Tenancy Sustainment Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1. This policy sets out how The Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (“the Trust”) will aim to provide the support needed to enable all customers to sustain a long term tenancy.

1.2. The key objectives of this Tenancy Sustainment Policy are to:

- Identify and establish early interventions to support the sustainment of tenancies.
- Ensure that there are appropriate levels of support to help our tenants maintain their tenancies and increase life chances.
- Build capacity to develop skills for our tenants to manage their tenancies and meet their tenancy obligations.
- Seek to reduce tenancy failure and encourage retention as an alternative where appropriate.
- Work to prevent and reduce homelessness so as to minimise void turnaround and void costs.

2. Definitions

2.1. Tenancy sustainment is an umbrella term to refer to the support the Trust will provide to customers more widely to help them to be in a better position to keep their tenancy.

2.2. The Department of Health defines a vulnerable adult as a person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. See (10.1).

3. Policy Statement

3.1. We recognise that tenancy sustainment activities begin before the tenant receives the keys to the property. Where appropriate the Trust will work with the incoming tenant to identify any risks that could affect tenancy sustainment, for example, household budgeting and claiming benefits.

3.2. The Trust believes that every person has the right to a secure home. We recognise that this requires not only the home, but also the skills required to meet the responsibilities associated with maintaining the tenancy. Where appropriate we will work with and offer direct support to residents to ensure that they can access appropriate services to them help build capacity and therefore help maintain their tenancies.
3.3. The Trust understands that individual circumstances will change over time and to this aim we will carry out occupancy visits to ensure that needs are identified and met. This could include signposting to appropriate agencies or making a referral to our Additional Housing Management Service.

3.4. The Trust will also work with external, specialist partners as well as our own employees. A range of mechanisms may be appropriate and support required could range from intensive short term interventions to long term care and support packages.

3.5. The Trust recognises the value to the business of successful tenancies both from a financial and reputational perspective. For example, successful tenancies will lead to sustainable communities and also fewer vacant properties and therefore ultimately lead to improved tenant satisfaction and maximising rental income.

4. Implementation

4.1. Frontline employees across the organisation are trained and supported in recognising potential sustainability risks and all are encouraged to report these risks so that we can seek to address the need. For example:

- The Independent Living Team delivers support through its Additional Housing Management Service to help tenants sustain their tenancies and live independently in their home.
- Welfare Advisors support residents to maximise their incomes by providing assistance with benefits claims, debt advice and household budgeting.
- Neighbourhood Managers support tenancies that are at risk through anti-social behaviour or other breaches such as hoarding.
- Rent Advisors approach rent arrears from a position of support and understanding helping tenants to budget and maximise their income and will only seek to evict tenants as a last resort.

4.2. Staff will seek to carry out assessments of risk and support needs for new tenants and tenancy audits of existing tenants, both of which may identify risks associated with the sustainment of the tenancy. Where undertaken, our initial assessments will include affordability checks and if necessary we will arrange a welfare advice appointment. The Trust will also work closely with partner agencies to ensure care packages are in place to help residents sustain their tenancies.

4.3. To ensure that the most vulnerable receive adequate support we have now also introduced mandatory safeguarding training for all staff. Safeguarding referrals will be made where appropriate in line with the Trust’s Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult policies and procedures.

4.4. Our Neighbourhood Managers will also work with other partner organisations and have established procedures in place that enable referrals to be made to these and other support organisations.
4.5. All front line staff will help provide a level of basic support to help tenants sustain their tenancies. In addition there are established procedures to ensure that they can make referrals to any of the above where a higher level of support is required.

4.6. The Neighbourhood Managers will enable us to seek intervention in urgent cases to provide support in circumstances which are not anticipated above, and to co-ordinate and manage the referral arrangements. This ensures that the variety of ways that we deliver support to sustain tenancies is effective.

4.7. Where it is established that a property is deemed to be unsuitable due to medical needs we will actively consider the installation of aids and adaptations to the property in line with the Trust’s Aids and Adaptations procedures.

5. **Equality and Diversity**

5.1. The Trust will ensure that in delivering our services we continue to be inclusive and representative. This will be achieved through the application of our Equality and Diversity Policy.

6. **How the Policy will be implemented**

6.1 This Policy is supported by existing procedures. The Tenancy Services Manager has responsibility for the implementation of this Policy.

7. **Performance Measures**

7.1 We will aim to achieve 95% of new tenancies being sustained after 12 months with 90% of new tenancies being sustained after 3 years. Performance will be monitored annually by the Tenancy Services Manager.

8. **Review**

8.1. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that it remains relevant to the business and fit for purpose.

9. **Legislation and other Documents**

9.1. This Policy is linked with a number of other policies and strategies within the Trust:

- Tenure Policy
- Rent Arrears Recovery Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Diversity and Equality Policy
10. References

10.1. Boland B, Burnage J, Chowhan H; Safeguarding adults at risk of harm. BMJ. 2013 May

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