



<b>TENANCY SUSTAINMENT POLICY</b>	
<b>Policy Number</b>	HM 3.6 Version 1.0
<b>Prepared by</b>	Stacy Angus, Housing Services Manager
<b>Date of Review</b>	October 2017
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	October 2020
<b>Reviewed &amp; Approved by</b>	Housing Committee
<b>Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2017

# OSPREY GROUP TENANCY SUSTAINMENT POLICY STATEMENT

***Osprey Housing and Osprey Housing Moray (referred to as the Group) believe that effective and efficient tenancy sustainment is vital to the success of maintaining good quality services and support for all our tenants.***

We embrace quality housing management and this is encompassed in our Core Values;

✓ **AMBITION**

*empowering through innovation and challenge*

✓ **(E)QUALITY**

*doing the best for individuals and communities in a fair and equal way*

✓ **RESPECT & PROFESSIONALISM**

*towards each other, the people we work with; the people we serve and our environment*

✓ **ACHIEVEMENT**

*delivering outcomes that matter and make a real difference – now and in the future*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Policy statement –

*"We will improve life chances for our customers through providing a secure home and supporting the development of necessary skills to sustain tenancies"*

**1.1** The Osprey Group (referred to as the Group) believe that effective and efficient management of our tenancies to identify issues and support tenants in accessing the help they need, is vital to the success of maintaining strong, safe and attractive communities. The range and scope of measures which can assist in supporting tenancies is broad and can vary according to the needs of individuals and the communities where they live. The Group is committed to working in partnership with other agencies to support tenants and prospective tenants in accessing assistance and in building the skills required to successfully manage their tenancy.

**1.2 Policy Purpose.** This Policy aims to ensure that The Group provides an effective housing service that complies with its landlord obligations in respect of tenancy sustainment.

The key purpose of this policy is to 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.

### 1.3 The Legal Framework

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

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, 2001 & 2010;
- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003;
- The Data Protection Act 1998;
- The Welfare Reform Act 2012;
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- Equalities Act 2010.

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

## 1.4 Performance Standards and the Scottish Social Housing Charter

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 organisations;
- **Homelessness** – 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.
- **Equalities** – tenants, owners and other customers have their individual needs recognised, are treated fairly, with respect and receive fair access to housing services, regardless of age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex of sexual orientation.
- **Participation**- tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

## 2. POLICY AIMS

The Group aims to meet the following outcomes of operating an effective Tenancy Sustainment Policy;

- To minimise tenancy breakdowns, such as abandoned tenancies and evictions;
- To assist in the prevention of homelessness;
- To work in partnership with other agencies to assist those tenants who are at risk of failing
- To promote stable and sustainable communities; and
- To minimise void levels, void rent loss and associated void costs.
- To mitigate against business risk by managing our housing operations

## 3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

- As a caring organisation we believe that every person has the right to a secure home. We recognise that this requires not only the home, but also the skills required to meet the responsibilities associated with maintaining that home and its tenancy.

Tenancy Sustainment Policy HM-3.6 Version 1.0

Printed copies are UNCONTROLLED. It is the users responsibility to verify printed material against the controlled document register.

- ii. As an ethical organisation we have a role in supporting tenants to attain those skills so that they can sustain a tenancy independently.
- iii. We recognise the importance of identifying those at risk as early as possible and providing support that is appropriate to the need.
- iv. We understand that individual circumstances change and we review tenants' needs throughout their tenancy with us.
- v. Where a need is identified we will intervene at an early stage and will offer support.
- vi. We are open with people about the risk assessments we carry out and about any support needs that we identify.
- vii. A range of mechanisms may be appropriate and support required ranges from intensive support alongside other partner agencies to short term interventions within the context of a long-term tenancy. We are flexible, using external, specialist partners as well as our own staff.
- viii. We recognise the value to the business of successful tenancies and our priorities for internal support provision focus on those needs that we identify as being the most significant.

## 4. IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

The action plan attached as **Appendix 1** shows the action plans supporting each objective of the policy. The areas of on-going action to implement this policy are;

### 4.1 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 promote housing options for applicants through working collaboratively with local authorities and other social landlords, through participation in Apply4Homes (the local Common Housing Register) and nomination agreements with Local Authorities.

The Tenancy Sustainment Policy seeks to promote sustainability of tenancies and as such assist with the sustainability of communities. We recognise that the provision of a tenancy is not in itself sufficient to make a tenancy successful and that other factors must be considered so that once a tenancy starts it does not fail. We accept that some tenants will need additional support on either a short term or long-term basis and aim to identify these tenants at an early stage in order to put suitable measures in place to prevent the failure of their tenancy.

### 4.2 Early Action

Under the terms of their Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST), every tenant is responsible for managing their tenancy and complying with tenancy conditions. It is recognised, however that we have a role to play in identifying tenants or households with particular needs or who may be vulnerable and require additional support to manage their tenancy.

Knowing our tenants is fundamental to being able to identify those requiring support at an early stage. Therefore, particular emphasis will be paid to keeping our tenant information

up to date and through routine visits identifying any change in circumstances affecting a household.

During visits to a neighbourhood, all staff members will be vigilant in looking out for indicators that a tenancy is not being well managed. If a tenant is identified as being in need of additional support, appropriate advice and support can be made by Housing staff and the Income Management Officer in relation to financial, debt and benefit advice. Where relevant, a referral to a partnership agency for higher level of specific requirements will be made.

Staff will assess tenants on the RAG rating (**Appendix 2**) and record this on the Group's database to ensure there is regular monitoring of identified higher risk tenancies. This will include monitoring their rent accounts and carrying out regular home visits to offer advice and support to help sustain their tenancy.

Certain households' may need help or assistance at times in order to sustain their tenancies. They may include:

- 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;
- people who have suffered previously from domestic abuse or other types of violence;
- households suffering from either racial and non-racial direct 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 or with children;
- families with support needs.

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;
- no established local networks (particularly for new immigrants);
- families with support needs.

### 4.3 Minimising tenancy failures

In an effort to minimise tenancy failures, we will use a variety of measures to assist us in identifying tenants at with the highest risk of developing tenancy issues or of abandoning their tenancies.

We will seek to:

- meet applicants' choice of where they want to live – where this is reasonably possible;
- participate in Apply4Homes (CHR), Mutual Exchanges and Local Lettings Initiatives, where appropriate, to maximise choice of housing options and building sustainable communities;
- Prior to the commencement of a tenancy, effectively gather all the information required to give the prospective tenant the appropriate level of support and assistance
- 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 relevant external agencies who are involved in support, eg, local Health & Social Care Partnerships (Social Work);
- refer new tenants with limited or no resources to projects/agencies who may be able to help provide assistance e.g. The Money Advice Services;
- at pre-tenancy stage, ensure that the applicant is aware of all their responsibilities as a tenant and the contact details for their Housing Officer;
- carry out a "Settling-In" visit within 6 weeks of moving in 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 to an Occupational Therapist;
- pass on cases to the Income Management Officer for higher level 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' households;
- work in partnership with the Anti-Social Behaviour section of the Local Authority in addressing problem behaviour either from or towards our tenants;
- work in partnership with specialist support agencies who work with vulnerable client groups and the statutory authorities;

## 5.EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Group is committed to ensuring and promoting diversity and equality of opportunity in housing, employment and provision of services for all people within its range of work. The Group will treat all people equally and in accordance with the Equality & Diversity Policy.

## **6. MONITORING & REPORTING**

The following areas will be subject to monitoring on a continuing basis:

- i. Outcomes expected from the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- ii. Risk management – Strategic risk matrix and Key Performance Indicators
- iii. Training and information for staff

## **6. REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless the following criteria dictate that it would be best practise to review sooner:

- i. applicable legislation, rules, regulations and guidance, both those which affect the Group directly and those which affect the resources available to significant numbers of our customers to enable them to sustain tenancies
- ii. changes in the organisation
- iii. continued best practice



## APPENDIX 1 - TENANCY SUSTAINMENT ACTION PLAN

DRAFT TEMPLATE – WORK IN PROGRESS

### AIM 1 - PREVENTION

Purpose	Action Required	Timescale	Lead Person
<b>Know our tenants - Identify and target Vulnerability</b>	Tenant Profiling – use of census forms in all contact with tenants		
	QL to be updated with tenant contact details		
	Use of RAG rating on QL to monitor high risk households		
	Staff training on recognition of key factors of vulnerability		
<b>Pre-tenancy</b>	Review pre-tenancy profile form to collect sufficient data on households prior to offer of tenancy		
	Review signup pack and associated documents		
	Review tenants handbook		
<b>New Tenants</b>	Settling in visits		
<b>Planned Visits</b>	Profiles for current tenants to be completed; new tenant profiles & Good Neighbour form completed at settling in visit.		

### AIM 2. TENANCY SUPPORT

Purpose	Action Required	Timescale	Lead Person
<b>Use IT system for clear identification of vulnerable tenants</b>	Staff training on systems and use of RAG system		
	Review		
<b>Identify support providers and establish positive relationships</b>	Referral system and contact list for support and partnership agencies		
	Establish positive working relations with family support givers		

### AIM 3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Purpose	Action Required	Timescale	Lead person
---------	-----------------	-----------	-------------

Tenancy Sustainment Policy HM-3.6 Version 1.0  
 Printed copies are UNCONTROLLED. It is the users responsibility to verify printed material against the controlled document register.

<b>Focus on tenants at risk of failure</b>	Identify tenants and key features(life changes) which could affect tenant's ability to sustain their tenancy Adopt a pro-active and targeted approach to sustainment issues		
<b>Signposting</b>	Signpost new or existing tenants to appropriate services		
<b>Targeted Home Visits</b>	Develop a system of home visits, structured to support and assist tenants when we are aware that they are subject to major life changes		

## APPENDIX 2 – RAG RATING GUIDANCE