



Supporting BAME communities to thrive

No.	65
Policy Title	Tenancy Sustainment Policy
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## Nehemiah Tenancy Sustainment Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

Nehemiah understands the importance of living in a secure environment and how this enables people to flourish through education, employment and good health. Nehemiah also understands the cost of tenancy breakdown – the personal, social and financial cost

### 2. Policy Aim

The aim of our Tenancy Sustainment Policy is to.

- Ensure that Nehemiah provides an effective service that complies with our obligations as a landlord in respect of tenancy sustainment.
- Expected outcomes of implementing the Tenancy Sustainment Policy.
- Reduce tenancy breakdowns, such as abandoned tenancies/properties and evictions
- Preventing homelessness.
- Build successful and sustainable communities,
- Minimise void levels, void rent loss and associated void costs.

Our mission is 'to build successful, sustainable and diverse communities by providing housing and wellbeing services in a culturally sensitive way to our current and our future customers'.

We are clear and committed to deliver a quality service in line with our values:

- **PASSIONATE** - we are **passionate** about empowering people to build communities alongside homes
- **DIVERSITY** - we believe **diversity** is a strength in every aspect of our

- work and the communities around us
- **INTEGRITY** - we act with **integrity** in all that we do even when that is not the easy option
  - **SUSTAINABLE** - we believe our actions and their impact must always be **sustainable**

We recognise the value to the business of successful tenancies. We know that tenancy success must achieve the following outcomes:

- Our customers feel safe and secure in their homes, in their neighbourhoods and in their community.
- Our customers believe they have a decent home that is affordable, value for money and appropriate to their needs.
- Our customers are satisfied with their home, the area where they live and with the services Nehemiah provide.
- Our customers to have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

We see tenancy failure as one that has ended because of:

- Eviction or the threat of eviction
- Abandonment
- Negative housing experiences

This policy meets the requirements of *The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2015 (updated 2017)*

Nehemiah has procedures in place to comply with this policy.

### 3. Tenancy Support

#### Pre-Tenancy Support

The relationship with our customers begins before the tenancy agreement is signed and the customer moves in. Pre-tenancy contact and support are vital to our approach to successful tenancy sustainment.

We use a choice-based lettings system, working in partnership with the local authorities where we have stock to give customers an active say in their choice of home.

Our lettings process involves a telephone assessment. If more information is needed to assist us to make a decision on tenancy offer, a home visit to a potential customer prior to an offer may be made. For all tenancies we identify if a new customer will have the financial means to make rent payments and sustain a tenancy by ensuring they understand the costs and commitment involved in taking on a tenancy through advice, information and support.

We will follow up on any identified support needs to ensure that support will be provided. For customers moving into our retirement living schemes, we identify support needs and ensure care needs are able to be met before an offer of a tenancy is made. All lettings at our young families' project are made through the single referral framework ensuring support needs are identified pre-tenancy and put in place from the start of the tenancy. We obtain references from

current/previous landlords to identify previous problems or issues with tenancies to ensure that a relevant level of support is available to sustain the tenancy from the start.

## **New Tenancy Support**

We support new customers in the early weeks of moving into their new home, with the provision of information about their new home and tenancy at the tenancy sign up, followed up by a 'new tenant visit' within 6 weeks of the start of their tenancy. We make certain that tenants or their advocate are aware of their responsibilities at the time of sign up and that they are given contact details of who to contact at Nehemiah, if they have any concerns or questions.

Nehemiah's generic Housing Officers provide assistance with setting up a home, liaising with other agencies and providing a point of contact for queries or problems. In our Retirement Living Schemes and Young Families scheme, new customers have an agreed person-centred support plan created for them to help them maintain their tenancy as well as meet other support needs.

Issues are tackled through early intervention to prevent breaches of tenancy or encouraging the customer to rectify a breach before it becomes serious without having to take formal legal action.

## **Proactive and Sensitive Housing Management**

- Good housing management is an essential part of maintaining sustainable tenancies. We aim to provide a housing management service that is sensitive, efficient, responsive, and flexible to support customers throughout their tenancy.

## **Our support can be tailored to the needs of individual customers.**

- The number of tenancy failures in relation to anti-social behaviour (ASB) is low. We aim to successfully resolve the majority of ASB complaints with the first intervention without recourse to legal action.
- We support customers who experience hate crime and harassment and taking legal action against perpetrators.
- We work in partnership with a range of external agencies to help prevent and tackle ASB to support vulnerable customers or provide advice and information on managing a home.
- We work in partnership to assist customers and their households to sustain education, health and employment and to help customers to access services that encourage and support health and wellbeing and maximise their life opportunities.
- We provide quality homes and an effective repairs and maintenance service. We expect our customers to look after their homes and will enforce tenancy conditions to make sure our homes are well maintained.

## **Income Management**

- We provide an effective and customer focused rent service where eviction is the last resort. Our Housing Officers provide a proactive service with an emphasis on early contact, intervention and support. We fund access to an independent Money Advice Service for our customers who need benefit and debt management advice. This service can also make referrals in the event of financial crisis to services such as food banks.
- Housing Officers will have access to IT equipment that will enable them to access real time information in relation to rent balances, updating agreements whilst in the customers own home and giving access to the internet to assist customers to make online applications for welfare benefits.
- We provide a range of payment methods. We provide clear rent accounting information advising customers of payments received and the balance on the account. Customers can also access their personal rent accounts online via the Nehemiah website.

## **Vulnerable Customers**

- We will work with health and social care partners to promote the wellbeing of our customers and support vulnerable people to sustain their tenancies. Nehemiah will work with partners to ensure effective, joined up services for our vulnerable customers, especially those who are disabled, the elderly, customers with mental health issues, domestic abuse victims and young families.
- We will use our disabled adaptations budget and access to external adaptations funding, to provide aids and adaptations to enable customers to safely remain, where practical, in their own home.

## **Under occupation and Overcrowding**

- We will make the best use of our stock to address the issues of overcrowding and under occupation by proactively identifying possible mutual exchanges and prioritising the use of void properties for customers who are adversely affected by the Welfare Reforms.

## **Sustainable Communities**

- Nehemiah will promote pride in our neighbourhoods and help create strong, inclusive and cohesive communities. We will encourage our customers to become more involved in their neighbourhoods and to feel they have an interest and investment in their local community. Customers will be invited on at least one annual 'walkabout' of the area they live in to discuss issues and concerns with Nehemiah staff and other agencies working in the local area.

Our Customer Engagement Framework identifies the wider benefits of customer engagement, including improving our services, homes and communities and developing individual customer skills

#### **4. Customer Profiling**

We aim to maximise our understanding of our customers through customer profiling so we can predict potential tenancy failures. We will seek to develop our Customer Profiles on our database to help identify those with complex problems and ensure appropriate levels of support are put in place. We will identify the best way to communicate with our customers, particularly where there are language or sensory barriers that can impact on sustaining tenancies.

#### **5. Measuring Outcomes**

At the end of all tenancies, we will identify the reasons the tenancy ended. We will identify and record where tenancies fail because of:

- Eviction or the threat of eviction
- Abandonment
- Negative housing experiences
- We need to understand these failed tenancies so we can develop our services accordingly.

We also need to measure our success, recording case studies, and the number of interventions that result in a positive outcome. Our size and culturally sensitive service means we can provide flexible, personal solutions that work.

We will use our satisfaction data to identify if:

- Our customers feel safe and secure in their homes, in their neighbourhoods and in their community.
- Our customers believe they have a decent home that is affordable, value for money and appropriate to their needs.
- Our customers are satisfied with their home, the area where they live and with the services Nehemiah provide.
- We will use this data to monitor the success of our services and to improve our services.
- We will promote our Tenancy Sustainment Policy through our website, social media and newsletter. Where changes are proposed, we will consult with our customers in line with our Customer Engagement Strategy.

#### **6. Legislation and Guidance**

- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Welfare and Reform Act 2016
- The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2015

## **7. Training and Support for Staff**

Tenancy turnover is monitored and reported as by our KPI's to Operations Committees on a quarterly basis.

Nehemiah will ensure that employees have received the appropriate training and support to enable them to deal effectively and confidently with the issues presented.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The Operations Director has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Tenancy Sustainment Policy and the Housing Service Manager is responsible for key aspects of the day-to-day service delivery with delegation of specific tasks to appropriate staff.

The Operations Committee receives regular updates as part of the agreed KPI's, so that they can have reasonable assurance that the Tenancy Sustainment Policy is operating effectively in practice.

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if legislation or good practice dictates.

## **9. Link to Other Policies and Documents.**

This policy should be read and implemented in conjunction with the following Nehemiah Housing Management Policies and other relevant documents:

- Abandonment Procedure
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy and Procedures
- Arrears Procedure
- Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Harassment and Hate Crime Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Customer Engagement Strategy
- Lettings Policy
- Succession Policy
- Housing Solutions for Customers with Disabilities: Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Neighbourhood Improvement Policy