



HOUSING MANAGEMENT
TENANCY SUSTAINMENT POLICY
MAR 2022
MAR 2025

Policy on :	Tenancy Sustainment
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Compliant with Charter :	7. Housing Options 10. Access 11. Sustainment 13. Value for Money
Compliant with New Regulatory Framework:	Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management: Standard 2 and 6.
Compliant with Tenant Participation Strategy:	Consultation through TPWG, Newsletter & our web site
Compliant with Equal Opportunities :	Yes Impact Assessment completed.
Compliant with Budget/Business Plan :	1. Place 8. Partnership 9. Participation

Date for review :	March 2025
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Responsible Officer :	Head of Housing
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Policy sets out a framework for how Paisley Housing Association (PHA) will deal with tenancy sustainment. It sets out how we will provide information, advice & support to enable tenants to meet their tenancy obligations and maximise their chances of successfully maintaining their tenancy.

Tenancy Sustainment is important to us as high levels of sustainment reflect that tenants are happy with their homes and the Association as a landlord. It is also financially important for us as high turnover results in void cost i.e. rent loss and the cost to bring the property up to our Letting Standard.

2.0 DEFINITION

Tenancy Sustainment is about identifying those who are at risk of tenancy failure and providing the right balance of help, information and practical support to ensure that they are able to sustain their tenancy.

3.0 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Association is required to act in accordance with the law. The following pieces of legislation & good practice inform what actions that we can take and are used to inform this policy & related procedures;

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, 2010 & 2014
- Antisocial Behavior etc (Scotland) Act 2004
- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Welfare Reform Act 2012

Business Plan

This policy supports the Association's Strategic & Business Objectives (BOs) specifically;

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE-Provide excellent customer service which represents best value for money and embraces current technology and communications.
5. VIABILITY-Ensure the financial and organisational viability of the Association.

4.0 CHARTER

The relevant sections with the Scottish Housing Charter for this policy are:

- **Section 7 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.
- **Section 10 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.
- **Section 11 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 organisations.
- **Section 13 Value for Money** – tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

5.0 BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

This policy contributes towards the Association meeting its Strategic & Business Objectives. Specifically;

1. **Place** – Provide quality, safe, affordable, attractive warm homes.
8. **Partnership** – Explore partnerships which assist the Association to meet our vision & strategic objectives.
9. **Participation** – Involve customers and respond to their priorities.

6.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Our aim is to promote stable and sustainable communities through minimising tenancy breakdown. We will do this through:

- 6.1 **Prevention** – ensuring that prior to and from the start of any tenancy, steps are taken to identify and address issues which could affect tenancy sustainment
- 6.2 **Tenancy Support** – identifying tenancies which are showing signs of sustainment stress and putting in place a package of support to address the emerging & changing needs of the household.

6.3 Partnership Working – establishing and maintaining partnership arrangements with the Council, other Housing Associations and other external agencies that are able to assist in sustaining tenancies.

The outcomes which we expect through tenancy sustainment include:

- Minimising tenancy breakdowns, such as abandoned tenancies and evictions. These will be measured and reported in the Association's Annual Return for the Charter (ARC).
- Promoting stable and sustainable communities. This will be measured through our turnover information.
- Minimising the number of voids, void rent loss and associated void costs. This will be measured through turnover information and budget spends.
- Decreasing former tenant rent & service charge arrears. This will be monitored through turnover information and rent accounts for failed tenancies

7.0 WIDER FRAMEWORK

We recognise that the delivery of other services provided by us can make a positive impact on tenancy sustainment. These are;

- Neighbour Relations Policy by dealing effectively with neighbour complaints
- Estate Management Policy by managing our estates so they are attractive places to live
- Arrears Policy by early intervention and providing our Advice Team Services to maximise tenants income
- Tenant Participation Strategy by providing tenants opportunities to participate in matters which concern them.
- Maintenance Policy by maintaining tenants homes to a high standard

Our approach of working in tandem with other Association Policies ensures that we are striving to make positive contributions towards the sustainability of our communities.

8.0 KEY PRINCIPLES

8.1 Housing Options & Access to Housing

The first principle to a sustained tenancy is to get the right people into the right houses with the correct support, (if required). We seek to achieve this through providing Housing Options Interviews for applicants, applying our Allocations Policy & working in partnership with Renfrewshire Council on our Combined Nomination & Section 5 Agreement outcomes.

We will carry out Housing Options Interviews, in person or by telephone, for all applicants.

Where an applicant advises that social work or other support agency is already working with the applicant then they will be invited to attend the Housing Options Interview.

We will provide information on the cost of managing a tenancy as part of our Housing Options Interviews to assist the applicant to make an informed decision about whether they can afford to take on a tenancy.

Where applicants identify when they are reaching the top of the housing list or at the point of selection that they have an unmet support need we will give advice on appropriate agencies which may be able to assist them.

Where applicants have had a previous tenancy we will seek a reference to determine if there were any problems with their tenancy. The failure of a previous tenancy may be an indicator of a household at risk of future tenancy failure.

We also recognise the importance of friends & family support in tenancy sustainment and will through Housing Options interviews, establish any connections to an applicant's areas of choice and discourage social isolation for households identified as being at risk of tenancy failure.

We will prior to offering a tenancy carry out accompanied viewings for all of our void properties.

8.2 Maintaining a tenancy

The provision of a tenancy is however not in itself sufficient to make a tenancy successful. We acknowledge there will always be natural and expected turnaround in tenancies but in respect to tenancy sustainment 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 regardless of the reason).

In addition to identifying support needs in advance of a tenancy being granted we will also continue to identify changing needs through ongoing contact with tenants and through notifications by third parties of a change in the tenant's circumstances. To do this we will look at:

- All 1st Non payments
- Notification of change in circumstances through Housing Benefit and Universal Credit payments indicating a significant change within the household

Where support needs are identified we will use all the resources available to us internally i.e. Advice Team for benefits and energy advice and refer to external agencies for appropriate advice and assistance. Where we make a referral we will contact the agency to establish engagement by the tenant and note any outcome on the tenant's tenancy record.

We will wherever possible make referrals with the agreement of the tenant. However where a tenant is not engaging and there is a potential risk of them losing their tenancy through breaches of tenancy, staff will make referrals as required to both statutory bodies e.g. the Council's Homelessness Prevention Team and to relevant support agencies for their circumstances e.g. Families First, Social Work. Where staff make a referral without the permission of the tenant, the tenant will be informed in writing of the referral made. Where a staff member makes a referral to an external agency they will record this in the tenant's tenancy record and will schedule a follow up date for 1 month to determine the outcome of the referral.

For referrals made with the agreement of the tenant and when a tenant does not engage with the agency referred to, the Housing Officer will make contact with the tenant and check why they have not engaged.

We will undertake new tenant visit for all new tenants between 4 to 6 weeks of the tenancy commencing. Additional telephone calls or visits will be carried out to tenants who are identified as needing further support and assistance with any issues they may have.

We understand that individual circumstances change and we ask tenants to advise us of any change in circumstances so we can provide appropriate advice e.g. benefit entitlement.

We will update our records of any change in circumstances and record any specific requirements for tenant engagement e.g. translation services, written information in large font or Braille. We will also record property adaptations detailing the type of adaptation made. Where a tenant is identified as being vulnerable and requiring support we will update the tenant's tenancy record and put a flag against the tenancy. Staff will check prior to any contact with the tenant any special requirements to assist them in dealing with the tenant while doing their work.

Where required we will attend case conferences and review meetings with social work or other agencies and contribute positively to identifying solutions where tenancies are at risk of failing.

The level of support we will provide for our tenants will be determined by the tenants needs. Where a course of action is required we will agree this with the tenant and monitor progress towards achieving outcomes e.g. supporting a tenant who is a hoarder.

The range of support to be given:

- Increased contact with their Housing Officer – telephone/ text/email/ visits
- Referral made to Advice Team
- Referral made to External Agencies
- Sign post to support agencies where we do not have a referral agreement
- Attend Case conferences
- Provide adaptations as required following an assessment by an Occupational Therapist and subject to budget availability.
- Provide Food Bank vouchers
- Use in exceptional circumstances the sustainment budget to enable the tenant to remain in the tenancy e.g. recycled furniture vouchers.

The Association will, where they become aware of, make applications for funding to support tenancy sustainment and will actively develop partnerships with support agencies to maximise referral opportunities.

8.3 Monitoring & Reporting

We will monitor our tenancy sustainment and report 6 monthly on performance against our sustainment KPI to our Board. We will analyse our sustainment information annually and report this along with any recommendations for action to our Board.

Analysis of tenancy sustainment will inform the following:

- Asset Management Plan – where tenancy failure can be attributed to the condition of the property/areas this will influence how the plan is delivered
- The Budget – increased void costs will identify the need for corrective action which may influence future budgets
- The Investment Plan - where tenancy failure can be attributed to the condition of the property i.e., component failure it will influence the timetable of works within the programme
- Environmental Improvements - where tenancy failure can be attributed to the condition of the areas it may influence the priority for works
- Partnership Agreements – where tenancy failure is due to a specific source of let/ client group we may need to change/ introduce partnership working/ sharing resources to address issues.

Where a tenancy is abandoned or terminated with no reason given within 1 year we will check rent account status, if there are any ongoing neighbour complaints or estate management issues which may have impacted on the tenancy being ended.

Where a pattern is identified the Housing Officer will call a meeting of all the relevant staff members to agree an Action Plan to resolve the issues and assist future tenancies being sustained.

9.0 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.
- people with addiction issues.
- young parents.
- people who have suffered previously from domestic abuse or other types of violence.
- households suffering from 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.

Where Housing Management staff identify support needs during a tenancy, we will contact the tenant and agree a programme of engagement with them over an agreed period. We will where appropriate, update the tenant's tenancy record to alert all staff of how best to support the tenant while dealing with whatever service they are providing e.g., repairs, rent account management.

Where a staff member through their contact with a tenant has a concern about a tenant's ability to manage their tenancy, they should email the Housing Officer for that area who will contact the tenant & agree any action required.

10.0 ACTION TO MINIMISE TENANCY FAILURES

In an effort to minimise tenancy failures we will:

- carry out Housing Options interviews to encourage prospective new tenants to make informed choices about getting a home

- carry out support and affordability assessments as part of the selection process for a house
- carry out accompanied viewings
- at the start of a tenancy, give as much information as reasonably possible on tenancy sustainment and address any areas of concern the new tenant may have
- use the services of /external agencies where support needs are identified
- refer new tenants with limited or no resources to furniture initiative projects who may be able to provide a basic furniture pack
- ensure that the applicant is aware of all their responsibilities as a tenant and the contact details for their Housing Officer
- carry out a new tenant visit for all new tenants between 4-6 weeks of the tenancy commencing.
- identify any possible changes in support needs required to sustain a tenancy – such as addressing referrals for adaptations
- make referrals to our Advice Team to access advice on welfare entitlement, energy efficiency & energy debt advice
- monitor agreed action plans
- work in partnership with specialist support agencies and the statutory authorities
- make best use of our IT system to support tenancy sustainment
- share information between sections e.g., Technical Section identify concerns over a tenant's ability to sustain their tenancy through gas service appointments & repair visits

11.0 BUDGET

The Association does not offer tenants incentives to sustain their tenancy. We do however recognise the need to support tenants in exceptional circumstances and as such we have introduced a small sustainment budget which can be used to help both new tenants who have nothing to move in with and for current tenants whose tenancy is at risk of ending within its first year due to a crisis and all alternative funding and support avenues have been exhausted to be given some assistance i.e. recycled furniture voucher. This budget can also be used towards improving the condition of difficult to let properties to make them more attractive to applicants. This budget will be annually reviewed.

We will seek to identify any funding opportunities to assist us in offering future support options for both new & existing tenants.

12.0 ADAPTATIONS

Where an existing tenant approaches the Association for a move due to a medical/mobility need we will investigate whether an adaptation would be a more suitable option. Where the property is suitable for an adaptation, we will direct the tenant to the Occupational Therapist Section within Social Work. The Association currently has an annual budget allocation from government to use for putting in adaptations.

We will report annually on adaptations in our Annual Charter Return.

13.0 TENANT PARTICIPATION

Where we plan to make significant changes to the policy, we will consult with our tenants and any other relevant stakeholders.

We will continue to develop good relationships with tenants through the delivery of our calendar of events.

We will use our Web site and face book to promote third sector agency services within our areas that may assist tenants to maintain their tenancy.

14.0 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

We will continue to work in partnership with other agencies in order sustain tenancies. We currently work with the following agencies:

- Lorretto Care – flat providing 24/7 support for 6 tenancies
- Blue Triangle – leased property providing support for young people who are homeless seeking housing
- Womens Aid – leased property providing support for victims of domestic abuse.
- Renfrewshire Council's Community Safety Team - partnership agreement for dealing with Anti Social Behaviour
- Renfrewshire Council's Social Work Dept – leased property providing support for unaccompanied children
- Renfrewshire Council's Housing Benefit team – service level agreement providing verification for the uptake of Housing Benefit.
- Renfrewshire Council's Housing Advice Team – Combination Section5/ Nominations Agreement for referrals for housing
- Social Work Department – requests for AD1 referrals for adaptations, case conference involvement as required and notifications of a tenancy at risk due to legal action for rent arrears
- DWP – joint training on Universal Credit so staff can best assist tenants in making and managing their claims

We will review operational practices with partners and seek to develop formal protocol agreements where required.

15.0 MONITORING & REPORTING

To measure the effectiveness of this policy a Key Performance Indicator will be used to monitor tenancy sustainment. We will annually review our Sustainment KPIs and make recommendations where changes are required.

An annual report will be presented to the Board on tenancy sustainment.

We will report annually on tenancy sustainment in our Annual Charter Return using their Indicator definition.

We will publish information on tenancy sustainment through our web site and in our Annual Report to Tenants.

We will monitor performance against targets monthly and report quarterly on the sustainment KPI to our Board.

16.0 TRAINING

The Association will identify through staff appraisal, induction and day to day operations any training required by staff to implement this policy and that these needs are met to provide an efficient and effective service in dealing with tenancy sustainment.

17.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board is responsible for approving the Policy.

The Head of Housing is responsible for ensuring our partnerships are working, reporting to Board on performance against Charter/KPIs and identifying any risk to the Association caused through any decrease in tenancy sustainment.

The Senior Housing Officer is responsible for ensuring procedures are in place, they are being followed, identifying any performance issues and overseeing liaison with the Technical Section.

The overall responsibility for tenancy sustainment is the Housing Officers. Their role is not only to apply the procedures but to co ordinate any other action required by other sections within the Association and with our partner agencies to address any sustainment issues which arise.

The Technical Section staff will be responsible for alerting the Housing Officers to any tenants which they feel require support in maintaining their tenancy.

The Housing Assistants dealing with Allocations are responsible for identifying any risk to sustainment for new tenants through the application process.

The Customer Services Officers for Allocations are responsible for giving advice and information to applicants at the Housing Options interview to encourage applicants to make considered housing choices.

18.0 RISK

The Board will consider the risk management factors of tenancy sustainment including:

- Non compliance with the regulatory requirements of the Charter
- The potential harm to the Association as a consequence of poor or ineffective implementation of this policy.

Data Protection and Equal Opportunities

When implementing the policies and procedures of Paisley Housing Association all staff and Board members must adhere to and be aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, which includes the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (the GDPR).

This Policy complies with PHA's Equal Opportunities Policy and takes account of the Equality Act (2010). PHA recognises its pro-active role in valuing and promoting diversity, fairness, social justice and equality of opportunity by adopting and promoting fair policies and procedures.

The Association promotes equal opportunities and will not discriminate between persons on grounds of gender or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language, or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

Complaints Procedure

The Association aims to ensure that the service provided to residents is of the highest quality. If this is not the case, a Complaints Policy and Procedure is in place to allow all residents or affected parties to state their grievance. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is the final stage of this process.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the association every 3 years. Amendments to the policy will be made in the interim to respond to any changes in legislation and to reflect any changes in any of the Associations related strategies, policies and procedures.