



Tenant Support Policy

Document No. HP15 Version: 3
Responsible Officer: Director of Housing
Date Approved: November 2022
Review Date: November 2027
Regulatory Standard: 2 & 5



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Providing homes, supporting communities

Contents

- 1.0 Hjaltland Values
- 2.0 Introduction
- 3.0 Policy Statement
- 4.0 Regulatory Framework / Legal
- 5.0 Responsibilities
 - 5.1 Committee
 - 5.2 Executive Team
 - 5.3 Senior Leadership Team
 - 5.4 Responsible Persons
 - 5.5 All Staff
 - 5.6 Third Parties
- 6.0 Housing Support Services
- 7.0 Identifying Housing Support Needs
- 8.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Right Impact Assessment
- 9.0 GDPR
- 10.0 Monitoring and Review

1.0 Hjaltland Values

Our Vision

Providing homes, supporting communities

Our Values

Teamwork

Working together as one team, to the benefit of our customers. To demonstrate and extend trust in each other.

Open, Honest & Inclusive

We offer a people focused service that is centred in fairness and integrity. We believe in being open, honest and respectful in everything we do.

Ownership

We expect our staff to take responsibility for their actions and give them the freedom to do their job in a positive working environment.

Quality

We value quality in everything we do from the standard of our product to the level of service we provide. We take pride in making a difference in communities and providing continuous improvement.

Innovation

We seek to ensure we have sustainable housing, fit for future generations, maintained and developed to the highest possible standard.

2.0 Introduction

This policy has been established to ensure consistency of all Hjaltland Housing Association activities

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Hjaltland Housing Association standards with regards to Tenancy Support.

Each employee is an important contributor to the Hjaltland Housing Association vision and each employee is needed at work to assist in the accomplishment of Hjaltland Housing Association's values.

To ensure effective and efficient operations of the Hjaltland Housing Association and provide the best possible work environment to employees, Hjaltland Housing Association expects employees to adhere to the standards as outlined in this policy.

The 'Tenant Support Policy' compliments the Association's mission to;

'Provide high quality affordable homes and services in communities where people are proud to live and work'

Enabling tenants to manage their tenancy is a core objective of the Association, and effective support and information can;

- Help tenants feel more included
- Help tenants feel more confident to participate and contribute to their local community
- Improve opportunities for accessing work, education, training or volunteering
- Raise levels of tenant satisfaction
- Reduce void rates and arrears levels
- Reduce neighbour problems and anti-social behaviour
- Sustain tenancies and communities
- Contribute to best use of housing stock

Good relationships with tenants start with first impressions and continue with a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of both the tenant and the Association. This relationship starts prior to someone becoming a tenant and will continue throughout their tenancy.

3.0 Policy Statement

Hjaltland Housing Association and our employees recognise the legal obligations placed on them by the Housing (Scotland) Act and of any other statutory provisions and regulations applying to its activities, and aims to:

- Ensure appropriate tenancy support is accessible and available to any tenant who needs it to maintain their tenancy and fulfil their potential

Employees [and any sub-contractors] have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this policy by fulfilling the responsibilities placed upon them.

Signed

Ian Bray
Director of Housing

Date: 26th November 2022 Planned Review Date: November 2027

4.0 Regulatory Framework / Legal

The Regulatory Framework is based on the Housing (Scotland) Act.

Hjaltland Housing Association has a range of duties, obligations and responsibilities placed on them by legislation and through statutory guidance. These include achieving the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter, duties to help people who are homeless, duties around the safety of tenants' homes, and promoting equality and human rights.

Hjaltland Housing Association also have requirements placed on them by other regulatory bodies, including the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Care Inspectorate, Audit Scotland and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Hjaltland Housing Association will ensure that we meet all of our legal duties and responsibilities and that we adhere to relevant guidance and the requirements of other regulators.

Relevant Regulatory Standard: 2 & 5

5.0 Responsibilities

5.1 Committee

It is recognised that the Management Committee, while not actively involved in the day to day running of the organisation, is collectively responsible for providing leadership and direction.

Committee Members are responsible for ensuring that Hjaltland Housing Association fulfils its statutory obligations and allocates adequate resources to do so.

5.2 Executive Team

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the Committee's policy objectives are achieved and that policy and performance are kept under active review to address any changes required. The following individual post has been allocated overall responsibility within the terms of our policy:

- Bryan Leask, Chief Executive Officer

5.3 Senior Leadership Team

Due to the 'managerial' function performed by Directors of Departments it is accepted that they will be best placed to identify and control any concerns within their departments. Day to day responsibility for ensuring the policy is put into practice and consultation with employees is delegated to:

- Directors of Departments

They will ensure:

- The objectives and guidance outlined within our management system is fully understood and observed by persons under their control;
- Responsibilities are clearly defined and allocated / delegated to the appropriate levels within their areas of responsibility;
- The policy statement will be brought to the attention of all employees under their control;
- Any changes to the policy or our arrangements are brought to the attention of all persons under their control;

5.4 Responsible Persons

It is important that policy standards are maintained and improved therefore where necessary specific roles within Hjaltland Housing Association, have been allocated additional responsibilities. Where this responsibility is specific to a subject area, the details of the responsible person are communicated to employees in writing or verbally as required.

These Responsible Persons will also be required to monitor their areas of control as well as the performance and activities of all persons under their control to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained.

Relevant responsible persons are:

- Director of Housing
- Financial Inclusion Officer
- Housing Support Worker

5.5 All Staff

- Employees will comply with the policies, procedures and arrangements set out in the Management System together with any information, instruction and training provided. In addition, any risk control measures and equipment provided to ensure safe-working practices will be properly used.
- Employees will report to their Director of Department or other member of management any identified breaches of procedures, any accidents or incidents in any aspect, which appears to them to give rise to a significant risk to employees or other persons. Such reports will be made without undue delay.
- Employees will inform their Director of Department or other member of management, without undue delay, where they believe that further training or other risk control measures would be beneficial.
- Employees will co-operate in all programmes, training, assessments and other initiatives that are intended to reduce risk and will actively implement any control measures identified as being required.

- Employees will not participate in horseplay, practical jokes or other acts, which may result in harm being caused to themselves or to other individuals.
- Demonstrate their commitment by their behaviour and co-operate in the investigation of accidents and incidents;

5.6 Third Parties

6.0 Support Services

Financial Inclusion Support

A service offered to customers at the allocation stage, but also available at any point throughout their tenancy. Referrals usually come through Housing Officers either as an action from the Tenancy Support Needs Assessment, or as part of the rent arrears process. However, partner support agencies and tenants can self-refer by phoning or e-mailing the Financial Inclusion Support Worker.

Financial Inclusion Support includes:-

- welfare benefit checks and support to claim all eligible benefits and grants
- budgeting advice and help to understand the difference between priority and non-priority debts
- sign posting or referring to specialist financial advice
- accessing energy vouchers and energy efficiency equipment for tenants in hardship

Housing Support

The Housing Support Service provides low-level support to tenants in sheltered accommodation. Support will enable tenants to realise their aspirations in terms of social interaction, community involvement and residing in their own tenancy for as long as they wish to. The role does not include any provision of personal care, and does not include domestic chores, such as cleaning or laundry.

A comprehensive support plan will be created, in partnership with the tenant, and reviewed on a six-monthly basis to ensure it is a live and up to date document.

The Housing Support Service also provides short-term support to tenants who are new to the Association, helping them settle into their tenancy and support them through the first six to eight weeks.

- a tenancy support assessment will be being carried out to help identify goals the applicant / tenant wishes to achieve, leading to an individual, regularly reviewed support plan
- partnership working with specialist support providers where appropriate

- help to identify preferred utility providers and set up accounts
- help you to register with local medical and support agencies
- form filling
- basic life skills advice
- help to prepare for and settle into their new Hjaltland home

This service is registered with the Care Inspectorate, and all staff are members of the Scottish Social Services Council.

7.0 Identifying Housing Support needs

Prior to carrying out an allocation home visit with an applicant, all supporting documents held in relation to their household will be considered in terms of potential support needs.

Where appropriate, the Housing Officer will contact the applicants' supporting agencies prior to a visit. This may happen in vulnerable cases where there are child protection concerns, or where Criminal Justice Social Work are involved. It may be appropriate for a partner agency to be invited to any home visit to ensure all support needs are identified.

Information from the supporting agencies will feed into a Tenancy Support Needs Assessment. This will contribute to any support plan and can help identify, and then mitigate, any future risks of the tenancy failing.

Pre-Tenancy Stage

During an applicant's home visit, where it is verified that they are to be allocated a Hjaltland property, a "Tenancy Support Needs Assessment" will be undertaken. This will identify the households needs including;

- Communication needs e.g. hearing or vision impairment, dyslexia, English as a second language
- Disability and support needs e.g. present care packages and whether a WYFY(With You For YOU)/ GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child) is in place or needs to be undertaken
- What support is required by the household to manage a tenancy
- What support can be provided by the Association e.g. support required in settling into their new property, assistance with budgeting, maximising income and ongoing support.
- What support can be provided by a partner agency e.g. Social Services, Shetland Women's Aid, NHS, CAB, The Advocacy People Advocacy Shetland, Shetland Befriending Scheme

This will enable a prospective tenant to highlight any support needs they may have and will assist the Association in supporting them to sustain their tenancy. The Housing Officer will also confirm what is expected from a Hjaltland tenant regarding rent payments, advising on the rent payment options, and the consequences of non-payment of rent. Engagement of Hjaltland's Financial Inclusion Support is promoted.

Tenancy Sign Up

The following will be undertaken at the tenancy sign up appointment

1. Welcoming the tenant to the Association and encouraging them to make contact with the office should they have any issues or difficulties during their tenancy
2. Signing of the tenancy agreement, ensuring that the tenant is fully aware of the requirements this places on them.
3. Provision of a tenants handbook
4. Appropriate arrangements for rent collection, including the completion of direct debit forms to ensure that rent payments are put in place at the start of the tenancy, and where tenancy commences part-way during a calendar month, payment of that part month's rent where appropriate.
5. Support and advice in relation to claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, including a discussion on direct payments to the Association, known as Alternative Payment Arrangement, for vulnerable tenants.
6. Provide the tenant with a range of discount vouchers from local businesses to assist with their move to their new home
7. The new tenant will be offered an appointment for the Technical staff to visit them in their new property to undertake a technical induction which will include information on how to use the heating system etc. Additional visits can be requested where a tenant remains unsure of the operation of heating systems etc.
8. Review and implement any actions & advice identified in the "knowing the needs of our tenants" support plan. Where the individual's have previously turned down this assessment, the offer to assess their needs should be made.
9. The Housing Officer will seek to undertake a home visit within 6 weeks of the tenant moving in.

Settling in visit

Experience has shown that the sheer volume of information is often too overwhelming for new tenants to remember. The new tenant will therefore be offered a home visit from a member of housing staff to cover any queries they may have regarding their tenancy.

The settling in visit serves three purposes:

- It gives the tenant the opportunity to cover issues which may have arisen since they moved into the property, or to clarify information given when they signed up.
- Enables the Association to continue to build a relationship with the tenant assisting the tenant to sustain their tenancies, as well as highlight any issues that need to be dealt with since the start of the tenancy such as rent arrears and maintaining the standard of the property.

- Continuous improvement of our service delivery. To ensure the approach taken towards new tenants is of a high standard we:-

Ask tenants feedback on the condition of the property when they moved in as well as the service provided by staff.

Ensure that tenants are aware of the various ways they can comment and influence the type and quality of services the Association provides e.g. tenant consultation, tenant focus groups, encouragement to become a committee member, tenant surveys and the complaints process

On-going support needs

During the course of a tenancy, the needs of a tenant may increase or the type of input they require to sustain their tenancy may change. To cater for this the Tenancy Support Needs Assessment can be completed or reviewed at any time. This can be triggered in the following ways:-

1. The tenant requests additional support
2. Housing Officer approaches the tenant to offer an assessment. This can be triggered by such things as
 - Concerns about the tenants living conditions or lifestyle THAT is affecting the management of their tenancy
 - A tenant finding it difficult to understand or adhere to a tenancy condition
 - Significant change in circumstances e.g. deterioration in health such as dementia, disability
3. Where appropriate referrals will be made direct to Social work in relation to Girfec, WYFY, child protection and vulnerable adult situations.

8.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Right Impact Assessment

The Association is committed to promoting positive measures that eliminate all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Our aim as landlord, service provider and employer is to recognise the needs of all individuals, and ensure these commitments are evident throughout every aspect of our business and our activities.

The Association assesses and reviews all new and revised policies and procedures, and an Impact Assessment is available.

9.0 GDPR

The Association will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Hjaltland Housing Associations Privacy notices.

10.0 Monitoring and Review

Employees [and any sub-contractors] have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this policy by fulfilling the responsibilities placed upon them.

As stated, the operations of the company and this policy will be reviewed at regular intervals or in light of changing company circumstances, procedures and statutes. These changes will be brought to the attention of employees and others whose health and safety may be affected by such changes.

Planned Review Date: November 2027