Tenancy Sustainment Policy

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You are advised that a printed version may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on the Brighter Places Policy Index Sheet. Those to whom this policy applies, are responsible for familiarising themselves with the latest version and for always complying with the policy requirements.

Should colleagues require any reasonable adjustment to allow for engagement with this document please contact the policy lead

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1. Policy Statement / Purpose

This policy sets out Brighter Places' approach to supporting customers in sustaining tenancies, preventing homelessness, and reducing tenancy breakdowns. The policy will detail the support that is offered to current and future customers to obtain any assistance that maybe required. The policy also seeks to prevent homelessness and reduce the likelihood of tenancy breakdowns, such as abandonment, eviction, or tenancies ending in an unplanned way.

Brighter Places recognises that some customers may need additional support in maintaining and sustaining their tenancy. The Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST) provides support that is best suited to customer needs, so they can have a long and successful tenancy and feel able to call their Brighter Places property their home.

This policy applies to all customers residing in properties managed by Brighter Places, with particular focus on those identified as vulnerable or at risk of tenancy breakdown. The policy will support Brighter Places colleagues to have an awareness of the support available to customers to ensure their tenancies are maintained.
This policy does not apply to customers in our supported accommodation.

2. Commitment

Brighter Places is committed to helping customers sustain their tenancies and providing them with access to services and support to help them improve their lives.
Tenancy sustainment means preventing tenancies from ending early by giving customers the right support and information to manage their homes successfully.

3. Linked Documents

This policy works with the following related policies:

- Data Retention
- Dealing with Challenging Behaviours
- Data Protection (GDPR)
- Hoarding
- Health and Safety
- Lone Working
- DBS and Police Checks
- Dual Visit
- Adult Safeguarding
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime
- Chargeable Repairs
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Income Management
- IT Security and internet usage
- Anti-Fraud, Anti-Bribery and corruption
- Management Transfers
- Domestic Abuse
- Fire Safety
- Child Safeguarding
- Modern Slavery
- Tenancy

4. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

This policy works within the following legal framework:

- The Housing Act 1996
- The Housing Act 1988
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Care Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Consumer Standards – Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, Tenancy Standard.

5. Policy Detail

5.1. Identification of Need

When a colleague, customer or stakeholder identifies that a customer may need additional help to manage to sustain their tenancy (either from lettings, tenancy review or through the life of a tenancy) they are able to refer the customer to the Tenancy Sustainment Team. (TST).

The Tenancy Sustainment Team will support customers in relation to maximising income, preventing eviction's and providing resettlement support at the start of a new tenancy. These three referral reasons are split into areas the team can focus on:

Maximise Income	Applying for Welfare Benefits DHP / HB / UC applications Foodbank referrals Fuel vouchers Applications to charities for white goods / household items
Prevent Evictions	Rent Arrears Income and expenditure paperwork Hoarding
Resettlement Support	Applications to charities for white goods / household items / carpets Set up for rent payments / benefits / utilities etc

Resettlement Support is a new area of work for the Tenancy Sustainment Team and is explained in more detail below.

Brighter Places wants to target our services at the customers who are most in need. As well as receiving referrals, the Tenancy Sustainment Team will proactively work with customers who are going through life events, such as, but not limited to:

- Being impacted by changes to benefits
- Retiring
- Going through a change in their relationship status
- Going through a change or loss of a job or redundancy
- Suffering from a bereavement
- Regular requests for financial support such as foodbank vouchers and / or fuel vouchers.

Customers can be identified through communication with colleagues within Brighter Places. They can also be identified by external agencies (e.g. probation, homeless services, domestic abuse agencies). Customers can contact Brighter Places if they have recognised, they want support themselves as well as being recognised by indicators such as rent arrears, complaints, safeguarding concerns, significant life changes etc.

The TST cannot offer support for the following needs:

- Provide direct financial payments to clear debts
- Any mental health support
- Clear debts on gas or electric meters for compliance issues without Tenancy Sustainment support.
- Be a point of contact or mediator for other departments
- Help with Management Transfers, Choice Based Lettings / or Homeswapper applications
- Provide a befriending service
- Enforce specific requirements imposed by a court of law (except assistance to keep to court orders to maintain a tenancy)
- Work with persons aged over 18 staying in a Brighter Places property that are not named on the tenancy/household
- Transport customers for any reason
- Offer debt or financial advice
- Be a point of contact or mediator for other departments

5.2 Managing Referrals

5.2.1 Resettlement Support

When a potential customer is matched to one of our properties, the Lettings Officer (LO) will complete a Lettings Assessment and refer to the Resettlement RAG rating used by the TST. If a potential customers has been assessed as a ‘Red’ rating or has 3 or more ‘Ambers’, this will trigger a referral to TST. If the potential customer refuses the referral to TST, the Lettings Officer (LO) may withdraw our offer. The LO will complete a referral form to the team, share the Lettings Assessment and inform the team when the sign up will happen. Once the customer has signed their tenancy agreement, the LO will inform the rents team, housing officer, income officer and TST.

The TST will attempt to attend the sign up with the customer. Resettlement support will be aimed at ensuring the customer can pay their rent from the moment they sign their tenancy agreement as well as providing guidance on contacting utility companies, Council Tax, Universal Credit and TV licence. The TSO may apply to charities to support the customer with making a house their home.

Resettlement RAG rating

Information	Red	Amber	Green
Substantial debt - owe money to 3 or more unsecured companies	No payment plans / currently incurring more debt / can't afford property	Engaging with a debt agency who is addressing and assisting with debt	Has ongoing payment plans and is managing within income limits
History of Anti-Social Behaviour with Domestic Abuse involvement	Living in a temporary accommodation	Has a support worker who is supporting with resettlement	Not Applicable
Prison leaver	Living in a hostel or straight from prison	Has a support / probation worker who is supporting with resettlement	Not Applicable
Lack of formal or family support	Has no support and does not understand how to manage expectations for tenancy	Has limited support from family, friends, or support agency assistance.	Has support and managing well.
High level support needs eg learning disabilities / learning difficulties	Has no support and does not understand how to manage expectations for tenancy	Has limited support from family, friends, or support agency assistance.	Has support and managing well.
Care leaver	Has no support and does not understand how to manage expectations for tenancy	Has a Personal Assistant (PA) or Social Worker for resettlement support	Has support and managing well.
Domestic Abuse survivor/ victim	Living in a temporary accommodation	Has a support worker who is supporting with resettlement	Not Applicable
Current Mental Health issues (at sign up) i.e. *severe anxiety & depression, schizoid affective disorder, unstable borderline personality disorder*	Has no support and does not understand how to manage expectations for tenancy	Has limited support from family, friends, or support agency assistance.	Has support and managing well.
Lack of white goods and essential household items i.e. *beds, mattress, cooker, washing machine etc.*	Has none or limited white goods or household items and does not have the money to provide themselves	Is able to fund the items but does not have the skills to purchase	Has all basic household items inc. white goods and beds etc.
Communication issues i.e. *poor English skills, sensory or verbal impairment etc*	Has no support and does not understand how to manage expectations for tenancy	Has limited support from family, friends, or support agency assistance.	Has support and managing well.
Poor physical health or issues that affect mobility or other significant ailments	Has no support and does not understand how to manage expectations for tenancy	Has limited support from family, friends, or support agency assistance.	Has support and managing well.

5.2.2 Maximising Income and Preventing Evictions

Referrals for support with income maximisation and eviction prevention can be made by any Brighter Places officer.

TST will engage with customers at key times during the life of a tenancy if the customer has rent arrears. Contact will be dependent on caseload numbers, but the team aim to contact customers when they have been served with a legal notice (NoSP) initiating possible legal action and before pre court action.

Once the team receive the referral, the customer will receive a call within 5 workings days to discuss their circumstances and complete a triage form. The information provided for the triage form will be assessed against the RAG rating and given a priority 'Red,' 'Amber' or 'Green.' Referrals that are rated a 'Red,' will be allocated to an Officer as soon as possible, but is reliant on caseload and availability. Amber will be placed on the waiting list and once they have waited 2 months, they will move to a Red rating. Any early opportunities to make a positive difference will be actioned so that customers do not need to wait for a quick and easy answer.

Maximising Income / Preventing Evictions RAG rating **

Referral Reasons	Red	Amber	Green
Maximising Income: Benefits	UC and UC Migration / HB / State pension / renewals: applications with deadlines	PIP / Attendance Allowance / Child Benefit / Pension Credit / UC work capability / UC sanctions / UC deductions	DLA Children / Carers Allowance
Maximising Income: Addressing welfare benefit errors	DHP applications / Benefit backdates	Benefit Appeals / Tribunals	Not Applicable
Maximising Income: Sudden financial crisis	Foodbank / fuel vouchers / Tenant Support Fund / Signposting to alterative financial assistance	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Maximising Income: Applying for white goods / household items (depending on charities available)	White goods are not working and no alterative available	Household goods are broken and struggling to manage without them	Not Applicable
Preventing Evictions: Rent arrears	DHP applications / Benefit backdates / Pre court visit and engaging with Income Officer	NOSP served and not engaging with Income Officer	Not Applicable
Preventing Evictions: Income and expenditure	For applications to charities	For managing finances	Not Applicable
Preventing Evictions: Hoarding (joint working with HO)	Stopping compliance checks and willing to engage with support	Mid range in the clutter rating and willing to engage with support	Not Applicable

**RAG rating columns refer to whether a customer either has a current claim for the benefits detailed, or requires one to be made with assistance

Tenancy Sustainment Officers (TSO's) will support customers at least once a fortnight. During the first appointment, an Initial Assessment will be completed, and an action plan is jointly made with the customer and the officer. The action plan provides a focus on the support that is offered and is aimed at empowering customers to complete objectives as well as the Officer. Between the customer and the Officer, the action plan will be completed and reviewed as necessary.

5.3 Audit and Review

The TST will regularly review and audit cases to ensure we offer a standard and responsive service, incorporating any lessons learned into working practices.

5.4 Working with the Tenancy Sustainment Team

Customers who are referred to the team for support need to be aware of what is expected of them whilst working with the Officers. This includes:

- The customer needs to give consent to the referral being made and understand and agree to engage with the support that is offered which includes weekly or fortnightly contacts / home visits, provide evidence for applications, completing actions that were agreed such as an income and expenditure forms.
- The customer is made aware that the team has limitations on what can be achieved. The Officers cannot move a customer; white goods are not guaranteed and not every charity application is successful.
- The support offered to customers may be ended if an appointment is missed with no explanation and/or good reason.

5.5 Tenant Support Fund

The Tenant Support Fund has been set up to support customers who are in sudden unplanned financial hardship so that a fuel or supermarket voucher can provide relief for the customer to manage their finances. This is a "one off" grant to provide temporary relief from genuine hardship where no other form of funding can be secured. It is agreed annually by Board and can differ in amount of budget availability subject to other business requirements.

The eligibility of the fund is for an applicant to:

- Hold a Brighter Places tenancy (either as a tenant or a joint tenant).

Have no more than:

- £150 per month left after essential household expenditure is deducted. Discretion will be used for individuals and families in significant hardship.
- Be facing immediate unplanned financial difficulties.
- Have short term difficulty paying for essential household bills.

- Be willing to engage with a basic income and expenditure assessment.
- Must be engaged with their income officer if they have rent arrears. Customers are not excluded from applying but must be engaging with their income officer and making regular payments as agreed with BP.

Brighter Place may offer multiple vouchers over a period of time, but this will not exceed more than 3 in any 6 month period.

An application to the fund can be completed by any Brighter Places colleague. Customers who are eligible will have vouchers granted direct to them. Every application is recorded and maintained to provide additional support for customers who find themselves in additional financial difficulties.

6. Training Requirements

TST will have access to the up-to-date policy and procedure on Sharepoint.

Colleagues from the Customer Directorate will be notified of any changes or revisions made to this policy.

7. Monitoring and Review

The ongoing application of this policy is monitored via Tenancy Sustainment Manager to ensure that it remains relevant, up to date and accessible to the relevant audience. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

Customers who are supported by the Tenancy Sustainment Team will be asked to provide feedback on their service they received.

8. Data Protection

Any personal data created, collected, shared or retained in connection with abandonment or tenancy fraud investigations will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and Brighter Places' Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices.

In applying this policy, Brighter Places will ensure that:

- Personal data is processed lawfully, fairly and transparently, and only where there is a clear and legitimate purpose connected to tenancy management, fraud prevention, safeguarding, or compliance with legal and regulatory obligations.

- Only relevant and proportionate information is collected and recorded, and data is limited to what is necessary to establish facts and support decision-making.
- Information obtained from third parties (including neighbours, contractors, local authorities, and partner agencies) is handled sensitively and assessed for reliability and relevance before being relied upon.
- Personal data may be shared with appropriate internal teams, local authorities, law enforcement agencies, fraud bodies, or regulators where lawful and necessary, including for the prevention or detection of crime, recovery of possession, or regulatory reporting.
- Appropriate access controls, security measures, and audit trails are maintained on all systems used to record and store investigation data.
- Personal data is retained only for as long as necessary and in line with Brighter Places' retention schedule, recognising that fraud-related records may need to be retained for evidential, audit, or regulatory purposes.
- Individuals' data protection rights are respected, subject to lawful exemptions that apply in the context of fraud prevention, crime detection, or legal proceedings.

All colleagues involved in abandonment or tenancy fraud investigations must ensure that data protection considerations are embedded throughout the investigation process and must seek advice where there is any uncertainty.

9. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Where required, reasonable adjustments will be considered to support colleagues to engage with this policy. Please speak to the policy owner for assistance.

Brighter Places is committed to ensuring that this policy is applied fairly, consistently and without discrimination.

In applying this policy, colleagues must have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that decisions relating to suspected abandonment or tenancy fraud are:

- Fair, proportionate and evidence-based, and do not result in unlawful discrimination, either directly or indirectly.
- Sensitive to individual circumstances, including where a tenant or occupier may be vulnerable due to disability, mental or physical health conditions, age, caring responsibilities, language barriers, or other protected characteristics.
- Inclusive and accessible, including consideration of reasonable adjustments to communication, timescales or processes where required to enable engagement with the investigation or review process.

- Informed by safeguarding considerations, particularly where concerns relate to household members who may be at risk, or where absence or non-occupation may be linked to hospitalisation, care arrangements, domestic abuse, or other complex personal circumstances.

Where vulnerability or protected characteristics are identified, colleagues must ensure these are appropriately considered and, where necessary, seek advice from relevant internal teams before progressing enforcement or legal action.

10. Summary Roles and Responsibilities

Activities	Exec	HoH	TSM	Hsg Mgrs	TST	CS Teams	All staff	HR	Gov
Owner of the policy		X							
Monitoring & review of the policy		X	X						
Approval of changes to the policy	X								
Responsible for policy implementation		X	X		X			X	
Addressing issues in the implementation of the policy		X	X		X				
Version control of live policy									X
Training of colleagues			X	X	X			X	