



TOLLCROSS
housing association

Tenancy Sustainment Policy

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Policy Created	Fiona Mills, Housing Manager
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Reviewed By	Fiona Mills, Housing Manager

CORPORATE FIT	
Internal Management Plan	✓
Risk Register	✓
Business Plan	✓
Regulatory Standards	✓
Equalities Strategy	✓
Legislation	✓

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tollcross Housing Association is committed to providing an effective housing operations service to all tenants and service users in relation to tenancy sustainment. Therefore the Tenancy Sustainment Policy's main objectives will be to minimise tenancy breakdown, prevent homelessness and promote stable and sustainable communities through:

- Prevention – ensuring that at pre-allocation and commencement stage of any tenancy, steps are taken to identify any issues that may affect tenancy sustainment.
- Tenancy Support – ensuring that all tenants are supported throughout their tenancy, individual support needs are identified and where appropriate, referrals are made on behalf of the tenant to partner agencies that can assist with that support.
- Partnership working – to demonstrate effective partnership working and to establish good working relationships with agencies that can contribute and assist our tenants in sustaining their tenancy.

1.2 We consider that a tenancy has not been sustained if it ends within 12 months and we use the definition set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator in the Scottish Social Housing Indicator 20 (Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year) to assess our effectiveness in that area. We are particularly concerned to prevent tenancies ending in :

- Eviction – at any time
- 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 more positive reasons such as purchasing a home, finding a new job or moving in with a partner.



1.3 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
- Abortive resource commitments

In some cases

- Legal Expenses
- Cost incurred by other agencies or authorities who subsequently take responsibility for accommodating the Former Tenant
- 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.

1.4. The most common reasons why a tenancy fails are listed below. The following list is not exhaustive:

- 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

2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Through the Scottish Social Housing Charter the Scottish Housing Regulator has identified a number of key indicators which will measure landlord performance in relation to tenancy sustainment. They are:

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

And more specifically **Outcome 11 – Tenancy sustainment** which states:



“Social Landlords must 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.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The key aims and objectives for the Tenancy Sustainment Policy are

- To minimise tenancy terminations through evictions and abandonments
- Promote partnership working in ways of providing support and advice for tenants and service users
- Preventing Homelessness
- Build stable and sustainable communities
- Minimise costs associated with void levels such as void rent loss

4. 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 local authorities, other social landlords and partner agencies. The 5 main groups on the housing list is based primarily on housing need with the key aims setting out to achieve balanced communities by allocations of property being spread across applicants with different circumstances. The 5 groups are:

Group	Circumstances
General	Applicants who require mainstream housing.
Transfer	Tenants of the Association who need to move due to a change in circumstances since their tenancy started.
Clearance	Tenants who are required to move due to demolition of their property.
Sheltered/Very Sheltered	Applicants who require rehousing and require specific support needs provided by our sheltered/very sheltered complexes.
Homeless Referrals	Homeless households referred, by Glasgow City Council’s homeless community casework team, for permanent housing.



- 4.2 Every tenant is responsible for managing their tenancy and complying with their tenancy conditions. However we have a role to play in identifying tenants or households with particular needs or who may otherwise be vulnerable, and to refer them to relevant external agency for appropriate advice and assistance.

Such referrals will be made where, in the professional opinion of Association staff, a tenant or household has particular needs or may otherwise be considered vulnerable and where this may potentially affect their ability to sustain their tenancy.

- 4.3 In an effort to minimise tenancy failure, we will seek to develop pre-tenancy, during tenancy and post tenancy measures to assist us in identifying tenants at most risk of abandoning their tenancies or developing problem tenancies.

We will seek to:

- Allow applicants as much choice as possible in their preferred type and location of housing,
- Provide as much information and guidance as possible on the responsibilities of managing a tenancy, and maintaining their home. Provide leaflets on local services etc
- Participate in Mutual Exchanges , where appropriate, to maximise choice of Housing Options
- Carry out New tenant visits within 4-6 weeks of the date of entry to review any changes or support needs
- Maintain regular, personal and sustained contact with “at risk” householders
- Work in partnership with specialist support agencies who work with vulnerable client groups and the statutory authorities.
- Make referrals to the Tollcross Money and Advice centre to access advice on Welfare entitlement and household budgeting, and initiate early intervention in the case of financial crisis or poverty. The Association’s links with this community facility also helps tenant’s access outreach services such as the Citizen’s Advice Bureau; East End Law Centre and Job Centre Plus, thereby promoting access to other agencies and allowing them to build on support networks.
- We will analyse information from exit interviews and termination forms with the view to continuously improve on our services and to review procedures as and when required.



- Ensure tenants access the Welfare Right Officer service in relation to Housing Benefit applications, Discretionary Housing Applications and appeals.
- Ensure the tenant is aware of their responsibilities and the Contact details for their housing officer/area team
- Identify changes in support needs required to sustain a tenancy – for example disabled adaptations
- Engage with external agencies regarding support needs/packages
- At the commencement of a tenancy provide as much information as possible on tenancy sustainment and address any issues a new tenant may have.
- Ensuring all tenants and service users are able to understand and access services provided by the Association and such of partner agencies who can offer support.
- Carry out accompanied viewing of properties offering advice to proposed new tenants on the lettable standard; decoration allowance; affordability, public utilities and fixtures and fittings within their new home.

4.4 Particular household types may require additional support or assistance in order to sustain their tenancy, these could be

- Households who have been previously homeless
- Older people with support needs
- Young people setting up home for the first time – particularly those leaving care
- Families with support needs
- Young parents
- Those with learning difficulties, mental health issues or personality disorders
- Those with drug or alcohol addictions
- Households with histories of financial exclusion or multiple debts
- Those with disabilities who may or may not have support needs
- Households suffering from either racial and non racial harassment
- People who have suffered previously from domestic abuse or other types of violence
- Ex offenders

4.5 The Association recognises the importance of good partnership working and that by liaising with relevant external agencies on behalf of the tenant, and sharing appropriate information with them, the Association can help



tenants access support in times of difficulty and ultimately assist them to sustain their tenancy.

Association staff will familiarise themselves with the services of support agencies operating in the East End of Glasgow and agree referral arrangements, or where necessary, protocols for liaising and working with these agencies/organisation. This may also include training for Association staff in order to familiarise themselves with the service and support these agencies can/will provide to tenants of the Association

5. BENEFITS OF POLICY

The above sections of this policy indicate that actions by the Association will benefit tenants to sustain their tenancy if they accept information offered by staff and agree to accept assistance and/or support from the Association and other agencies/organisation.

The Association and the Community will however also benefit from staff adopting the aims and objectives of this policy and by its implementation. These benefits will include:

- keeping the level of tenants' rent arrears to a minimum,
- minimising the level of turnover of Association properties, incurring lower void loss and lower void repair costs,
- minimising the number of abandoned properties,
- reducing anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance incidents,
- working towards achieving more sustainable communities,
- assisting to achieve a more prosperous community by offering money advice, welfare rights services, credit union facilities.

6. STAFF TRAINING

Housing staff, including the Welfare Rights Officer and Association staff working in the Tollcross Community Advice Centre will be provided with in-house and external training to assist them carry out their responsibilities covered in this policy.

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



7 Wider Role

Having played a significant part in securing funds to set up and run the Tollcross Community Advice Centre, the Association will continue to apply for additional funding in order to continue and improve on the services made available to the Association's tenants and service users.. In turn this should help improve tenancy sustainment and contribute to creating a stronger sustainable community for residents.

8 Performance Monitoring

In order to monitor performance and identify any key areas for improvement we will ensure that:

- Association staff members will maintain records to allow the Association to monitor performance in tenancy sustainment work and initiatives.
- Performance reports will be produced for the Management Committee on a quarterly basis.
- Customer satisfaction surveys are carried out
- Exit interview are completed for the majority of tenants that terminate their tenancy.

9 Role of Committee

- 9.1 Committee Members will be concerned with the overall policy to be adopted in relation to tenancy sustainment.
- 9.2 Quarterly statistical and performance reports will be presented to the Operations Sub-Committee.
- 9.3 In accordance with the scheme of delegated authority, Committee Members on the Operation's Sub-Committee, PIL's and PIN's will be responsible for:



- Reviewing and making recommendations in relation to the Tenancy Sustainment Policy with the view to continuously improving this area of the business.
- Scrutinising and monitoring performance in Tenancy sustainment
- Comparing the Association's performance against targets and the performance of peers.

10 Equal Opportunities

The Association will seek to ensure that in implementing this policy that no group, organisation or individual will receive less favourable treatment or be discriminated against regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or other grounds.

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11 Complaints

Any tenant who feels aggrieved by the service they have received from staff in carrying out their responsibilities in relation to this policy can make an informal or formal complaint to the Association.

All complaints will be fully investigated in accordance with the Association's Complaints Policy. A written guide on the complaints process is readily available to customers on request and is on display in the reception area of the office.

Any tenant making a complaint will be advised of their right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

12 Review

The Association will formally review this policy at least every three years or sooner if required by statutory, regulatory or best practice requirements

If amendments to this policy are proposed which are likely to significantly affect the tenant, consultation will be carried out with tenants and any registered tenant organisation to accord with Section 54 (2(a) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

