnership working and referrals to Clydebank Independent Resource Centre or Citizens Advice Bureau who will provide welfare rights service and financial awareness including budgeting, banking and managing money.

## **5.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

5.1 Given the multitude of reasons why people move it is difficult to use one statistic or performance indicator to measure the outcome of this policy. Several indicators will be used such as those prescribed under The Scottish Social Housing Charter. For example, under charter outcome 11 the Association must provide the following:

- The percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than one year, by source of let
- The turnover of lettable stock in the last year
- Number of applicants on the waiting list for medical adaptations, the number carried out and the average waiting time
- Number of cases during the year in which: Notice of Proceedings issued; court actions initiated; and orders for recovery of possession granted
- Number of and reason for evictions in the last year
- Number of properties abandoned in the last year

The Association also regularly records and presents the following reports to its management committee.

- Void Report
- Offer Report
- New Tenant Visit Report

## **6.0 TRAINING**

All staff will be provided with any training to assist them to carry out the responsibilities covered in this policy.

Staff will be encouraged to play an active and positive role in establishing and developing relationships with applicants, any support organisations and agencies that can help tenants, the community and the Association.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

We are committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all. This is reflected in our Equality and Diversity Policy.

## **8.0 COMPLAINTS**

Although we are committed to providing high levels of service, we accept that there may be occasions where you may not be satisfied with the service you have received from us. We value all complaints and use this information to help us improve our services. Our Complaints Policy describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint.

## **9.0 GDPR**

We will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our Privacy Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in our Customer Fair Processing Notice.