

Women's Pioneer Housing

Title	Tenancy Sustainment Policy (Formerly the Independence & Wellbeing Policy)
Issue date	16 December 2022
Effective date	7 December 2022
Document owner	Lorna Morris
Post of document owner	Housing Inclusion Manager
Date approved by EMT	19 January 2023
Date approved by HASC	24 January 2023
Version number	2
Date of next review	January 2026
Related corporate policy objectives	Corporate policy objective 2

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Women's Pioneer Housing's (WPH) is committed to work with tenants to sustain their tenancies effectively.
- 1.2 This Policy outlines our approach to facilitating support for tenants where needed, by way of referrals to appropriate external agencies, including Social Service etc.

2. Regulation and legislation

- 2.1 The Regulator of Social Housing outlines requirements under specific standards. Under the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, registered providers shall demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their residents, including in relation to the equality strands and residents with additional support needs so they can be referred to external agencies for support, as required.
- 2.2 Under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.
- 2.3 The Equality Act 2010 also allows voluntarily help for people with a protected characteristic. This is called 'positive action'. Taking positive action is legal if people with a protected characteristic are at a disadvantage, have particular needs or are under-represented in an activity or type of work

3. Policy

Identifying tenancy support needs

- 3.1 A resident who needs support could be anyone who needs additional support to meet their obligations under their tenancy. In particular, our approach recognises that support need may not be a permanent state and that people may need support at different times for different reasons.

3.2 We have multiple opportunities to identify residents who may need extra support. This includes various touchpoints with our services, as well as contact from neighbours and other agencies alerting us to potential support needs. Such cases are to be referred to the Housing Inclusion Manager and potential resolutions to be discussed and referred to relevant external agencies.

Examples of times when we would identify a need are:

- At sign up – the sign up process we will aim to identify support needs and establish whether the resident is able to live independently in general needs accommodation. See the Allocations and Lettings Policy for details.
- Induction visit – a home visit is conducted within days of a new resident moving in, showing the resident how to use various aspects of their home.
- The welcome visit – is conducted within six weeks and will identify whether the resident is initially coping in their home, for example if they have furniture, food, fuel
- Starter tenancy review visit – six months into a new tenancy a visit will occur to discuss the tenancy as well as other aspects mentioned above.
- Tenancy Audits – we aim to visit a sample of homes bi-annually where support needs can be identified and refer to appropriate external agencies.
- Any other touchpoint – for example phoning the office, during communal area inspections, by our contractors when completing a repair. We may identify fuel poverty for example at the annual gas safety check.

3.3 Often needs identified can be resolved by the Housing Officer, for example through referral to a support partner. Sometimes the Housing Inclusion Manager or Financial Inclusion Officer will need to provide their expertise.

4. How we will meet common areas of support need

4.1 There are many areas which WPH can assist residents to maintain their tenancies by contacting third parties to provide support. We will maintain a database of third party support agencies.

4.2 Common areas we will identify and support are:

Fuel poverty

4.3 We will support residents who are experiencing fuel poverty through referrals to partner agencies, who will support residents to provide fuel saving devices as well as obtain grants. The Financial Inclusion Officer will also support residents who need it to complete grant applications with major energy providers to clear debt. We can also in emergencies offer an E-Voucher for pre-payment meters. See the Welfare Fund Policy for details.

Furniture poverty

4.4 We will work with partner agencies, charities and relevant local authorities to source grants for white goods and household items for those who do not have

the means to purchase them themselves. In some circumstances we may provide this through our Welfare Fund.

Food poverty

- 4.5 We will hold food bank vouchers for relevant, local food banks and act as signatories for our residents. In some circumstances we will provide supermarket vouchers, see the Welfare Fund Policy for details.

Financial Inclusion

- 4.6 We will offer benefit advice through our in-house Financial Inclusion Officer for any resident who needs to claim benefits, appeal decisions and manage their Universal Credit claims.
- 4.7 We will work in partnership to facilitate access to free and confidential debt advice for our residents.
- 4.8 We will support residents to set up affordable payment plans as per our Rent Arrears Policy.
- 4.9 We will maintain our 'Homes for Cathy' Pledge as part of our Evictions and Rent Arrears Policies, taking steps to prevent homelessness of our tenants.

Employment Support

- 4.10 We will work with partner agencies to support residents who are not working and wish to seek employment.

Mental Health

- 4.11 We will provide training for frontline staff in basic mental health knowledge, enabling them to identify need and understand where to refer a resident.
- 4.12 We will work in partnership with mental health charities and statutory services to help facilitate our residents access to these services.

Physical Health

- 4.13 We will support resident's in their existing homes through our Aids and Adaptations Policy for small adaptations and by referring them to a third party GP etc as required.
- 4.14 We will support some residents with 'small jobs' through a partnered and contracted Handy Person service as per the Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
- 4.15 We will provide for those identified as in need of additional fire safety items, such as battery alarmed smoke detectors, vibrating pillows or light alarms. See Fire Safety Policy

Domestic Abuse

- 4.16 We will support residents as per our Domestic Abuse Policy.

Hospital Discharge

- 4.17 We recognise that many residents will be discharged from hospital to their homes and may need additional support during this period and we will refer them to a relevant third party to facilitate the support required, for example social services etc.
- 4.18 We will conduct a home visit within two weeks of our knowledge of a resident discharged from hospital and refer to external agencies as appropriate.
- 4.19 If we believe the accommodation to no longer be suitable for the resident we will raise concerns to relevant authorities to facilitate a move to suitable accommodation. We may identify that accommodation is no longer suitable for a resident without a hospital discharge; in this case we will also liaise with the resident and relevant partners to facilitate a move.

Communications

- 4.20 We will ask for communication preferences from our residents, such as large font and language needs and vary our approach to meet these wherever possible

5. Training

- 5.1 Staff will receive a rolling training programme to support them to identify residents who need additional support to maintain their tenancies, as well as how to decide what action to take and which agencies to work with.

6. Older Women's Housing

- 6.1 WPH is the largest provider of older people's housing in RBKC. Our buildings are highly desirable in sought after areas and we wish to promote our offer of Older Women's Housing. We will do this through social media, our website and our annual, public waiting list.
- 6.2 Older Women's Housing has the added benefits of an on-site Scheme Manager and Community Alarm System.
- 6.3 We will work with RBKC to influence their older person's strategy, as well as other key agencies such as Age UK to support our resident's tenancies in Older Women's Housing.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The CEO has overall responsible for the corporate strategy and the Tenancy Sustainment Policy.
 - 7.2 The Housing Inclusion Manager is responsible for day to day implementation of this policy, alongside all frontline managers.
- 8. Equality and Diversity**
- 8.1 This policy will operate at all times in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy.