Tenancy Support Policy

SER-POL-14

Version 4.0

Date approved: 09th October 2024

Approved by: Executive

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy outlines the approach Southway Housing Trust (the Trust) will take in:

- Recognising tenants who may need support to manage their tenancy and interact with us

- Responding by making reasonable adjustments and removing barriers to service delivery

- Supporting some of our tenants to sustain their tenancies and live independently

- Recording individual circumstances on our Housing Management system.

1.2 The Trust will empower staff to work collaboratively with tenants and, on a case management basis, be a key worker.

1.3 The Trust will provide housing related support to some tenants who are at risk of tenancy failure or need more support to live independently, aiming to intervene early where possible.

1.4 The Trust will provide a holistic approach to support tenants who hoard, to address hoarding behaviour and to reduce the hoard and associated fire, health and safety risks. We may take a flexible approach to tenancy breaches in order to resolve the situation.

1.5 The Trust will work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to recognise and respond to tenant's individual circumstances and care and support needs.

2. Recognising Support Needs

Definition of Vulnerability

2.1 The Trust recognises the limitation, and sometimes stigmatising nature of the use of the term "vulnerability", when referring to some tenants and their needs. Wherever possible the Trust will use the term "individual circumstances".

2.2 The Trust will adopt the Housing Ombudsman definition that "vulnerabilities" are a person's characteristics, either permanent or temporary, that may mean a tenant requires care and support to complete landlord – tenant

transactions for example to pay the rent, to allow access for compliance or repair visits.

<u>Examples of Support Needs</u>

2.3   Tenants who may benefit most from support will be living in our supported, including age friendly, homes or in our general let homes, and may have some of the needs listed below:

- Resettlement / moving to a new area including leaving residential or institutional care, care home, prison or temporary foster care, or have been in temporary or supported accommodation
- Survivors of Domestic Abuse
- Refugees granted asylum status
- Need help to stay at home or rightsize, and not go into residential care or hospital
- Experiencing or causing Anti-Social Behaviour including behaviour of children and needing help developing parenting skills
- Misuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Hoard and/or neglect their property
- Socially isolated, with no support network
- Not receiving statutory or other (voluntary/family) support to manage their physical and/or mental health
- Workless, in debt, in fuel poverty and/or in food poverty.

2.4   The Trust will train our staff to have the skills and knowledge to recognise support needs and individual circumstances. This includes but is not limited to:

- Being trauma informed - having an awareness of how trauma, including in childhood (known as Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs) can negatively impact individuals, including their trust in professional services.

- Taking a strengths based approach - focusing on what's working well, to empower tenants to increase their life skills and employment chances.

- Being Professionally Curious – able to explore and understand what is happening with an individual or family.

3.   **Responding to Individual Circumstances**

<u>Reasonable Adjustments</u>

3.1   The Trust can and will make changes to the way it delivers services to remove any barriers to accessing or receiving services, based on tenants' disclosed individual circumstances at the point of accessing a service and/ or on the information held on the Housing Management system. This may include and is not limited to:

- Instructions to staff visiting people's homes
- Communication preferences
- Providing a key worker
- Providing housing related support
- Referrals and partnership working.

3.2   Each service area must consider making reasonable adjustments based on the following guidance:
- How effective will the change be
- Can it practically be done
- What is the cost and resource implication
- What, if any, would be the impact on service delivery to all.

<u>Key Working and Housing Related Support</u>

3.3   From time to time tenants in both our supported (including age friendly) and general let homes may require care and support to live independently, manage, maintain their home and sustain their tenancy, comply with their tenancy conditions or complete transactions.

3.4   The Trust does not directly provide personal care but does provide support which can be:

- Information on community, voluntary or statutory support, referrals and signposting
- Intervention based such as hoarding, victim care and domestic abuse support
- Key worker support where an Officer is one point of contact co-ordinating the actions of others
  Housing Related support on a case management basis using a needs assessment, and
- Specialist support such as hoarding, benefits, money and debt advice and help to get into work, training or education.

3.5   The purpose of this support will be to encourage independence and increase skills, however where someone requires statutory care and support to live independently the Trust may advocate on their behalf to other agencies as well as work in partnership to deliver a package of wrap around support.

3.6   Within our age friendly homes, support will be provided by Housing Officers to promote wellbeing and maintain independence. Officers will assist tenants, particularly those in age friendly homes, to access services to help them to live independently.

3.7   Officers will have a role in referring, case planning and contributing to action plans where a statutory organisation or another intervention is taking the lead, in particular in safeguarding children (including Child in Need status) or adults with care and support needs. And will attend strategic and operational multi-agency partnership meetings.

4.   Recording Individual Circumstances

4.1   For new tenants, the Trust will record individual circumstances that may require our services to be adjusted at the pre-tenancy stage, tenancy sign-up and starter tenancy visits.

4.2   For existing tenants, the Trust has recorded data on its Housing Management system which covers health, disability and communication needs, based on information tenants have disclosed to the Trust.

4.3   Examples of recording data we hold on our housing management system are:

- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Dementia
- Dyslexia
- Long standing Illness
- Learning Difficulty
- Mental Health
- Walking Aid
- Wheelchair User

4.4   Through all interactions, such as tenancy and repair visits, rent arrears collection and anti-social behaviour reports, the Trust will identify tenants who will benefit the most from additional support to manage their tenancy.

5.   Roles and responsibilities

5.1   All Heads of Service must consider in the implementation of a policy or delivery of services, how they will respond to individual circumstances and make reasonable adjustments when providing services.

5.2   All staff in the Landlord and Community Directorate will:

- Check, record and update the Housing Management system for individual circumstances that need to be taken into account when delivering services.

- Signpost and/or refer tenants to external support agencies, statutory and voluntary. This will include activities provided by the Trust in our communities such as employment support, volunteering opportunities, and activities to prevent social isolation.

- Signpost tenants to and/or assist tenants with referrals for, major and minor adaptations to their home, to enable independent living and tenancy sustainability.

5.2 Some Landlord and Community staff will:

- Be a key worker, coordinating advice and support, using an action plan if required with short term timescales, to resolve an issue.

5.3 The Housing Management and Support Service will:

- Receive and triage referrals for housing related or specialist support. Cases most at risk of tenancy failure will be prioritised. If the Team doesn't have capacity the referral will be passed to the other teams for key work and signposting pending the start of the intervention.

- Case manage more complex situations to support tenants to sustain their tenancies, pay their rent, achieve greater independence and live fulfilled lives.

- Manage hoarding cases, using the good practice developed by the Tidy Homes, Tidy Minds project.

- Coordinate support for survivors of domestic abuse and work in partnership to safely manage risks.

- Manage cases involving tenants who lack capacity under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, wherever possible ensuring that a comprehensive package of support is in place from statutory agencies.

5.4 The Age Friendly Housing Team will:

- Monitor the health and wellbeing of tenants at an agreed frequency, providing advice, advocacy and referrals to promote and maintain independent living.

- Work with residents and non-residents along with partner agencies, to deliver a range of social events and activities to tackle social exclusion and loneliness.

- Where care services are provided within schemes, the Trust will monitor the quality of these services with the tenants and their families and representatives.

- Where the home benefits from a hard wired alarm system the Trust will work in partnership with an accredited call centre to provide monitoring of any emergency calls within agreed timescales and to agreed service standards.

6. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

6.1 As part of the process of providing and organising support for tenants, the Trust will need to record and share information with other organisations, statutory and voluntary.

6.2 Before sharing information the Trust will agree this with the tenant, including which agencies information can be shared with, and obtain a signed consent form.

6.3 Where there are safeguarding concerns about the tenant or another person who may come to harm if information is not shared, information will be shared without consent. This is detailed in the Safeguarding Policy.

7. Monitoring and Service Improvement

7.1 The Head of Housing Management and Support will report on performance measures, including number of housing related support cases and outcomes, specifically tenancy sustainability, annually to Committee.

7.2 To continuously improve the way we deliver our services all staff will receive customer care training. Other staff will receive training on:

- Relevant strategies and legislation, e.g. the Care Act 2014, Mental Capacity Act 2005, and domestic abuse awareness;

- Safeguarding children and adults with care and support needs;

- Equality Act 2010 and protected characteristics;

- Understanding dementia, autism, sight and hearing loss and using positive language; and

- Approaches to intensive support, e.g. Early Help assessments, support planning, strengths based interviewing, cognitive behavioural therapy techniques.

7.3   All Heads of Service should include in reports examples of how they have made reasonable adjustments to service provision and/ or what they have learnt from customer feedback about barriers to accessing services.

4.   Related Policy Documents

- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Hate Crime Policy
- Equipment and Adaptations Policy

POLICY REVIEW HISTORY
To be completed during each review
Previous versions (version number – approved by – approval date – title if different) v1 – Shadow Board – 19/06/2007 – People with Support Needs Policy v2 – CE 11/1/2018 v3 – never got signed off v4 – As agreed at P&P Committee May 2024, re-written to include how the Trust recognises, responds and records tenants individual circumstances or vulnerabilities.

Date of last EIA:	28/6/21
Review lead by:	Claire Davies, Head of Housing Management and Support

Main points or amendments made and reasons
V3 amends: The policy has been amended to reflect the change of teams and officer's names in the People and Places Department and the expanded housing and support role carried out by the Age Friendly Deliver Team   The Confident and Achieving Manchester section has been removed as this was superseded by the Early Help delivery model and more recently MAPS. The Tenancy Support Team will still use the principles of Early Help, carry out Early Help assessments and work in partnership including attending the weekly Early Help allocations meetings however, the case management payment was withdrawn by MCC. This allowed the Team to review the primary support needs for Early Help referrals which were parenting, domestic abuse support and property condition. Southway tenants needing help with parenting were put on a waiting list for parenting courses delivered by MCC twice a year. Having a trained Parenting officer means that we can deliver timely interventions. The team also took over responsibility for domestic abuse support from the Action Team and one officer will coordinate our response and risk management working in partnership internally and externally.   Complex needs and holistic support changed to Housing Related Support Needs to be clearer on the aims and priorities of the service and the list of needs updated to reflect the procedure.   V4 amends – re-written to cover how the Trust recognises, responds to and records individual circumstances and makes reasonable adjustments to service delivery. And how this covers all service provision not just tenancy support services. This policy is about supporting tenants to sustain and manage their tenancy either by an intervention or during landlord and tenant transactions.

Next review due:	**Q2 2027/28**
Approval level:	**Executive**