



TENANCY SUSTAINMENT POLICY

Reference	01	Version	1
Applies to	Board members, staff and residents and third-party contractors for Arches Housing	Issue date	FEBRUARY 2025
Approved by	Director of operations	Review Date	FEBRUARY 2028
Lead Officer	NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGER	Reviewed By	HEAD OF HOUSING OPERATIONS

1. Scope

- 1.1 Arches Housing recognises that tenants living within its housing stock and estates will have a range of different housing and support requirements. Our tenancy sustainment policy will detail how Arches Housing will support our tenants to maintain their tenancy successfully. We may do this by direct support as the tenant's landlord or by referring them on to appropriate support agencies. We will promote our tenancy sustainment approach to our tenants so that they are aware of the support we may be able to provide them. We will also work closely with partners to avoid wherever possible enforcement action against tenants.
- 1.2 This policy mainly applies to rented properties only, however some support is available for shared owners at the discretion of the Neighbourhood Manager. Those residents who have purchased their properties outright will be sign posted for other appropriate support.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Our tenancy sustainability policy aims to establish a consistent approach to our delivery of tenancy sustainment support to tenants of Arches Housing properties ensuring they have support when they need it and they have a safe and secure home. We also recognise that we may not always be the most appropriate agency to support a tenant and therefore will provide our staff with details of how to make referrals to appropriate agencies where needed.
- 2.2 The aims of this policy are to ensure that:
 - Arches Housing staff are equipped with knowledge and skills to recognise if a tenant requires additional support to maintain their tenancy with us successfully and what type of support maybe required.
 - We are able to provide tenants with support or refer for appropriate support to a third-party agency to ensure the tenant is able to maintain their tenancy.
 - We have a process for proactively identifying tenants who are most at risk of tenancy failure and then ensuring that these tenants are provided with support as needed.
 - Tenants know who to contact if they are struggling with their tenancies.
- 2.3 We will meet the aims of this policy by:
 - Ensuring that we collect tenancy sustainment data and agreeing a monitoring regime for tenants who have required support.

- Where required, we will provide low level support at an early stage aimed at preventing escalation of enforcement action.
 - Where tenants need more intensive support, identifying this early and referring to appropriate agencies.
 - Preventing of homelessness where possible
 - Reducing both the financial and human cost, of failed tenancies to Arches and the local authority.
- 2.4 It is important to note in this policy that Arches are a general needs housing provider, we are not a support agency and whilst we have knowledge and experience of tenancy management, we are not a specialist support provider.
- 2.5 This policy is in addition to the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy, Legal Duties and Regulatory Responsibilities. We will ensure that we comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements as part of this policy including:
- The Housing Act 2004
 - The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
 - Welfare Reform Act 2012
 - Equalities Act 2010
 - The Mental Health Act 1983 (as amended, most recently by the Mental Health Act 2007)
 - Safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults
 - Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - Rehabilitation of offenders Act 1974
 - Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
 - Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and Code of Practice

3 Staff Responsibilities

- 3.1 **Director of Operations**
Has overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation.
- 3.2 **Head of Housing Operations**
The Head of Housing Operations will ensure that staff receive the appropriate training and support to effectively achieve the objectives of this policy.
- 3.3 **Neighbourhood Manager**
The Neighbourhood Manager is responsible for ensuring the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

- 3.4 Housing Operations Team Officers
Arches Housings Housing Officers and Assistant Housing Officers are responsible for implementing this policy as part of their day-to-day duties when working with our tenants.
- 3.5 All Staff Will be aware of this policy and the role of Housing Operations Officers in sustaining tenancies.

4. Identifying Additional Support Needs.

- 4.1 Arches Housing are committed to providing sustainable tenancies. We want prospective tenants to have the very best chance of their move to an Arches property be successful. To help us achieve this we will complete a thorough pre-tenancy assessment with all prospective tenants. We will gather information from previous landlords and housing providers to ensure that if we make an offer of a property that the prospective tenant can meet the cost of the rent and any service charges.

If it becomes apparent that a prospective tenant may have difficulties managing and maintaining a tenancy, the Housing Officer and Neighbourhood Manager will make a decision as to whether to offer a tenancy. Our decision will be based on all the available information provided, a review of any risks and comply with the Access to Housing Policy.

If we do offer a tenancy, we will agree with the tenant and any involved support providers what support is required to ensure the tenancy is successful.

- 4.2 We will visit all our tenants at least every two years. The purpose of this visit will be to:
- Check on our tenant's wellbeing.
 - Check on the condition of our property.
 - Identify any support needs.
 - Ensure the information we have about our tenant and their household members is up to date.
 - Identify any ways we can improve our services either generally or specifically for this tenant.
- 4.3 A tenant may approach Arches for additional support because they are struggling to manage their tenancy. Whilst there will be no formal route for tenants to self-refer, if they make it known to Arches that they are having difficulties then a Housing Officer or Income Maximisation

Officer, as appropriate, will discuss those difficulties and identify appropriate actions to put support in place.

- 4.4 A partner organisation or a contractor working on behalf of Arches may inform us that they have visited a tenant who appears to be having difficulty managing their home or their tenancy. If this happens the housing officer will make contact with the tenant to discuss what support is needed.

5. What support is available from Arches Housing

- 5.1 Financial support
- i. Repayment plans for arrears and recharges
 - ii. Support with energy bills
 - iii. Support with applications for grants or welfare benefits where eligible
 - iv. Other items / areas at the discretion of the Neighbourhood Manager and / or Head of Housing Operations
- 5.2 Decoration vouchers
- v. Supply of decoration vouchers for DIY stores
- 5.3 One off purchases & gifting of furniture or white goods
- vi. Charis vouchers to purchase white goods or furniture for tenants who are not able to provide basic items for themselves or their families
- 5.4 Referrals to alternative third-party support providers
- vii. Referrals to third-party support providers such as:
 - viii. Shelter – Tenancy Support Services
 - ix. De-paul – Mental Health Tenancy Support Service
 - x. Citizens Advice Bureau
 - xi. Step Change Debt Advice
 - xii. Talking Therapies Service (Formally iAPT)
- 5.5 Housing management case work from housing officers
- xiii. Regular visits and action planning for improvements.
 - xiv. Assistance and guidance on how to manage a tenancy successfully
 - xv. Support to identify and address issues that the tenant and their household is facing.

6. Eligibility and Qualifying Criteria for Financial Support

- 6.1 Arches Housing is a small housing association and our financial resources for supporting tenants is limited. We must ensure that we are

supporting tenants who are most at risk and most vulnerable of tenancy failure. As such the following eligibility and qualifying criteria must be applied where financial support or purchasing items for a tenant is requested.

1. Financial support / Hardship payment

- The tenant must be in a situation where they are having a short-term financial crisis and usual sources of funding from grants, advances or crisis loans are not available or suitable.
- Short term support can improve the tenant's longer term financial situation.
- The tenant is taking positive action to improve their situation by way of engagement with financial support agencies.
- Financial support can only be provided as a one-off payment per financial year unless there are exceptional circumstances

2. Decoration vouchers

- Decoration vouchers will generally be provided to tenants who are moving into an Arches Housing tenancy for the first time.
- Vouchers would be provided to support tenants to improve the visual appearance of their new home.
- Vouchers are provided to individuals who may not otherwise be in a position to make decorative improvements to their home due to the cost.

3. One off purchase of whitegoods or furniture

- The tenant must be in a situation where they are having a short-term financial crisis and usual sources of funding from grants, advances or crisis loans are not available or suitable.
- Short term support can improve the tenants longer term financial and living situation
- The tenant is taking positive action to improve their situation by way of engagement with financial support agencies
- Financial support can only be provided as a one-off payment per financial year unless there are exceptional circumstances

6.2 The table below provides guidance on the eligibility criteria for financial support for tenants from Arches. The table is a guidance and does not cover off all eventualities. The Neighbourhood Manager and Head of Housing Operations have discretion to provide financial support to tenants via the tenancy sustainment fund(s) outside of the examples below.

Circumstances	Financial Limit	Qualifying Criteria	Conditions
Payments to utility providers to assist with energy costs	Neighbourhood Managers Discretion (up to £200)	Applicable in households with children or other known vulnerabilities (such as disability)	<p>Tenancy Sustainability case opened.</p> <p>Agree to referral to appropriate 3rd party provider</p> <p>Agreement to an APA for rent if on UC / HB.</p> <p>Income & expenditure check completed</p> <p>All other funding options have been exhausted</p>
Payment to utility providers to clear historic debt on account(s)	Neighbourhood Managers Discretion (up to £200)	Applicable in households with children or other known vulnerabilities (such as disability)	<p>Tenancy Sustainability case opened</p> <p>Agree to referral to appropriate 3rd party provider</p> <p>Agreement to an APA for rent if on UC / HB.</p> <p>Income & expenditure check completed</p> <p>All other funding options have been exhausted.</p>
Significant Rent Arrears – Consideration for write off	Neighbourhood Managers Discretion (up to £500)	<p>Tenant is at risk of losing their home due to rent arrears</p> <p>Household has children or household members with known vulnerabilities</p>	<p>Tenant agrees to APA if on UC / HB</p> <p>Tenant agrees to a repayment plan for remaining arrears (paid via direct debit).</p> <p>Tenant agrees to clear the</p>

Circumstances	Financial Limit	Qualifying Criteria	Conditions
		<p>Significant reputational risk to the organisation.</p>	<p>remaining arrears within 18 months.</p> <p>Tenant agrees to referral to tenancy support agency</p> <p>Tenant agrees that any breach of the agreements will lead to court action.</p> <p>All other funding / grant schemes exhausted.</p>
Purchase of furniture / whitegoods	Neighbourhood Managers Discretion (up to £500)	<p>Tenant has little to no furniture in their home (focussing on beds / seating and other essentials)</p> <p>Tenant does not own a cooker / washing machine / refrigerator</p> <p>Tenant has no financial means to provide these items themselves</p>	<p>Income and expenditure assessment to be completed.</p> <p>All other funding streams exhausted.</p> <p>Referral to St Vincents or Live Well at Home as appropriate.</p> <p>Tenant agrees to APA for rent if on UC / HB</p> <p>Tenant agrees to referral to 3rd party tenancy / financial support provider.</p>
Decoration Vouchers	Neighbourhood Managers Discretion (up to £300)	<p>Tenant has limited finances to improve the visual appearance of their new home.</p> <p>Tenant is a new tenant to Arches Housing or has suffered damage to their home that</p>	<p>Income and expenditure check to be completed.</p> <p>Tenant agrees that vouchers will be used within 3 months of issue.</p> <p>Tenant agrees that unused vouchers</p>

Circumstances	Financial Limit	Qualifying Criteria	Conditions
		is deemed not their fault.	will be returned to Arches.
Hardship Payment	Neighbourhood Managers Discretion (up to £100)	Tenant is having a short term financial crisis that means that they are not able to provide themselves with basic living essentials such as food.	<p>Tenant agrees to income and expenditure check</p> <p>Tenant agrees to referral to 3rd party support agency as required</p> <p>Tenant agrees to APA for rent if tenancy is at risk of failure.</p> <p>Tenancy sustainment case opened by housing officer.</p>

7. Customer Involvement in this policy

- 7.1 We will consult on the content of this policy with our customers. We will do this by asking our Neighbourhood Network which is made up of customers from a variety of our estates to review the content.
- 7.2 We will review the outcomes of this policy with customers at least once per year.

8. Equality of Opportunity

- 8.1 Arches Housing will ensure that in implementing this policy that it will not unfairly discriminate against any person with protected characteristics named in the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.2 As this policy allows discretion for Arches Officers to make decisions based on individual circumstances there may be the possibility of discrimination taking place either directly or indirectly. All decision makers as part of this policy will ensure that a written record of their decision is stored on our housing management system and this includes relevant information to support the decision that was made.

9. Monitoring and Reporting

- 9.1 The Director of Operations is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy and any supporting procedures that are used by officers of Arches Housing.
- 9.2 The Head of Housing Operations and Neighbourhood Manager will produce an annual report that provides the following:
- Summary of tenants who have accessed the support elements of this policy.
 - Financial reporting of the use of the tenancy sustainment fund.
 - A record of tenancy sustainment cases.
 - A summary of tenancy sustainment cases.
 - A summary of tenancy failures.
- 9.3 The Neighbourhood Manager will conduct bimonthly case reviews of tenancy sustainment cases.

10. Complaints

Any tenant wishing to make a complaint about the service they have received in relation to the implementation of this policy can do so by following Arches Housings Complaints Procedure. This can be found on our website:

www.archeshousing.org.uk

11. Links to other Arches Housing Policies

Arches Housing realises that tenancy sustainment is dependent on a variety of other policies and procedures including;

- Access to Housing Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Income Collection Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Hate Crime & Domestic Abuse Policy
- Customer Complaints Policy

12. Publishing this Policy

This policy will be published on our website – www.archeshousing.org.uk