



POLICY

Tenancy Sustainment

Wellhouse - The Place to Be

Policy Created	January 2022
Date of Next Review	January 2025

The policy is available on the Association’s website. Customers will be provided with a copy of this policy on request. We will provide this policy in specific formats as requested, i.e. tape, Braille or another language.

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Linked Policies/Procedures

1.	Openness and Confidentiality Policy
2.	Common Allocation Policy
3.	Neighbourhood Management Policy
4.	Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
5.	Rent Management Policy
6.	Assignment, Sub-Letting and Lodgers Policy
7.	Succession Policy
8.	SSST Policy
9.	Abandonment Policy
10.	Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy
11.	Data Protection Policy (GDPR)
12.	Vulnerable Tenants Domestic Abuse Policy
13.	Succession Policy

1. Vision and values

Wellhouse – the Place to Be.

This simple statement is our vision of Wellhouse as an attractive place where people feel happy and safe, benefit from having a good home and an attractive environment and feel proud to be part of a vibrant community.

We believe that our values of **Trust, Honesty, Integrity, Excellence, Accountability and Sustainability** supported by a comprehensive policy framework will help make our vision a reality.

2. Governance

Wellhouse HA is a community controlled Registered Social Landlord and is managed by a group of local people who are elected onto the Management Committee. We may co-opt other people onto the Management Committee from time to time where we feel we need specialist support. Their role is to make sure that the Association is well run, meets the needs of the local area and is responsive to what is important to local people.

The Management Committee appoints senior staff, agrees all the Association's policies and takes all the key decisions. The Director and the senior team support the Committee in these responsibilities.

3. Policy Aims

By implementing a Tenancy Sustainment Policy Wellhouse Housing Association (WHA) seek to prevent tenancy failure and homelessness by:

- Providing a comprehensive and responsive customer service to applicants and tenants which supports sustainable tenancies and delivers customer satisfaction
- Taking steps prior to and from the commencement of a tenancy which will identify issues and assist in sustainment
- Being proactive in identifying prospective and existing tenant vulnerability issues and signposting tenants to appropriate support to sustain their tenancy
- Providing a comprehensive Income Advice Service
- Developing networks and partnership working with other agencies to address vulnerabilities and assist in sustaining tenancies

4. Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Statement

We aim to ensure that all services, including the delivery of this policy, provide equality of opportunity.

We will respond to the different needs and service requirements of individuals. We will not discriminate against any individual for any reason, including age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or other status.

5. Scottish Housing Charter

The Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter came into force in April 2012 and was reviewed in 2019. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that Registered Social Landlords should achieve.

There are 6 outcomes under the Charter that are especially relevant to our tenancy sustainment policy, these are:

Outcome 1: Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Outcome 6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that:

- Tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Access to housing and support

Outcome 7, 8 and 9: Housing options

Social landlords work together to ensure that:

- 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.

Social landlords ensure that:

people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

Outcome11 Tenancy Sustainment

Social Landlords ensure that:

- Tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their homes and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and other organisations.

6. Legislation

The following legislation is relevant to this policy:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001

7. The Policy

7.1 Introduction

This Policy sets out how Wellhouse Housing Association (WHA) will meet its aims, as set out in Section 3 above. Please note that WHA's approach will be primarily about identifying those applicants or tenants requiring support and signposting them to a range of agencies, the tenant or applicant may wish to work with. We will not provide Housing Support Services directly.

We consider 'Tenancy Sustainment' to be 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 have negative effects for the tenant who may become homeless or find it difficult to secure another tenancy because of issues relating to their former, failed tenancy.

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 Scottish Social Housing Indicator 16 (Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let) to assess our effectiveness in this area.

WHA is particularly concerned to prevent tenancies ending by:

- Eviction – at any time
- Abandonment – at any time
- Early termination (a tenancy which lasts under 12 months)

However, 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 purchasing a home, finding a new job or moving in with their partner.

7.2 Known Risk Factors

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
- Being under 25 or in a first tenancy
- Young parents
- People with support needs
- No established local networks
- History of homelessness
- History of rent arrears, abandonment or antisocial behaviour in a previous tenancy
- Previously failed tenancy or eviction

Other causes of tenancy breakdown may include:

- Allocations in unwanted areas
- Dissatisfaction with property condition
- Antisocial behaviour
- Debt problems
- Inability to secure adequate furniture and equipment
- Lack of support with resettlement and setting up home
- Isolation
- Insufficient information sharing and partnership working

7.3 Prevention

WHA operates a points-based lettings system which allows applicants to select the house types they are interested in. Given the compactness of the Wellhouse area, we also allow applicants to note any streets they are not interested in. These choices restrict where an offer will be made and therefore reduces the risk of applicants accepting an inappropriate tenancy through offers of property being made that the applicant does not want, but then may feel pressured to accept.

WHA also aims to identify potential support needs at the point of registration from application form questions.

We carry out accompanied viewings to all of our empty properties. This provides an opportunity to explain the characteristics of the property and the local area, and for the prospective tenant to raise any concerns or issues. It also provides an opportunity to ensure that any support needs are identified to allow the tenant to move in and be able to live in the property.

We ensure that all of our empty homes meet our Lettable Standard when they are relet. We provide assistance with decoration materials where the standard of decoration is poor at the beginning of a tenancy.

We aim to ensure that our new tenants fully understand their tenancy obligations at the time of signing their agreement and highlight some of our key housing management policies which emphasise early intervention and prevention and adopt a customer centred approach.

Both the accompanied viewing and sign-up are normally carried out by the Housing Officer for the area, so that new tenants get the opportunity to meet and speak to their key contact, with regard to their tenancy.

Our Housing Officers will carry out New Tenancy Visits within six weeks of the beginning of a new tenancy. Follow up visits will be programmed as necessary following that initial visit, where it is apparent that the tenant may require support to keep to the conditions of tenancy. We will prioritise such visits where tenants are considered to present a high risk of tenancy failure.

Our Housing Officers should refer new tenants for interview by our Income Advice Officer. In addition, when arrears arise during a tenancy or where they feel that a significant change of circumstances has occurred. Our standard arrears letters also contain information to enable tenants to arrange an appointment with our Income

Advice Officer directly, as well as providing information of other local agencies who can assist with budgeting and financial advice.

Our Rent Management policy emphasises the importance of arrears prevention and encouraging tenants to seek help before debt becomes unmanageable. Eviction is always a last resort.

Our Income Advice Officer will assist with welfare advice aimed at maximising household income, form filing, submission of applications and even appeals.

We ensure that all information provided to applicants and tenants is in plain English, easy to understand and in a format suited to each individual.

Our quarterly newsletters and our website include regular information about our services, financial gain outcomes in our Income Advice Officer's Update, along with information on any benefit changes, as well any local funding or projects which may be able support or assist our tenants with such things as fuel poverty, access to affordable food etc.

7.4 Partnership Working

We work in partnership with a range of organisations skilled to provide the appropriate support to our tenants and this includes the agencies set out in Appendix 1.

We do not provide support services ourselves, beyond our Income Advice Service, but our staff can signpost tenants to a wide range of information, support and advice in confidence that can help with a wide range of issues.

We will ensure that, wherever possible, required support is in place at the start of a new tenancy and if we cannot help, we will refer tenants to an appropriate support provider as issues are identified.

We work closely with the Local Authority via a range of protocols to ensure applicants experiencing homelessness, domestic violence etc. secure appropriate housing and existing tenants receive appropriate advice and support.

7.5 Training

We will ensure that appropriate staff are trained to identify potentially vulnerable households.

8. Monitoring and performance

We will report on the progress of the policy using ARC Indicator 16 'Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let' to the Management Committee.

9. Consultation

We aim to deliver excellent services, which respond to local needs and reflect what is most important to our customers.

To do that we need our customers to tell us how well our policy is working and help us to make the changes which will improve it. In line with our Customer Engagement and Participation Policy:

- We make it easy for customers to give us their comments and views - face to face, by telephone, e-mail, on line or in a letter.
- We commission formal independent tenant satisfaction surveys on a continuous monitoring basis carried out every three months.
- We consult our Customer Opinion Panel
- We publish the targets we set
- We publish how we have performed against those targets

We use customer feedback to review our policies and talk to customers about the changes we are making.

10. Complaints

We have a separate complaints policy and procedure. Leaflets and copies of the complaints procedure are available from the Association's office and on our website. We also provide information on how our customers can make a complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS, telephone, 0800 377 7300) and how to contact the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Ombudsman will not normally deal with complaints unless customers have followed the Association's complaints' procedure

11. Review timeframe

The policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner, in response to a change in legislation or circumstance.

12. General Data Protection Regulations

The organisation will treat personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own GDPR Policy. Information regarding how data will be used and the basis for processing data is provided in Wellhouse HA's privacy notice.