

Sustaining Tenancies Policy

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To be issued to:		Board of Management Ark Management All Housing & Property Staff	
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Version Control

Date	Owner	Version	Reason for Change
July 2023	Alex Edwards	V3.0	3 yearly review

Summary of Changes

Section	Change
All	New format update to whole policy, which includes adding in Arks Values.
Policy reference	Change from HM08 to HAM03 as policy relevant to both Housing & Assets team

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1.0 Arks Values

Arks organisational values are the basis for everything that we do, from providing housing, care and support to tenants and service users to ensuring that staff has clear standards of performance set.

Arks values are true to the core purpose of the organisation and the services we deliver. They determine our behaviours towards one another and what we should expect in our relationships with one another. Working within the following values will guide and help us deliver our vision and mission of Ark being an organisation where everyone is equal:

Trust

We have confidence in our people to deliver excellent services and trust in them to do so. We will develop trusting and honest relationships and our customers will feel assured that they can rely on us to deliver.

Respect

We treat everyone fairly and we listen. We are respectful of each person with whom we come into contact and expect our people to respond professionally and treat others as they would wish to be treated.

Understanding

We will operate with empathy and compassion and approach each situation with an open mind. We will question and challenge to ensure we achieve the right outcomes for customers and our people.

Equality

We believe everyone is equal and expect our people to create positive experiences where everyone feels valued and included.

Integrity

We will do the right thing and take responsibility for our actions. We will work together to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and practice.

2.0 Purpose

This Policy is in place to set out how Ark will help tenants who may need support to maintain their tenancy, allowing them to remain in it as long as they wish. This includes tenants who may be at risk of falling into arrears with their rent, and tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibilities.

3.0 Policy Statement

This policy describes how we will seek to achieve sustainable tenancies. Tenancy Sustainment is a generic term for the prevention of tenancy breakdown or a 'failed tenancy'.

This Policy, along with a number of other supporting policies and procedures, aims to ensure compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter, Outcome 11, 'Tenancy Sustainment' - Social landlords 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.

4.0 Scope

All Housing and Property staff are required to abide by this policy. This policy should be read in conjunction with the HM01 Allocations Policy; HM04 Rent Collection Policy; AM01 Maintenance Policy and HM06 Void Policy along with their supporting procedures.

5.0 Legal/Regulatory Framework

5.1 Legislation

This Policy takes account of the Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987 (as amended) 2001, 2014.

5.2 Scottish Social Housing Charter

This policy is informed by the outcomes and standards in the Scottish Social Housing Charter, November 2022.

Outcome 2 – Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Outcome 10 – Access to Social Housing

Social landlords ensure that:

- people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and on their prospects of being housed.

Outcome 11 – Tenancy Sustainment

Social landlords 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.

Outcome 13 – Value for Money

Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:

- tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

Outcome 14/15 – Rents and Service Charges

Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that:

- a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford them
- tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including details of any individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.

6.0 Responsibilities

6.1 Board of Management

Arks Board of Management is responsible for consideration and approval of this policy, and for ensuring that its decisions are taken in accordance with relevant regulatory expectations, good practice, training and guidance.

6.2 Executive Team

Arks Executive Team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed in accordance with Arks schedule for review of policies, or sooner if required. The Executive Team is responsible for ensuring that its decisions, and the decisions of officers, are taken in accordance with relevant regulatory expectations, best practice, training and guidance.

6.3 Operational Management Team

The Operational Management Team will be responsible for approval of this policy and the effective implementation of this policy within their area of responsibility, as required. They must also ensure that each member of their staff, through induction, and team meetings, is made aware of this policy and participates in relevant training.

6.4 Managers

Ark Managers will be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy within their area of responsibility, as required. They must also ensure that each member of their staff, through induction, and team meetings, is made aware of this policy, local plans and participates in relevant training.

6.5 Staff

All Housing & Property employees are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and comply with its provisions as well as undertake any training implemented as part of the rollout of this policy.

7.0 Policy Content

7.1 Principles

Through implementing this policy we will:

- Act in accordance with Arks Allocations Policy and seek to match applicants with the most suitable property available, according to their housing needs and their stated preferences regarding the type of property and/or the area they would like to live in;
- Act in accordance with Arks Rent and Service Charges Policies and seek to ensure that our property rents are comparable with those of other local landlords; our rents are 'affordable' according to current definitions our service charges represent 'value for money' and only seek to recover the costs we incur in providing the services;
- Act in accordance with our Development Policy and seek to ensure that any properties we build or refurbish are to the highest construction standards possible and that they incorporate appropriate energy efficiency elements, both as part of our overall sustainability measures and to help and from that date onwards, we will ensure that all our properties, "where practically possible" will comply with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing;
- Act in accordance with our Voids Policy and ensure that each empty property is brought up to our current lettable standards before it is offered to an applicant, so that we give each new tenant a 'good start' at the beginning of their tenancy. Through our programmes of cyclical and planned maintenance we will seek to maintain the key elements of our properties to a high quality, meeting or exceeding current standards;
- Act in accordance with our Landlord Responsibilities Policy to ensure that we:
 - Keep the areas around our properties for which we are responsible neat and tidy, contributing to making the area an attractive and desirable place to stay;
 - Minimise the length of time a property is empty before it is re-occupied or, in the case of an abandoned property before it is re-possessioned and available again for occupation;
 - Take prompt and appropriate action to deal with issues and problems affecting one or more tenants and/or the local community;
 - Take appropriate action to deal with issues which may affect the health and safety of tenants and neighbours.

We recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances that arise that are not covered by this policy. We will consider such cases on an individual basis as they arise.

8.0 Related Policies & Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with Ark's:

- Code of Conduct for Staff Members and Board Members;
- Equality Policy and Procedures;

- Allocation Policy and Procedures;
- Rent and Service Charge Policies and Procedures;
- Landlord Responsibilities Policy;
- Void Policy and Procedures;
- Abandonment Procedures;
- Neighbour Disputes and Anti-Social Behaviour Procedures;
- Hoarding Procedure.

This list is not exhaustive, and our people are required to comply with all of our policies and procedures.

9.0 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

No potential equalities issues have been identified in relation to the development of this policy, and consequently an EIA has not been completed.

10.0 Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

No potential data protection issues have been identified in relation to the development of this policy, and consequently a DPIA has not been completed.

11.0 Stakeholder Consultation

In developing this policy staff within the Housing & Property Services were consulted.

12.0 Monitoring and Review

12.1 Monitoring

The Head of Housing Services is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented as required.

12.2 Review

This policy will be reviewed within 5 years from the date of approval by the Board of Management, in accordance with Arks policy review framework and approval process.