

Tenancy Sustainment Policy

Version control

Avoid referring to printed versions of this document. Printed versions may be out of date.

Owner/responsibility for compliance		Head of Housing Customer Services	
Status (draft / approved & live)		Approved and live	
Version no:	Date approved:	Approved by:	Summary of changes made to each version:
1.1	17 July 2024	Cabinet	New policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is to support the Council in its function as a landlord to provide effective housing management.
- 1.2 This policy outlines the Council's approach to supporting tenants to live in their homes and fulfil the terms of their tenancy agreement.
- 1.3 In developing this policy, the feedback of tenants and partnering agencies has been considered. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

2 Aims/objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to explain how the Council will ensure that tenancies are sustainable and how this will contribute to building and maintaining sustainable communities.
- 2.2 This policy outlines the way in which the Council will support tenants and future tenants to obtain any assistance that they may require e.g. financial advice or accessing medical services, and the way in which the Council will try to support a tenant that is having difficulty sustaining their tenancy
- 2.3 The Council recognises that effective delivery of this policy relies on the development of good relationships between our housing colleagues, tenants and the wider community.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 A sustainable tenancy is one which a Swindon Borough Council tenant can maintain successfully during the time in which they live in the property.

- 3.2 There are three key factors which contribute to a tenancy being sustainable:
- The property will meet the housing needs of a tenant and their household.
 - The tenant will have the skills and resources to be able to live successfully in their home.
 - The tenant will adhere to the responsibilities of their tenancy agreement.

4 Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to all introductory, secure and flexible tenancies granted by the Council. It does not apply to leaseholders, shared owners or non-secure tenancies.

5 Types of tenancy related support

- 5.1 Tenants may require support to enable their tenancy to be sustainable. Support can take various forms, including any of the following:
- Early support – where help is given to an applicant prior to a tenancy being offered or after an offer but prior to them moving in.
 - Short term support - where help is given to resolve a particular issue.
 - Longer term support - where support can be ongoing after our initial intervention.
- 5.2 Typical areas where support may be required include:
- Help with understanding and completing forms.
 - Help with looking after a tenant's home.
 - Help with bidding for properties where existing tenants want to move but are unable to bid themselves.
 - Money management, debt, and budgeting skills.
 - Welfare benefits advice, applications, and appeals.
 - Help for customers with disabilities.
 - Signposting to the support of other organisations for example accessing food banks or furniture; obtaining grants or other financial assistance; or accessing mental health services, drug and alcohol services, education, voluntary work, and employment opportunities.
- 5.3 The Council's approach is to support tenants to sustain their tenancies through specialist advice and assistance provided directly by our housing colleagues or by signposting them to other organisations.
- 5.4 The Council will provide information to tenants and prospective tenants to ensure they are clear about what they need to do to sustain their tenancy and how they can access support services, whether that is provided by the Council or through other organisations.

6 Risks of tenancy failure

6.1 The Council will consider a range of risk factors when considering how we can support a tenant or prospective tenant to sustain a tenancy. These include:

- Low or irregular income, or loss of employment.
- Debt issues, including related to welfare benefits and rent arrears.
- Addiction, such as drug, alcohol, or gambling.
- Challenging household circumstances, including a domestic crisis, relationship breakdown, the death of a close family member, under occupation and non-dependant charges.
- Hoarding behaviour.
- ASB including domestic abuse and hate crimes.

7 At the beginning and during a tenancy

7.1 When a new tenant moves into their home, the Council will explain their rights and responsibilities.

7.2 The Council will use introductory tenancies to support our aim of setting up our tenants to have a successful tenancy whilst creating and maintaining safe and sustainable communities.

7.3 The Council will tailor the approach based on the issues which tenants are facing and to ensure we engage with them in the most effective way. The Council is committed to developing trauma informed ways of working.

7.4 Trauma-informed organisations assume that people have had traumatic experiences, and as a result may find it difficult to feel safe within services and to develop trusting relationships with service providers. Consequently, services are structured, organised and delivered in ways that promote safety and trust, and aim to prevent re-traumatisation.

7.5 As a result of the Council's tenancy sustainment action, one of the following situations will occur:

- The tenant can resolve the issue(s) they are facing, and they are able to continue living in their home and sustain their tenancy.
- The tenant is unable to resolve the issue(s) they are facing and is unable or unwilling to work with support services. The Council will take appropriate action, which may range from monitoring the situation, offering further support and, where necessary, taking tenancy enforcement action.
- The tenant is unable to resolve the issue(s) they are facing and can no longer sustain their tenancy, despite having engaged with support services. The Council will support the tenant to find suitable alternative accommodation, with tenancy enforcement action being used as a last resort.

8 Monitoring and review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation or regulations change.

9 Further information

- 9.1 Please contact Stuart Hook, Head of Housing Customer Services, SHook1@swindon.gov.uk for information or support in relation to this policy.