

## Neighbourhood and Housing Management Policy

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy covers our Neighbourhood and Housing Management approach across all client groups and tenure types. It should always be viewed in conjunction with the relevant tenancy or leasehold agreement, which is where the legal rights of individual customers are set out. It is important to note that some tenancy and leasehold types apply more rights than others.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood and Housing Management policy explains The Wrekin Housing Group's (The 'Group') approach to managing tenancies and neighbourhoods, including tenancy sustainment measures, creating well-maintained areas that residents can be proud to live in and explaining how tenancy change requests will be managed.
- 1.3 The Wrekin Housing Group own and manage a wide range of stock and varying client groups, from general needs, to retirement living and our care and support units. Whilst this policy highlights the principles of our approach to neighbourhood and housing management, including to a degree the tools available to us, we will flex and adjust our approach according to the client group and any specific needs or vulnerabilities. An approach generally favoured with some tenants may be inappropriate with other client groups.
- 1.4 This policy ensures compliance with the relevant legislation, Consumer Regulatory Standards and the Wrekin Tenants Charter.

### 2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 The policy seeks to ensure that all customers are treated with respect and receive the relevant and necessary advice, where required, to be able to maintain and sustain a positive tenancy. It also ensure that customers are able to enjoy a safe, secure and well-maintained environment in an area in which they are proud to live in, whilst receiving fair, reasonable and consistent services from the Group.

### 3.0 Policy Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to existing tenants, potential tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, employees, contractors and external partners, irrespective of gender expression or gender identity.

### 4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 **Failed Tenancy:** The Group accepts that there are a number of reasons why tenants may choose to end their tenancies but in general, a tenancy will be classed by the Group as being a failed tenancy where it ends through eviction,

abandonment, has been occupied for less than 12 months or is an unplanned surrender.

- 4.2 **Support Service:** Additional support which is provided which goes beyond the general housing management support offered, and may be provided by either an in-house team or an external agency.
- 4.3 **Tenancy Sustainment:** Although there is no legal definition, the generally accepted definition is: “Preventing a tenancy from coming to a premature end by providing the necessary information, advice and support for tenants to be able to maintain their tenancies”.
- 4.4 **Assignment:** An assignment is where a person is “assigned” or takes over all of the rights and responsibilities of a tenancy. These rights are passed from the original tenant to a new tenant.
- 4.5 **Succession:** The tenancy agreement details the rights of succession following the death of a tenant. Succession refers to the transfer of tenancy rights and not property rights. Succession of a tenancy will only apply on the death of a tenant and there must be a ‘qualified person’ to succeed. This will be subject to the qualifying criteria which is further outlined in the Tenancy Change procedure.
- 4.6 **Mutual Exchange:** The term ‘mutual exchange’ describes the ability of two or more tenants in the social housing sector to move house by swapping their homes. Exchange rights depend on the type of tenancy that the person has.

## 5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 **The Wrekin Housing Group Board** has overall responsibility for ensuring the Group is compliant with its statutory, regulatory and legal requirements and meets its stakeholder’s needs.
- 5.2 The **Executive Director of Operational Services** will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied consistently across the Group and that there is a management structure with delegated responsibilities for the implementation of this policy.
- 5.3 The **Head of Housing** will be responsible for developing and reviewing the policy.
- 5.4 Delegated duties are given to those named in the Neighbourhood and Housing Management Procedures.

## 6.0 Policy Approach

- 6.1 The Group understands the importance that a sustainable tenancy can have on both the tenant and the Group and is committed to minimising the number of failed tenancies.

- 6.2 The Group will ensure that all new applicants have undertaken a pre-tenancy assessment to ensure that they are able to successfully sustain the tenancy, with or without support.
- 6.3 The Group provides a range of services to ensure its tenants are able to access all the appropriate support services available to them to help them manage their tenancy in accordance with their tenancy conditions and to prevent failed tenancies.
- 6.4 The Group is committed to supporting its tenants through our Tenancy Sustainment, Debt Advice and Money Matters teams. The Group is able to refer tenants for in-depth housing support through its external partnerships, ensuring tenants get the appropriate level of support whenever it may become needed throughout the life of their tenancy.
- 6.5 The Group understands that not all tenants will approach us directly for help and will therefore ensure that there are robust systems in place to identify vulnerable tenants and/or tenants at risk of tenancy failure to help to ensure the appropriate support can be offered.
- 6.6 In providing services, the Group aims to ensure that decent living conditions are in place for all residents so that they can enjoy their homes within a community in which they feel safe and secure. The Group will meet all of its statutory and contractual duties, complying with the law and regulatory performance standards.
- 6.7 Whilst the Group is able to provide various levels of support for a period of time, enforcement action may be deemed necessary by the Group if the tenant fails to engage, accept support and/or cooperate to achieve successful conclusions to any tenancy breaches.
- 6.8 There are various tools available to the Group when looking to take tenancy enforcement action. The appropriate support and advice will be offered to all tenants who may be going through tenancy enforcement action.
- 6.9 The Group will ensure that all employees take a person-centred approach when providing services and addressing tenancy breaches, establishing any vulnerabilities or support needs in order to avoid any unnecessary action being taken.
- 6.10 Contractual arrangements such as tenancy agreements and leases make it clear what customers can expect and conversely, what is expected of the customer.
- 6.11 Tenants must ensure the premises are used as their main home; the premises must not be sublet and permission from the Group must be sought before taking in a lodger. The Group is committed to preventing tenancy fraud and has a responsibility to report any concerns to the relevant authorities. Enforcement action will be taken to end the tenancy where we believe the premises have been abandoned.

- 6.12 The premises should be clean and in reasonable repair and decorative order. All repairs should be reported when necessary and any repairs that the Group are not responsible for, including deliberate or accidental damage, should be rectified immediately by the tenant. Failure to do so could result in the Group carrying out these repairs and recharging the tenant and/or tenancy enforcement action being taken. The Group will support tenant requests to make improvements to the premises subject to all tenancy conditions being met.
- 6.13 Both the Group and its customers have a responsibility to ensure that all communal areas are in good order to ensure a safe and pleasant environment is maintained. Customers should report any communal repairs and keep all communal areas free from rubbish and any obstructions (Including but not limited to mobility scooters, bikes, pushchairs or similar items). The safety of all customers and employees is of paramount importance to the Group and any fire risks identified may be removed and disposed of, as appropriate.
- 6.14 The Group will continue to work collaboratively with resident groups, tenants, leaseholders and partner agencies to improve and enhance the Group's delivery of effective neighbourhood and tenancy management services.
- 6.15 In terms of the wider neighbourhood the Group will develop locality plans for localities where we have a notable proportion of the overall stock. This will enable our approach to neighbourhoods and housing management to be placed in the context of neighbourhood sustainability and development.
- 6.16 The Group recognises the positive impact that keeping a domestic pet can have on an individual's wellbeing. The keeping of a domestic pet is allowed in houses and bungalows but tenants will need to seek the Group's permission to keep a pet in a flat. In all cases, tenants must ensure that the pet is kept under control and does not cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or damage to the premises or communal areas.
- 6.17 The Group will assess all tenancy change applications fairly and consistently (Including assignments, variations, succession or mutual exchanges) in compliance with the relevant legislation, and considering the type of tenancy and the appropriateness and suitability of the current home so to make the best use of housing stock and to meet housing demand.
- 6.18 The associated Tenancy Change procedure sets out the approach the Group will take for all assignment, succession, mutual exchange applications and Temporary Move due to Essential Repairs or Redevelopment (Also known as 'Decants').
- 6.19 In all circumstances, the Group will provide advice to ensure that tenants are fully informed of the effect on their tenancy and/or rights.
- 6.20 The Groups approach to Tenancy Change requests will be compliant with the relevant legislation.

6.21 The Group will ensure that there are effective monitoring systems in place to deliver an excellent neighbourhood and tenancy management service and implement any learning outcomes to achieve the aims of the policy and improve the customer experience.

## **7.0 Further Guidance**

7.1 For further guidance, please refer to the Neighbourhood and Housing Management Procedures.

<b>The Wrekin</b> <u>Housing Group</u>	<b>Policy Control Sheet</b> <b>Neighborhood &amp; Housing Management Policy</b> <b>Policy reference number – 2023/036</b>
<b>Policy Author</b>	Nick Grubb Head of Housing
<b>Direct Lead</b>	David Wells Executive Director of Operational Services
<b>Version</b>	V1.0: November 2023
<b>Target audience</b>	All employees of The Wrekin Housing Group
<b>Consultation</b>	Wrekin Voices (two engagements) Tenant Action Group Employee Forum (two engagements) Customer Committee Senior Managers
<b>Customer Feedback Summary</b>	The policy has been sent to: 300+ customers via direct email 6 customers via printed copies 90 customers via Facebook closed group
<b>Date of Equality Impact Assessment</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment was completed on the 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2023
<b>Date of Data Privacy Impact Assessment</b>	No personal data is processed as a result of the adoption of this policy
<b>Approving Body</b>	Executive Management Group
<b>Date of final approval</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023
<b>Implementation date</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023
<b>Monitoring and Reporting</b>	Monthly monitoring (operational)
<b>Review date</b>	May 2026
<b>Expiry date</b>	November 2026
<b>Review cycle</b>	Three Year Review Cycle
<b>Policy category</b>	Tenancy Management
<b>Associated policies and procedures</b>	Neighbourhood and Housing Management Procedures Allocations and Lettings Policy Tenancy Debt and Income Management Policy ASB Hate Crime and Harassment Policy Customer Service Policy Tenancy Policy Introductory and Fixed Term Tenancy Procedure Homecheck Procedure Untidy Garden Procedure Tree Policy Abandonment Procedure Illegal Occupiers Procedure Mutual Exchange Procedure Section 21 Procedure
<b>Policy location</b>	SharePoint Website

## Summary of changes table

Revision history			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised by & date
Nick Grubb Head of Housing	In line with policy review cycle  Separation of Policy and Procedure Combining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy Change Policy;</li> <li>• Tenancy Sustainment Policy;</li> <li>• Tenancy and Estate Management Policy;</li> <li>• Leaseholder Management Policy</li> </ul>	V1.0: November 2023	Executive Management Group 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023