

# Tenancy Management Policy

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<b>Policy author /holder</b>	Head of Neighbourhoods
<b>Approved on:</b>	November 2022
<b>by:</b>	Executive Team
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<b>By:</b>	Customer Services Committee
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<b>Review date:</b>	1 November 2025

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## 1 Purpose and anticipated outcomes

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LiveWest recognises that there is a direct relationship between the interaction we have with our customers when they start their tenancy and their ability to sustain their tenancy over time. We want our customers to love their homes and to look after them in accordance with their tenancy agreement.

Therefore, the purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to ensure that our customers are treated fairly and consistently and that our properties are managed well.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Develop a proactive approach to tenancy management tailored to our customers' individual needs
- Create sustainable tenancies and communities by supporting our customers
- Make sure our customers are well informed about their rights and responsibilities along with the consequences of any breach
- Ensure our customers' homes are well managed and maintained.

This policy operates within our Values:

- Customer focussed – we work with our customers to find solutions
- Challenge convention – we are resilient and aren't afraid of change
- Together we deliver – we work together to achieve outcomes

Our values are a key part of who we are and what we do. They reflect the way we approach our customers, our people, and our work at LiveWest.

Successful implementation and management of this Policy will deliver improved outcomes for both our customers and LiveWest. These key outcomes include:

- A higher percentage of tenancies being sustained in their first year of tenancy, together with a reduction in the overall percentage of our tenancies that turnover.
- Increased levels of tenancy fraud identified and investigated.

## **2 Scope and definitions**

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This policy covers all LiveWest general needs and older persons rented homes.

## **3 About this policy**

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So that we deliver effective tenancy management services, we have developed this policy and associated procedures which outline our approach to provide an efficient service that reflects legislation, regulation, and good practice.

We will ensure that all new customers are provided with clear information concerning the terms of their tenancy and of the consequences of failing to keep to those terms.

We will intervene at an early stage when we become aware of any tenancy breaches. Following investigations, we will seek to ensure that customers receive appropriate support to help them keep their home. We will refer customers in general needs and older persons' homes to our tenancy sustainment team or other support services where a support need has been identified.

Where customers have rent arrears, we will seek possession only where all preventative methods, such as financial inclusion advice, have been reviewed and exhausted.

Our Neighbourhood Management policy, Anti-social Behaviour policy and associated procedures focus on managing our neighbourhoods, the quality of our estates and the environment where our customers live. These policies and procedures ensure that our customers are aware of these additional responsibilities and follow them.

### **3.1 Tenancy visits**

As part of our approach to tenancy management, we will assess all new customers who move into a home with LiveWest. Our customers' individual needs will also be assessed at the start of their tenancy, where future visits will be based around the help and support our customers need to maintain their tenancy – if no specific need is identified at the start of their tenancy, then we will visit between 6 and 8 months of starting their tenancy.

We will also undertake cyclical visits with all our customers on a trigger basis where we will prioritise customers based on risk. Our commitment is to complete a “You and Your Home” visit with every LiveWest customer proactively at least once every 5 years. The purpose of these visits will be to make sure that we are delivering on our responsibilities as a landlord whilst also making sure that our customers are adhering to their responsibilities as detailed within their tenancy – these responsibilities include:

- Occupying the property as their only or main home and updating occupancy details.
- Promptly reporting any repairs or disrepair for which we are responsible.
- Making sure that their homes, gardens, and driveways are well maintained, in good condition and in line with their tenancy agreement.
- Making sure that pets are kept under control and do not defecate/urinate in communal areas.
- Not hoarding items in their home.
- Helping us meet our health and safety responsibility in ensuring that any communal areas (if appropriate) are kept clean, tidy, safe, and free from obstruction.

### **3.2 Tenancy Sustainment**

Our Tenancy Sustainment team offer short term support for customers through one-to-one tailored housing related advice, guidance, sign posting and advocacy. The service offer can be accessed through internal or self-referral and includes but is not limited to:

- A dedicated financial inclusion offer for customer struggling with debt
- Provide assistance and guidance to navigate the welfare benefits system
- Support to address hoarding issues
- Support with wellbeing where this impacts on the tenancy
- Advice on options for moving home

Support is delivered face to face, or through digital channels tailored to the customers’ needs and ability to engage.

### **3.3 Customers in Debt**

Where customers are struggling to pay their rent, we will actively work with them to minimise the risk of eviction. We will look to engage with our customers at the earliest opportunity, visiting in line with the expectations of the Pre-court Action Protocol. This will include helping them by:

- Understanding the root cause of any arrears
- Helping them navigate the welfare benefits system, including Universal Credit and Housing Benefit
- Signposting to advice and support including our own tenancy sustainment team

### 3.4 Pets

We recognise that pets provide a range of benefits to their owners including providing companionship, offering a means to make contacts and socialise with others and teaching children empathy and responsibility.

Details of our customers' obligations in relation to pets and their neighbours are contained within the tenancy agreement/lease and reflected in the Renters Reform Bill. For some types of properties, we require the customer to obtain our written consent to keep a pet.

We will not withhold our permission without good reason however, checks will be carried out in the first instance to ensure that there are no tenancy issues to warrant refusal and we may add conditions to our permission. See separate procedures on pets.

### 3.5 Fraud

There are many different types of tenancy fraud. These are the most common:

- Unlawful subletting – when a customer rents out all, or part of their home to someone else without our permission. (The 'sub-tenant' may be seen to be participating in fraud and as such may be committing a criminal offence).
- Obtaining housing by deception – when a person applying for housing knowingly gives false information in their application.
- Unlawful succession – when someone who is not entitled to the property takes over the tenancy.
- Key selling – when a customer moves out and sells their key to someone else. (Both parties may be seen to be working together to commit fraud and may face prosecution).
- Keeping a social rented home when they own, or part own another property.
- Failing to report a change in circumstances. (For example; a single person living on their own moves a partner or family member into their home. If they are claiming Single Persons Discount on their Council Tax and do not inform the local authority, this is benefit fraud which is a criminal offence carrying a potential prison sentence). This information is shared with local authority partners.
- Abandonment – when a customer stops living at their home and leaves it but does not tell us and does not contact the local authority to stop any benefits they have been claiming.
- Making a fraudulent Right to Buy application.

If the person living in the property is not the customer, they could also be committing fraud.

#### **How we tackle tenancy fraud:**

We work closely with local partners and external agencies to identify and tackle tenancy fraud and will take legal action to regain possession of our properties. We will regularly carry out tenancy inspections to ensure the correct people are living in our homes.

Any cases of suspected fraud will always be investigated. Anyone who suspects tenancy fraud should contact us either by phone, letter or by emailing [reportfraud@livewest.co.uk](mailto:reportfraud@livewest.co.uk). See Tenancy Fraud Procedure.

### **3.6 Equality and Diversity**

We recognise the importance to ensure all our customers have equal access to our services and that our services are relevant, responsive, and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers. We will treat all our customers fairly whilst valuing diversity. We are committed to the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the organisation with the aim to meet the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds.

## **4 Monitoring and review**

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We have a full commitment to this policy and will ensure appropriate training will be given to all relevant staff.

This policy will be made widely available to customers and stakeholders via an appropriate range of online and printed communication platforms.

We will review customer feedback, look for trends and hotspots and identify areas for service improvement on a continuous basis so that we improve the value for money of services being delivered.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier in line with any legislative, regulatory, or good practice changes.

## **5 Legal considerations**

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This policy has been written with regards to the following:

- Relevant Housing Acts as amended by the Localism Act 2011
- The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards

## **6 Linked / associated policies and other references**

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Tenancy management procedures include:

- Changing/ending tenancies/leases that also include succession, assignments, surrender and abandonment
- Mutual exchange
- Decants, temporary and emergency housing
- Dealing with hoarding
- Tenancy inspections
- Rental income and debt
- Tenancy Fraud Procedure
- Pets Procedure

Other tenancy associated policies and procedures

- Allocations and Lettings policy
- Complaints, Compliments and Feedback policy
- Neighbourhood Management policy/procedures
- Tenure policy
- Anti-social Behaviour policy/procedures

Version	Date	Requested/ Authorised by	Comments
2	Nov 2022	Head of Neighbourhoods	Key amendments to this policy are in sections: 3.1 Tenancy Management Visits 3.2 Tenancy Sustainment 3.4 Pets 3.5 Fraud
	April 2023	Customer Services Committee	Further approval to this Policy