



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Tenancy Sustainment and Support Policy (Housing)

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1. Introduction

1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is committed to providing an effective housing management service and ensuring that tenants have the support they need to sustain their tenancies. This may include:

- Identifying and supporting vulnerable households.
- Working collaboratively with statutory and voluntary sector partners.
- Providing access to tenancy sustainment services.
- Signposting to relevant support agencies.
- Promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.

2. Scope and purpose

2.1 This policy outlines SCDC's approach to helping support tenants to successfully maintain their tenancies and fulfil the terms of their tenancy agreement.

2.2 The Tenancy Sustainment and Support policy aims to:

- Prevent homelessness and reduce the likelihood of tenancy breakdowns.
- Promote independent living and stable communities.
- Encourage early intervention and tailored support.
- Align with national legislation and the [Greater Cambridgeshire Housing Strategy \(2024 to 2029\)](#).
- Assist in meeting our responsibilities as outlined in the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#) and the associated [regulatory standards](#).

2.3 This policy applies to SCDC tenants that hold either an introductory, secure or a fixed term/flexible tenancy. It does not apply to leaseholders, shared owners or non-secure tenants. It also does not apply to properties managed by Ermine Street Housing or Shire Homes Lettings, as they have their own policies.

3. What is tenancy sustainment?

3.1 Tenancy sustainment support services are preventative measures to help reduce the risk of a tenancy from ending prematurely. These services can



help tenants keep to the terms of their tenancy, to ensure that they are able to keep their home and can live independently for as long as possible.

- 3.2 Our goal as a landlord is for our tenants to feel secure, stable, and supported in their homes. As part of this commitment, SCDC can provide support to help tenants to manage their tenancy successfully and try to avoid issues such as rent arrears, eviction, or homelessness.
- 3.3 SCDC recognises that people may experience periods of difficulty or personal challenge that can affect their ability to manage and maintain their tenancy. Tenants are encouraged to contact the Council at the earliest opportunity if they feel they may require additional assistance.
- 3.4 There are risk factors that can contribute to a tenancy ending early which are considered as part of tailoring our support services. These can include (but are not limited to):
- Mental health
 - Disabilities
 - Learning difficulties
 - Financial (low or fluctuating income, unemployment, debt, fuel poverty)
 - Addiction (such as drug, alcohol, gambling)
 - Domestic abuse
 - Safeguarding concerns
 - Trauma
 - Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and hate crime
 - Housing/tenancy history (e.g. history of rent arrears, homelessness, previous eviction or failed tenancies)
 - Leaving care
 - Support needs
 - Under or over occupation of property
 - Hoarding behaviours
 - Repair issues or dissatisfaction with property condition
 - Other changes to household circumstances (e.g. lack of available support network, relationship breakdown or bereavement, being new/young parents, difficulties being able to sufficiently furnish property etc.)



4. Tenancy sustainment support services

- 4.1 We understand that everyone's circumstances are different, and we aim to provide tailored support that empowers tenants to maintain a safe, secure, and sustainable tenancy. Our goal is to work in partnership with tenants, offering practical assistance and guidance wherever it is needed.
- 4.2 SCDC will provide tenancy sustainment and support services either by internal specialist advice or by signposting tenants to external support services.
- 4.3 Some areas that support may be required during a tenancy include (but are not limited to):

Direct Support (provided by our officers)

- Help with understanding and completing forms.
- Assistance in explaining information so tenants understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Help with being able to access online services.
- Budgeting, benefits and household management support.
- Help with starting a new tenancy, for example helping set up utilities or finding furniture.
- Dealing with neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour.
- Dealing with hoarding.

Signposting and Referrals (connecting with external services)

- Help with accessing addiction services, mental health charities and connecting people to other external support agencies where relevant.
- Assistance in finding employment, education, training or volunteering opportunities.
- Getting support for health and/or wellbeing

Reasonable Adjustments

- Supporting tenants with disabilities and/or special requirements



5. Our Approach

5.1 The type of support a tenant may require will vary, and we will take individual needs into account when offering relevant services. Support can range from short-term help to longer-term assistance, depending on the situation. Services include:

- **Pre-tenancy support**
Providing support to someone before a tenancy begins, such as help with forms etc.
- **Short-term support**
Helping to resolve a particular issue, which doesn't require any on-going support beyond overcoming the initial difficulty.
- **Medium and long-term support**
This would be for situations in which a tenant needs longer-term support to help sustain their tenancy.

5.2 New tenancy support

All new tenants (other than those transferring or by mutual exchange) are given an 'Introductory' tenancy, which usually lasts 12 months. This period is designed to provide guidance and support, helping tenants settle in and successfully manage their home in line with their tenancy agreement. If there are no issues during this period, a 'Secure' tenancy is offered. Where challenges arise, such as rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, the Council will work closely with the tenant to resolve issues. If difficulties persist, the 'Introductory' tenancy may be extended for up to six months to provide additional time for the tenant to demonstrate they can manage their home. In exceptional cases, further formal action may be necessary, such as serving a 'Notice of Proceedings for Possession' (NOPP). This step is taken as a last resort where persistent breaches of the tenancy agreement remain unresolved despite intervention. The Council's priority is always to work collaboratively with tenants to prevent enforcement wherever possible.

At the beginning of any new tenancy, an SCDC Housing Services Officer (HSO) or Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO) will explain to the tenant their rights and responsibilities and answer any questions that they may have.

During the 'Introductory' tenancy period, HSOs will carry out a 6-week and a 36-week visit with the new tenant to ensure that the tenancy is working well



and is on the right track. These visits utilise a preventative approach, allowing the chance to catch problems early before they escalate – e.g. repair issues or difficulty paying rent.

6-week visits

This visit takes place at the beginning of the tenancy and its purpose is to:

- Ensure the tenant has settled in well and understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Identify any immediate issues with the property, such as repairs or safety concerns.
- Offer support if the tenant is struggling with budgeting, accessing services, or adapting to their new home.

36-week visits

This visit focuses on promoting long-term stability. It helps:

- Review how the tenancy is going - are rent payments consistent? Is the property being maintained?
- Spot signs of vulnerability - such as isolation, health issues, or anti-social behaviour.
- Prevent tenancy breakdown by offering tailored support or referrals to other services.

5.3 General tenancy support queries

Housing Services Officers (HSOs) and Sheltered Estate Officers (SEOs) are available to support tenants throughout their tenancy. They will be able to provide initial advice, support tenants with issues, and/or signpost to other services wherever it is required.

5.4 Signposting

Where appropriate, SCDC will signpost tenants to specialist services that could help support them (this could be other Council led services, or external organisations). Examples of this may include (but are not limited to):

- Citizens Advice
- Food banks
- Low-cost furniture or removals
- Mental health services



- Addiction support services
- Employment support services
- Education support services
- Financial assistance services
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
- Grants

5.5 Visiting support services

SCDC provides visiting support services to all eligible residents living in South Cambridgeshire, not limited to Council tenants. The service is designed to promote independent living and support residents to remain in their own home for as long as possible.

The visiting support service delivers a free, short-term support service to residents aged 65 or over (regardless of tenure), subject to a needs and risk assessment to determine eligibility.

The visiting support service offers help across a range of areas, including:

Financial Support

- Debt management
- Budgeting advice
- Benefit entitlement checks
- Support with completing application forms
- Tenancy management guidance
- Setting up payment plans
- Help with bills

Physical and mental health – signposting residents to access support services for:

- Personal care
- Help with daily living tasks (for example, cooking, shopping, laundry and gardening)
- Anxiety and depression and memory loss
- Medication management
- Access to healthcare services
- Addressing loneliness and social isolation



Social and Community Support

- Connecting residents to local day centres or social groups
- Access to chair-based exercise classes and leisure activities (such as swimming or walking)
- Signposting to community activities and volunteering opportunities.

Where appropriate, residents may be referred to specialist professionals, such as:

- Occupational therapists to assess and plan home adaptations
- Mobile Wardens to help residents live independently and safely in their own home, and who have a connection to their community

Support also includes advice on personal and home safety.

Whilst the Visiting Support Service is open to those eligible and aged 65 or over, we can signpost people under 65 to other organisations and services for support where required.

6. Mental Health Support for Council Tenants

- 6.1 SCDC recognises the critical link between mental health and tenancy sustainment. Mental health challenges can significantly impact a tenant's ability to manage their tenancy, engage with services and maintain independent living. As part of its commitment to intervention and holistic support, SCDC integrates mental health provision into its tenancy sustainment framework.

Dedicated Mental Health Support Officer

SCDC employs a Mental Health Support Officer to provide targeted assistance to tenants experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties. This role involves:

- Identifying tenants at risk of tenancy breakdown due to mental health concerns
- Offering direct support and guidance
- Facilitating referrals to appropriate internal and external health services



- Working collaboratively with officers to promote wellbeing and tenancy stability

7. Income maximisation services

- 7.1 SCDC offers money advice to assist tenants in managing their finances effectively, helping them make the most of their money and maintain financial stability.
- 7.2 Our Housing Advice Team provide affordability assessments, benefit entitlement checks, savings advice and budgeting advice, and can refer tenants to any appropriate services, where required.
- 7.3 The assistance is tailored to each individual situation and is based upon the information the tenant shares with us.

7.4 Tenancy sustainment workshops

SCDC offer tenancy sustainment workshops every 6 to 8 weeks. These workshops are designed to support tenants in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain successful tenancies. During these sessions, tenants have the opportunity to engage with specialist staff to discuss:

- Tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities
- Financial obligations associated with holding a tenancy
- Accessing support services and sources of advice
- Other relevant topics aimed at promoting tenancy stability and independence

7.5 Maximising Income through data-led Support

SCDC utilises the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software to proactively identify households that are likely to be eligible for welfare benefits but are not currently claiming them. This innovative, data-led approach enables the Council to target support more effectively and improve financial outcomes for residents.

Identified households are contacted through letters or text messages, encouraging them to apply for the benefits they may be entitled to. Where appropriate, follow-up telephone calls are made to offer further guidance and support.



This targeted intervention has resulted in hundreds of South Cambridgeshire residents receiving additional income through successful benefit claims, directly attributable to the Council's advice and support.

SCDC will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the LIFT programme and explore opportunities to expand its use.

8. Accessibility and inclusion

8.1 SCDC is committed to engaging with tenants and residents in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure services are accessible to all. This may include:

- Contact preferences
- Offering home visits
- Use of advocates or interpreters
- Alternative communication formats, such as large print or translated materials
- Adjusting appointment times or locations to accommodate mobility or health needs

9. Referrals

9.1 In the first instance, tenants should contact their Housing Services Officer (HSO) or Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO). These Officers can provide initial advice and where appropriate direct queries to the relevant officer or service.

9.2 Residents living in South Cambridgeshire can self-refer to the Visiting Support Service) [online](#) or by telephoning 01954 713000. Referrals can also be made by other council officers, GPs, family members, community navigators, health, social care or the voluntary sector.

9.3 Residents interested in attending a Tenancy Sustainment Workshop, or would like to work with Income Maximisation to get tailored budgeting advice, can contact the Council [online](#), via email incomemaximisation@scams.gov.uk or by telephone 01954 713000.



10. Outcomes

10.1 All tenancy sustainment and support services are tailored to the individual needs of each tenant. The outcomes of any support intervention will typically fall into one of the following categories:

1. **Successful Resolution and Tenancy Sustainment**

The issues the tenant is experiencing can be resolved (either with short-term or longer-term support in place) and they are able to sustain their tenancy.

2. **Ongoing Support with Monitoring**

While the tenant's issues cannot be immediately resolved, a support plan is in place to help maintain the tenancy. Regular monitoring will be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the support and ensure the tenant is fulfilling their responsibilities.

3. **Alternative Housing Support**

Despite engaging with tenancy sustainment and support services, the tenant is unable to resolve the issue and cannot continue to sustain their tenancy. In such cases, SCDC will provide appropriate support to assist the tenant in securing alternative accommodation.

4. **Non-Engagement and Escalation**

The tenant refuses to engage with the support services offered. In these circumstances, SCDC may be required to take further action, which could include proportionate enforcement measures, such as tenancy-related notices or applying anti-social behaviour interventions in line with the [Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)).

11. About this policy

11.1 This policy will be reviewed every 5 years. However, earlier reassessment may be required following tenant feedback, further guidance or where there are changes in operations and/or legislation.

11.2 This policy has been produced in consultation with tenant representatives. If a tenant is interested in getting involved in shaping the housing service, further information is available on the [website](#), or contact resident.involvement@scamb.gov.uk.





12. Service requests and complaints process

- 12.1 A tenant should report initial service requests, such as repairs or safety concerns, through the designated channels:

Repairs: [Online](#) via the Council's [website](#).
By phone via the Repairs Hotline: 0800 085 1313.
Through the **M&Me** Mobile App

General Queries: Tel: 01954 713 000 or email
duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk.

The [Communications Charter for tenants and leaseholders](#) sets out detailed guidance on how to contact the Council and the service standards that can be expected in relation to communication and responsiveness.

- 12.2 SCDC aims to provide excellent customer service, but recognise that mistakes can happen. If a tenant is dissatisfied with the service received following a service request, they can make a complaint in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy. To make a complaint, visit our [website](#) or telephone 01954 713000 or email housing.complaints@scambs.gov.uk.

13. Our values

Ambitious

- We are proactive and take a forward-thinking approach to addressing challenges.
- We create smart solutions and reach our goals with determination and a clear vision.

Collaborative

- We foster a culture of teamwork and open communication.
- We work with and involve stakeholders, to improve how the organisation works and serves the public.



Compassionate

- We prioritise empathy and understanding in decision-making and service delivery.
- We consider the wellbeing of people and communities in everything we do and we replicate this when we talk to our colleagues because we know that when we support each other, we all do better.

Accountable

- We take responsibility for our actions and decisions.
- We own up to mistakes and make sure we fulfil our commitments.