Organisational Policy

Group Tenancy Sustainment Policy

Our Commitment

Argyll Community Housing Association Group is committed to provide equal opportunities across all services and to avoid discrimination. This policy is intended to assist Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) and Argyll Homes for All (AHFA) to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

This policy can be made available in other formats, for example in large print, audio-format or Braille: the document may also be available in other languages, in full or summary form, as appropriate.

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1. Section 1 – Context

1.1 This policy sets out Argyll Community Housing Association's (ACHA) proactive approach to sustaining tenancies.

1.2 ACHA recognises that tenants living within its communities have a wide range of different housing and support needs. This policy will detail how we will help meet the support needs of our vulnerable tenants, to ensure they can remain living in their homes.

1.3 What is Tenancy Sustainment? Shelter Scotland defines Tenancy Sustainment as:

"Preventing a tenancy from coming to a premature end by providing the necessary information, advice and support for tenants to be able to maintain their tenancies."

1.4 The Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) sets standards and outcomes that describe the results that our customers can expect. The main relevant standard for Tenancy Sustainment is Charter Outcome 11:-

- 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.

1.5 The following Charter standards and outcomes are also relevant:

- Outcome 1 – Equalities
- Outcome 4 – Quality of Housing
- Outcome 6 – Neighbourhood and community
- Outcome 7, 8, 9 & 10 – Access to housing & support
- Outcome 13 – Value for money

2. Section 2 – The Law, Good Practice and Links to Other ACHA Policies and Strategies

2.1 In order to effectively deliver the aims and obligations of this policy ACHA will meet the requirements of the following: -

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- The Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Equality Act 2010
- The Performance Standards for Registered Social Landlords in Scotland as detailed in the Scottish Housing Charter

2.2 ACHA recognises that tenancy sustainment is dependent on polices and performance in a variety of areas, including:

- The terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and any other lease or agreement in place
- Void Management Policy
- Allocation Policy (HOME Argyll)
- Debt Management Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- Abandonment Policy
- Vulnerable Adult's Policy
- Group Equalities and Human Rights Policy

3. Section 3 – Our Policy Aims and Objectives

3.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that we meet our landlord obligations in respect to tenancy sustainment which is to prevent a tenancy from coming to a premature end and to provide the necessary information, advice and support for tenants to be able to maintain their tenancies.

3.2 ACHA aims to maintain balanced and sustainable communities, recognising that we have a responsibility to do what we can to ensure that vulnerable people are able to enjoy a good quality of life and to live as independently as possible.

3.3 ACHA will ensure that houses become homes to our tenants, encouraging them to stay in them, by providing ongoing support when required. Our aim is to work with our tenants and help them sustain their tenancies.

3.4 ACHA will continue to work in close partnership with Argyll & Bute Council (ABC), the other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) operating in Argyll & Bute and relevant Support Agencies.

3.5 We will continue to work with ABC to prevent homelessness wherever possible, and where homelessness does occur, to provide settled mainstream housing as quickly as possible. Homeless people will get prompt and easy access to help and advice, are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation by ABC when this is needed and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to. A Housing First approach should be the first response for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages.

3.6 Our Key objectives for tenancy sustainment:

- Promoting sustainable communities
- Develop networks and partnership working with other organisations and agencies to address vulnerabilities and assist in sustaining tenancies
- Preventing homelessness
- Support harder to reach groups and individuals by addressing their needs around welfare reform, health and wellbeing, financial capability and employability.
- Minimising tenancy breakdown – evictions and abandonments
- Minimise costs to ACHA relating to tenancy failure, such as reduce the number of voids, void rent loss and follow on void costs
- Improve our neighbourhoods as places to live, providing an effective estate management service and tackling anti-social behaviour
- Improve our performance in relation to the percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than one year, reportable to the Scottish Housing Regulator
- Improve Tenant Satisfaction

4. Section 4 – Implementing Our Policy Objectives

4.1 **Choices for rehousing**
Applicants who apply to HOME Argyll, and choose ACHA as their future landlord, will be offered a choice of where they want to live. Information will be readily available on what amenities are present in their areas that they choose to be rehoused to help them make informed choices and improve the likelihood of a successful tenancy.

4.2 **Pre-Tenancy Support**
We will work with the prospective tenant before they sign for their new tenancy to identify any issues that could affect them sustaining their tenancy. We will implement an action plan to support them, in partnership with other agencies

where appropriate. This helps ensure the property is suitable for their needs and their financial situation.

4.3 **Tenancy Interview**

At the commencement of the tenancy, tenants will be provided with information on the importance of rent payments and what advice and assistance is available from ACHA, and the respective responsibilities of both ACHA and the tenant.

Every tenant will be offered an appointment with our Welfare Rights Officer.

4.4 **Tenancy Support**

ACHA recognises that support for vulnerable and potentially vulnerable tenants is critical to the future success of their tenancy. We are committed to providing tenancy support and welfare rights advice and early intervention services to our tenants at any stage of their tenancy should they require it.

All new tenants will receive a settling in visit within 6 weeks of moving into their new home. If the tenant is identified as vulnerable there will be increased contact based on the level of vulnerability. These visits and contacts provide an opportunity for staff to gain an early indication of how tenants are managing their tenancy and where appropriate this can allow staff to take action to support the new tenant, which may include referrals to relevant agencies. We will maintain regular contact with our 'at risk' tenants and work in partnership with relevant agencies.

We encourage our partners, Argyll Homes for All (AHFA) when visiting our tenants to highlight any potential issues which require the action by our staff.

4.5 **Partnership working**

We will work with other agencies or organisations who have the resources to help support the tenant to remain in their tenancy.

We will continue to maintain key partnerships with:

- Argyll & Bute Council
- Health & Social Care Partnership
- HOME Argyll partners
- Police Scotland
- Community Networks
- Voluntary Sector

Our partnership working is underpinned by protocol agreements, including priority housing for Statutory Homeless Persons, Protocol for Care leavers,

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Protocol for the accommodation of Registered Sex Offenders and Information Sharing Protocols.

5. Section 5 – Performance management

5.1 We will analyse data relating to terminations of tenancies, including evictions and abandonments.

5.2 We will regularly review tenancies that failed to sustain for one year. This will allow us, over time, to build up historical data to help identify trends and highlight areas requiring further attention.

5.3 We report each year to the Scottish Housing Regulator on the percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than one year by source of let. This allows us to analyse our performance over time and also in relation to how other RSLs in our peer group have performed.

5.4 We carry out a regular tenant satisfaction survey which measures our tenants' levels of satisfaction in many areas including the overall service provided by their Landlord and how good their Landlord is at keeping them informed about the services they provide and the decisions they make. The outcomes of this are reported to all our customers and to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

6. Section 6 - Development and Training

6.1 ACHA is committed to training and developing staff in order that they have a good knowledge of the procedures and systems in place for dealing with tenancy sustainment.

6.2 Awareness sessions are made available to Governing body members on request as part of their development plan.

7. Section 7 – Equal Opportunities

7.1 Tenants, owners and other customers will 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, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (collectively referred to as 'protected characteristics' in the Equality Act 2010). ACHA opposes, and shall adopt a zero tolerance stance towards, all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

7.2 We will deliver accessible services that take account of the needs of individual tenants, owners and service users by making information available in plain language and/or other languages as appropriate; providing interpreting and signing services; and making reasonable adjustments to services, as appropriate

8. Section 8 - Dealing with Complaints

8.1 We value complaints and endeavour to use information from them to help us improve our services.

8.2 ACHA will actively seek feedback by:

- Inviting all new tenants at the settling in home visit to complete a satisfaction questionnaire on the service they received when signing for their new tenancy, 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.

8.3 Complaints relating to how we have applied this Policy will be dealt with in line with our complaint handling procedure. Complaints can be made if we fail to apply this policy properly or do not meet our organisational standards.

9. Section 9 – Consultation and Review

9.1 This policy will be reviewed every five years or earlier if required due to changes in legislation or regulatory requirements.

9.2 The Policy will be reviewed in consultation with ACHA tenants and wider stakeholder partners.

10. Section 10 – Confidentiality and Data Protection

10.1 All information provided by tenants and residents will only be used for the purpose provided. We will ensure that we meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). We will process and retain personal information in compliance with current data protection legislation and regulations.

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Policy Owner	**Housing & Neighbourhood Services**
Author	**Yvonne Angus**
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