

KNOWES HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD	
Policy Name	Tenancy Sustainability Policy
Policy Category	Housing Management
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Consultation	Internal

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Policy sets out KHA's proactive approach to sustaining tenancies. Tenancies which fail, impact on KHA's resources and can have negative impacts on Tenants who may end up as homeless and have difficulties securing alternative accommodation. As such, over a period of time, tenancy sustainability has been a key part of KHA's commitment to work in partnership to support Tenants and create sustainable communities.

1.2 KHA recognises that Tenants living within its communities have a wide range of different housing and support needs. This policy will detail how KHA will help meet the support needs of its most at risk Tenants either directly as a landlord, or indirectly through referrals to other support agencies ensuring, where possible that Tenants are not disadvantaged in accessing services and can remain living in their homes.

1.3 The development of KHA's Tenancy Sustainment Services will further support the Tenancy Sustainment Policy's aims and objectives. This service is designed to maximise that resources we have available in supporting, through various means, tenants who may be struggling to manage aspects of their tenancy and in doing so prevent them from ending their tenancy prematurely. The Employment of a Tenancy Sustainment Officer provides an enhanced support service where quality and time is provided to work with tenants.

2.0 CONTEXT

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

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, 2008 & 2014; .
- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- The Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Equalities Act 208
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- Children (Scotland) Act 1775
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1754; and
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Human Rights Act 1998

2.2 This Policy should be read in conjunction with KHA's Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement; Allocation Policy; Rent Arrears Management Policy; Mutual Exchange Policy; Estate Management Policy and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and our Tenancy Sustainment service guide.

2.3 This Policy seeks to achieve the following regulatory requirement contained in the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

- **Outcome 1: Equalities** and Human Rights – Tenants and other customers have their individual needs recognised, are treated fairly with dignity and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing providers
- **Outcomes 5, 6 & 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 Approved 9.9.21 Review November 2024
- **Outcome 8: 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
- **Outcome 9: 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

- **Outcome 13: Value for money** – Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay

3.0 POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The Tenancy Sustainment Policy aims to ensure that KHA provides an effective housing operations service that complies with its landlord obligations in respect of tenancy sustainment. Specifically, the aims of this Policy are to:

- Develop appropriate proactive mechanisms to identify and respond to Tenants' needs
- Develop and support initiatives to improve tenancy sustainment
- Enhance information sharing and joint working
- Monitor, evaluate and continuously improve tenancy sustainment rates

3.2 The objectives of the Policy are to:

- pro-actively identify groups most at risk of tenancy failure and provide tailored support to these customers
- develop and support initiatives aimed at increasing the level of tenancy sustainment, based on an understanding of the reasons for tenancy failure
- signpost to a range of agreed services aimed at increasing tenancy sustainment
- ensure that these services can be easily accessed by KHA Tenants
- ensure tenancy sustainment data is collected consistently and reported regularly via the agreed monitoring framework
- reduce the incidences of KHA Tenants becoming homeless
- develop effective partnership working
- listen to and act on the views of KHA Tenants and customers

3.3 KHA's 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
- **Partnership Working** - establishing partnership arrangements with agencies, especially local authorities, who can assist in sustaining tenancies where appropriate

3.4 This Policy seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- minimising tenancy breakdowns, such as abandoned tenancies and evictions
- preventing homelessness
- promoting stable and sustainable communities
- minimising the number of empty homes
- Protecting our customers human rights by:-
 - Ensuring that our customers are able to access the support to provide an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families
 - Ensuring that our the way that we provide our service show our respect for our tenants' homes, their private and family life.

4.0 KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

4.1 Allocating Tenancies - KHA let its homes 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.

4.2 KHA seeks to promote sustainment of tenancies and as such assist with the sustainment of the wider community. The provision of a tenancy, however, 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.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities - Every Tenant is responsible for managing their tenancy and complying with their tenancy conditions. KHA has a role to play in identifying Tenants or households with particular needs or who may otherwise be at risk. Initially we will seek to assist using our in-house resources of the Housing Team and the Tenancy Sustainment Officer, (TSO). If there are more complex needs identified then we would, with the tenants permission, refer them to a relevant external agency for appropriate advice and assistance. Such referrals will be made where, in the professional opinion of the KHA Teams, a Tenant or household has particular needs or may otherwise be considered at risk and where this may potentially affect their ability to sustain their tenancy.

4.4 Failed Tenancies - KHA consider that a failed tenancy is one that ends by eviction, abandonment or where a tenancy is ended early (i.e. a tenancy which lasts less than 12 months) or is ended for a negative reason. A tenancy which falls into this category can incur substantial additional costs for KHA including rent loss (through void empty homes and possible former Tenant arrears); cost of re-let repairs (including possible rechargeable repairs); KHA Team resources associated with the letting's procedure and in some cases legal costs.

4.5 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 Tenants
- rent arrears
- drug or alcohol addiction problems
- mental health issues
- domestic abuse

- leaving care
- learning difficulties
- poverty
- fuel poverty
- security and safety issues
- extreme youth or immaturity
- no established local networks (particularly for new immigrants)
- families with support needs
- unable to furnish the property
- hoarding issues

The above list covers many aspects of why a tenancy may fail but there are many other reasons why this may happen and we will assist where possible regardless of the causes.

4.6 Minimising tenancy failures - To minimise tenancy failures, KHA will seek to develop pre-tenancy, during tenancy and post-tenancy measures, to assist in identifying Tenants most at risk of losing their home or developing tenancy related issues which could jeopardise their tenancy.

4.5 KHA will seek to:

Pre-tenancy we will;

- satisfy applicants' choice of where they want to live - where this is reasonably possible and participate in Mutual Exchanges, and Local Lettings Initiatives, where appropriate, to maximise choice of housing options

During the Tenancy we will:

- 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 as need is identified
- refer new Tenants with limited or no resources to our TSO service and any available furniture initiative projects who may be able to provide furnishings
- ensure that the applicant is aware of all their responsibilities as a Tenant and have the contact details for their Housing Officer and TSO.
- carry out a new tenant visit within 8 weeks of the date of entry to review any tenancy issue or support needs
- where a vulnerability has been identified at the settling in visit, refer them to the TSO who will engage with the tenant and build a relationship which develops trust and empathy to allow support to cover the period which assist the tenant in settling in and managing their tenancy successfully.

- identify any possible changes in support needs required to sustain a tenancy - such as addressing referrals for adaptations
- make referrals to KHA's Welfare Benefits and Financial Inclusion Services partners Citizens Advice Bureau, to access advice on benefit entitlement and household budgeting, and initiate early intervention in the case of rent arrears, financial crisis or poverty
- through the TSO 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
- establish a liaison plan for at risk Tenants to ensure regular contact is made by the TSO when tenancy issues and support needs can be reviewed and/or addressed. The TSO will keep the Housing Officer updated with all aspects of support and any tenancy issues that may impact on the management of the tenancy.
- utilise the tenancy sustainment budget funded by KHO to cover the costs of essential items that may otherwise be unaffordable and risk a tenancy failure or hardship if not available elsewhere.

Post Tenancy we will: attempt to identify reason why a tenancy has failed and whether there was anything further the Association could do to prevent this failed tenancy. Where possible we will introduce changes to policies and procedures that could have prevented a tenancy ending prematurely. (Not all tenancy's that fail will be preventable as there will be accepted norms of tenancy's terminating that we will have no control over).

5.0 IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO TENANCIES AT RISK

5.1 All new tenancies should begin in a positive manner with Tenants receiving the appropriate level of support. This is not sufficient to make a tenancy successful and tenancy sustainment needs to be promoted by the working practices adopted by KHA to stop tenancies from failing.

5.2 Housing management policies, procedures and people working practices should be focused on identifying, at an early stage, tenancies that are at risk and take action aimed at sustaining Tenants in their tenancies. Tenancy sustainability is not a new concept and experienced KHA Teams will be pro-active in identifying at risk Tenants at risk of losing their home and taking appropriate action so that this is avoided. Identifying tenants at risk will also involve contractors who have a responsibility of informing KHA of any concerns they have with a tenant or household when they are carrying out work in one of our properties.

5.3 There are many varied actions and working practices that officers should adopt including:

- ensuring Tenants have up to date advice and support
- referring Tenants to mainstream support services
- on-going communication and engagement with mainstream services
- maintaining regular contact with "at risk" households

6.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

6.1 The Head of Housing Services has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Tenancy Sustainment Policy and the Housing Officers and Tenancy Sustainment Officer are responsible for key aspects of the day-to-day service delivery.

6.2 The percentage of lettable homes that become vacant during the year is one of the Performance Indicators used by the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess how well landlords are achieving the outcomes outlined in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

6.3 Properties become vacant for the following reasons;

- terminated with notice given .
- terminated due to abandonment
- terminated due to death
- terminated due to eviction

6.4 In order to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to measure tenancy sustainment and a number of associated outcomes.

6.5 The success of Tenancy Sustainment Policy will be measured against the following KPIs:

Local Indicators:

- Quarterly report from Tenancy Sustainment Officer on the services that are provided.
- Number of new tenant visits within 8 weeks of date of entry
- Value of former Tenant arrears as a percentage of net debit
- Annual number of abandoned tenancies and evictions
- Number of new tenancies sustained 12 months after date of entry Statutory Indicators (Scottish Social Housing Charter)
- Percentage of Tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in
- Number of lets during the reporting year
- The number of lets during the reporting year by source of let
- Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let

6.6 KHA will carry out periodic satisfaction of our tenants to ensure that they are happy with services they receive from us and will consult them on improvements to our services.

6.7 KHA will ensure that all customers are aware of our complaints procedure and will monitor all complaints received to assess where service improvements can be made.

6.7 KHA will routinely review and analyse the outcomes and make recommendations where changes are required.

6.8 KHA's Management Committee will monitor the implementation of the Tenancy Sustainment Policy and the Tenancy Sustainment services and spend so that they can have reasonable assurance that it is operating effectively in practice.

7.0 KHA TEAM TRAINING

7.1 KHA will ensure that in managing tenancies, duties are delegated to its people effectively and that all relevant KHA Teams receive comprehensive, regular training for implementing this Policy. Ongoing training requirements will also be regularly reviewed.

7.2 All employees involved in delivering services to promote tenancy sustainment have a responsibility to ensure that they read, understand, and implement this Policy.

8.0 EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

8.1 KHA aims to treat all customers with respect and professionalism and will ensure that this service is fair and accessible to all. KHA will publish information that is easy to read and understand and if requested in a range of appropriate languages and formats. Where Tenants have any particular needs or requirements, KHA will do all that it can to ensure that its services are tailored to these needs.

8.2 This Policy will not be used to discriminate against any individual or household on grounds of race, religion, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, political opinion, pregnancy, or maternity. KHA aims to promote equal opportunities and comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

8.3 KHA will promote tenancy sustainment activities through its newsletter, website publications, leaflets and tenancy start up packs to keep stakeholders informed and involved.

8.4 KHA will collect data on equalities through surveys and allocations process. This information will be stored anonymously on our data base and will be utilised to tailor our services to ensure we are tailoring our services and addressing the needs of our customers

8.5 KHA will adopt a Human Rights approach in the provision of its services by ensuring that we do not breach any of our customers' rights in particular with regard to respect for their home, their family life, their privacy, and the right to freedom from discrimination.

9.0 APPEALS, COMPLAINTS & CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

9.1 KHA values feedback on its services and will listen to Tenants views to enable continuous improvements to services, in line with the Tenant Participation Strategy.

9.2 KHA will actively seek feedback by:

- Inviting all new Tenants at the New Tenant Home Visit to complete a satisfaction questionnaire on the empty homes service received and the condition of their new home when they moved in; and
- Monitoring customer compliments, complaints and appeal outcomes relating to tenancy sustainment to identify and respond to emerging trends.

9.3 If a Tenant or customer of KHA feels we failed to correctly apply this Policy, they may submit a complaint using the KHA's Complaints Policy.

10.0 POLICY REVIEW

10.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, operational requirements, or customer feedback. The Policy will be reviewed in consultation with KHA Tenants.