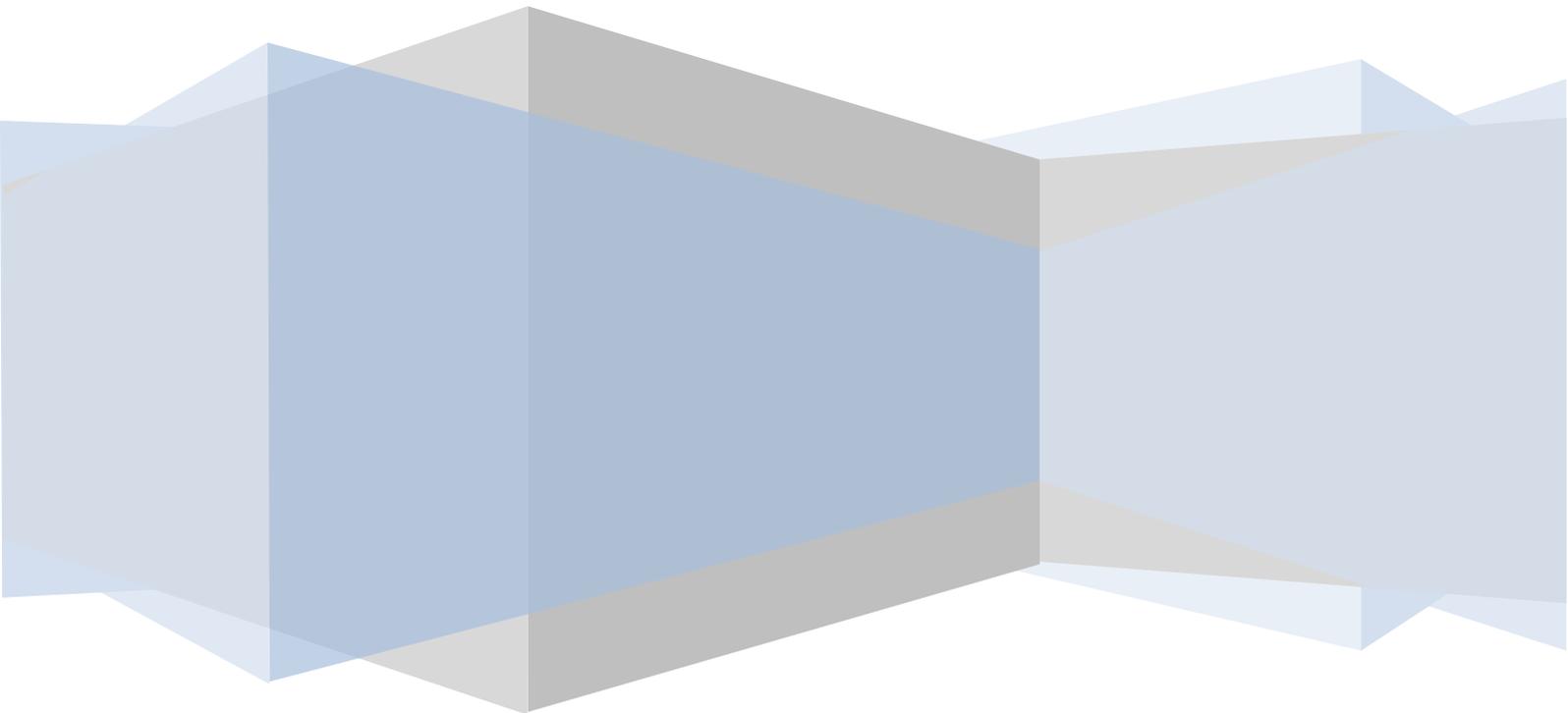




TENANCY SUSTAINMENT POLICY

November 2020



All Policies are available on tape, in braille and in translation into most languages. Please ask a member of staff if you would like this policy in a different format.

Date of Policy Review: November 2020
Date of Committee Approval: 17 November 2020
Date of Next Review: November 2023

SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR STANDARDS	STANDARD 1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users CHARTER 1 EQUALITIES: Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised is treated fairly and with respect and received fair access to housing and housing services CHARTER 2 COMMUNICATION: 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 CHARTER 6 ESTATE MANAGEMENT, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, NEIGHBOUR NUISANCE AND TENANCY DISPUTES: Tenants and other customers live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tenancy Sustainment is a generic term for the prevention of tenancy breakdown or a 'failed tenancy'. Failed tenancies are a waste of resources because each additional property becoming empty incurs significant costs. It can also be disastrous for the tenant who may end up homeless, and find it difficult to secure another tenancy.

1.2 The cost of a failed tenancy can be high for both the tenant and the Association. Every failed tenancy represents:

- Abortive resource commitments
- Rent loss during the time property is empty
- Costs incurred associated with the re-letting of a property
- In some cases, legal costs
- Supplementary costs incurred by other agencies or authorities who subsequently take responsibility for accommodating the former tenant.
- The human cost to the person who again finds themselves in need of accommodation and may now have additional issues to overcome, such as former tenancy debt.

1.3 This policy aims to:

- Ensure that tenancy sustainment underpins the delivery of our housing services
- Minimise the costs associated with tenancy failure
- Ensure resources are directed towards proactive tenancy management solutions
- Optimise service satisfaction levels

2. WHAT IS A FAILED TENANCY?

2.1 We consider that a tenancy has 'failed' if it ends by:

- Eviction
- Abandonment
- Early Termination (*a tenancy which lasts under 12 months*)

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

2.2 There are known risk factors in relation to early tenancy failure, and particular household types may need help or assistance in sustaining their tenancies. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Mental health issues
- Learning difficulties
- Drug and alcohol addiction problems
- Disabilities
- Leaving care
- Domestic violence
- Poverty/fuel poverty
- Extreme youth or immaturity
- Young parents
- Older people with support needs
- Families with support needs
- No established local networks

Other causes of tenancy breakdown are:

- Allocations in unwanted areas
- Dissatisfaction with property condition
- Anti-social behaviour
- Debt problems
- Inability to secure adequate furniture and equipment
- Lack of support with resettlement and setting up home
- Isolation

2.3 Tenancy sustainment is not a new concept for us, and our staff are experienced in assisting tenants to sustain their tenancies and preventing homelessness. This policy recognises that it is not currently our role to carry out detailed assessment of needs or to case manage tenants with specific needs, but that we must be proactive in signposting and referring tenants to agencies with the expertise to assist.

2.4 Covid-19

During Covid-19, the housing management staff will make contact with all of the Association's tenants to ensure that the correct help is being given. The staff will identify factors related to Covid-19 that could potentially cause tenancies not to be sustained as during this time it is likely to be a combination of factors mentioned at 2.1 and 2.2.

Housing Officers will offer support with rent accounts and repayment arrangements, organising for debt support and welfare rights support, making referrals to any relevant outside agencies for physical or mental health issues and offering a friendly service for tenants should they simply need someone to talk to during this time. All visits to tenants' homes will be carried out dependant on government advice and guidelines. Social distancing along with wearing PPE will be enforced.

3. KEY OBJECTIVES

By implementing a Tenancy Sustainment Policy, we have sought to identify 3 key objectives to prevent tenancy failure and homelessness:

3.1 Prevention

Taking steps prior to and from the commencement of a tenancy which will identify issues and assist in sustainment.

3.2 Tenancy Support

Being proactive in identifying prospective and existing tenant vulnerability issues and ensuring the appropriate support is put in place to sustain a tenancy.

3.3 Partnership Working

Developing networks and partnership working with other agencies to address vulnerabilities and assist in sustaining tenancies.

Appendix 1 outlines the detail of the above 3 Objectives.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered by the Association in respect of applicants and tenants is treated as confidential in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. Any referrals made to other agencies for support and assistance for individuals will only be made with the knowledge and consent of that individual and in line with the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to ensure that information used is used fairly, lawfully and transparently.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Cathcart & District Housing Association is committed to providing fair and equal treatment to all in accordance with our Equality & Diversity Policy under the Equality Act 2010 Scotland.

6. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years to ensure that it is effective.

Tenancy Sustainment in Practice

Objective 1: Prevention

Pre-tenancy measures and initiatives which assist in the identification of tenants at risk will assist the Association and its staff in identifying those prospective tenants most at risk of abandoning their tenancy or developing problem tenancies. The Association will be better placed to address any issues when they arise.

Pre-Allocation

We will seek to:

- Satisfy applicants' choice of where they want to live.
- Ensure that our empty properties meet our minimum re-let standard.
- Carry out accompanied viewings of our empty properties. On the few occasions where it is not a Housing Officer who shows an applicant the flat, Housing staff will ensure that the applicant has adequate information on the property and the surrounding neighbourhood, when keys are signed out for viewings.
- At the tenancy sign-up meeting ensure that the most important features of the tenancy agreement are highlighted including responsibility for rent payments and the Association's policies regarding rent arrears and anti-social behaviour.
- Provide details of energy suppliers with the most up to date meter readings for the property.
- Advise on the benefits of having home contents insurance.
- Provide details of suppliers/charities in the area who can assist with furniture provision.
- Ask the tenant to provide details of next of kin or other support contact in the event that staff have difficulty contacting the tenant in an emergency.
- Assist the tenant to complete a housing benefit form if applicable and calculate an estimate of any rent they may have to pay.

During the Tenancy

- We will carry out settling in visits within 6 weeks of the start of the tenancy. During Covid-19 these visits may take longer than six weeks to arrange depending on government advice and guidelines and the health of the staff and tenants. The Association will endeavour to do these as soon as possible when it is safe to do so. Staff will carry out social distancing and wear the appropriate PPE during the visit.

- Ensure all information provided to applicants and tenants is in plain English, easy to understand and in a format suited to each individual.
- Make regular, personal and sustained contact with 'at risk' households.
- Make referrals to Welfare Rights Officers for income maximisation, financial advice and early intervention in cases where financial crisis or poverty are identified.
- We will endeavour to provide assistance to ensure that your rent account is always up to date. We expect you to work with us in this area. Where payment plans have been put in place and failed on more than one occasion we may withhold non-urgent repairs until the rent account is being managed in accordance with your tenancy agreement and or your repayment plan.

Objective 2: Tenancy Support

The Association recognises that continued personal and sustained support for potentially vulnerable individuals is critical to the future success of their tenancy.

Prior to allocation the specific needs of applicants are assessed by the Housing Assistant and all details loaded onto our software programme when the application is submitted so that each Housing Officer is aware of the needs of the applicant before considering them for a property. In addition, staff will liaise with housing and social work Occupational Therapists if necessary to ensure the property is suitable for identified needs.

Cathcart & District HA does not provide support directly to tenants, but will ensure, wherever possible, that new tenants with specific needs for support have a package already in place when they are allocated a property.

We will not allocate a property if support needs exist that cannot be met.

Where a need for support for an existing tenant becomes apparent, a referral for support will be made to the local social services office.

These include:

- Drug and Alcohol
- Housing Support
- Mediation
- Mental Health Services
- Furniture Provision
- Money Advice
- Violence and Domestic Abuse

We will also assist tenants in making a self-referral for medical adaptations to their house.

Objective 3: Partnership Working

We work in partnership with a range of organisations as follows:

Glasgow City Council

- Homelessness prevention and housing the homeless
- Community Safe Glasgow to tackle anti-social behaviour and Glasgow City Council Noise Team to tackle noise complaints.
- Southside Housing Association Welfare Right Service and Money Advice Service.

Police Scotland

- Protocols in place for information sharing.
- Attendance at Community Engagement meetings in all areas where we have properties. This close working relationship allows us to tackle anti-social behaviour at all levels as soon as it arises.
- Cathcart Local Community Police work closely with the housing management team and hold regular meetings in the office to discuss any issues in the area. The assigned officers to the area also keep in contact with the Association by telephone and email.

Social Work and Health Services & Other Agencies

- We will work closely with local social work and health services to resolve issues that might impact on tenants' ability to remain in their home.
- We will continue to seek to develop partnership working with any other agencies and community groups that play a part in the local community.