

# Tenancy Sustainment Extra Help Funds Policy

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**Scottish Social Housing Charter Relevant Standard Outcomes**

STANDARD	OUTCOME
<p><b>Section:- Access to housing and support</b></p> <p>11. Tenancy sustainment</p> <p>Social landlords ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.</i></li> </ul>	<p>This <b>outcome</b> covers how landlords <b><u>on their own, or in partnership with others,</u></b> can help tenants who may need support to maintain their tenancy. This includes tenants who may be at risk of falling into arrears with their rent, and tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibility.</p>

**Scottish Housing Regulator – Relevant Standards of Governance and Financial Management and Guidance**

STANDARD	GUIDANCE
<p><b>2</b> The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.</p>	<p><b>2.1</b> The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.</p> <p><b>2.2</b> The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants, and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities.</p> <p><b>2.4</b> The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.</p>

# **TENANCY SUSTAINMENT EXTRA HELP FUNDS POLICY**

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AUTHORISATION FORM

# TENANCY SUSTAINMENT EXTRA HELP FUNDS POLICY

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 The Association has created this policy to cover two funds available to assist tenants sustain their tenancy. These being the *Tenancy Sustainment Exceptional Circumstances Fund* and *Tenancy Sustainment Floor Covering & Furniture Fund*.
- 1.1.1 The *Exceptional Circumstances Fund* will provide emergency financial support to assist tenants who face **exceptional** pressures in sustaining their tenancy. The fund will only be utilised to support the resolution of one-off special circumstances and will **not** offset day-to-day challenges in meeting rent payments, heating bills or other routine domestic costs.
- 1.1.2 The *Floor Covering and Furniture Fund* will enable the Association to engage with Scotland Excel Procurement Partners to supply and fit a variety of floor coverings and provide essential household items such as beds, pots, pans, crockery, utensils, dining tables and chairs and white goods. The Fund would be utilised to top up an award made by the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) where it has not awarded all the items requested due to the financial restriction on the fund, or where a tenant is not eligible, or the items applied for is deemed by the SWF as a low priority.
- 1.2 These funds are not intended to duplicate the functions and eligibility of Crisis Grants, Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) or Community Care Grants (CCGs) but, instead, provide backup to those funds. Neither fund will be proactively advertised to tenants but key Association staff in the Housing, Finance, Property Services and Energy Advice Services teams will be able to refer existing or new tenants to the Tenant Adviser (TA). The TA will engage with the tenant to identify the main risk factors to mitigate the risk of tenancy failure and part of these risk factors would be the identifying the inability to secure adequate furniture and equipment, or the special circumstances worthy of support.
- 1.3 The SWF provides a safety net for vulnerable people on low incomes through the provision of CCGs. The Fund is a national scheme that helps' Scottish households in need. CCGs made under the scheme aim to help vulnerable people set up home or continue to live independently within their community, specifically:
- helping families under exceptional pressure
  - helping people following a period of care or homelessness
  - helping people continue to live independently where there's a risk of care or homelessness

## **2. ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE FUNDS**

### **2.1 The Exceptional Circumstances Fund**

2.1.1. This fund will amount to £3,000 and normally the maximum payment per tenant household will be of £100 in any one calendar year. The fund amount will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

2.1.2. Examples of circumstances which might trigger eligibility for new and existing tenants include:-

- Supporting tenants who have self-disconnected or significantly rationed heat purchase due to cost concerns. This will allow the Association to undertake a pilot heating trial so that both the tenant and the Association can check on the true costs of heating and confirm that heating systems work as expected
- Emergency purchase of heat for a vulnerable household in cold weather
- Paying to sustain a mobile phone or internet connection for a short period to ensure a tenant's benefit payments compliance or ability to complete necessary application processes related to their receipt of benefits including Universal Credit
- Any other short term and immediate requirement for support not met by the Scottish Welfare Fund deadlines

### **2.2 The Floor Covering & Furniture Fund**

2.2.1. This fund will amount to £6,000 and normally the maximum payment per tenant household will be of £600 in one calendar year. The fund amount will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

2.2.2. Examples of circumstances which might trigger eligibility for new and existing tenants include:

- Scottish Welfare Fund only approving part of an award, i.e. Floor Coverings fitted in part of a home only or fridge but no freezer due to the fund's need based budget restrictions.
- Tenants who are digitally excluded or have received an incomplete award due to not completing the online application correctly.
- Tenants who, due to the impact of welfare reform, are only able to purchase floor coverings or essential household equipment by a repayable advance of social security from the Department of Works and Pensions. This poses a risk to tenancy sustainment where, for example, tenant's social security is already being reduced due to Tax Credits and/or Housing Benefit overpayments or rent arrears third party deductions.

### **3. LINKS TO OTHER FUNDS**

- 3.1 Currently there are circumstances in which discretionary payments are made to tenants including disturbance allowances, the provision of paint packs, compensation payments for the excess running costs of heating systems not operating correctly, or the restoration of carpets or lino following upgrades to bathrooms and kitchens. The new funds are not designed to cover these existing payment schemes and are designed for other exceptional circumstances.

### **4. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 4.1 All payments will require the approval of a Management Team member or the Tenant Adviser and will be supported by the completion of the Authorisation Form (Appendix A) which requires a countersignature from the Chief Executive or Director of Investment. A condition of payment will be that the recipient engages with our Tenant Adviser to mitigate any future risks to the tenancy, including checking that they are receiving all the financial and benefit advice they need.

### **5. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS**

- 5.1 The Association will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own policies and procedures
- 5.2 Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in the Association's Privacy Policy.

### **6. REVIEW**

- 6.1 All payments will be reviewed on an annual basis and a report completed in March each year to detail the usage of the Fund. The Policy will also be reviewed by the Management Committee or Sub-Committee set up for that purpose in accordance with the requirements of the Association's Register of Policies and Procedures.
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LOCHALSH AND SKYE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**TENANCY SUSTAINMENT EXTRA HELP FUNDS AUTHORISATION**

**RECIPIENT DETAILS**

Name:

Address:

**PROPOSED AWARD DETAILS**

Exceptional Circumstances Fund  Floor Covering & Furniture Fund

Please provide details of the nature of the proposed award to be offered and attach any supporting evidence or documentation.

£

**REQUESTED BY**

Name

Job Title

Signature.....

Date

**AUTHORISED BY**

Name

Job Title

Signature.....

Date

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**N.B.:** Once authorised, this form is to be passed to Finance Services to arrange an appropriate payment method and receipt from the fund recipient.

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SCHEDULE OF REVISIONS		
DATE	REVISION No.	DETAILS
16.09.2019	1.1	ADDED: Cover page – new SHR Standards of Governance and Financial Management
16.09.2019	1.1	DELETED : “in 2018/19” at Point 2.1.1 and ADDED: last sentence “The fund amount will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.”
16.09.2019	1.1	DELETED : “in 2018/19” at Point 2.2.1 and ADDED: last sentence “The fund amount will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.”
16.09.2019	1.1	ADDED: NEW Point 5 - <b>GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS</b>
16.09.2019	1.1	AMENDED: Point 6 (was point 5) FROM “ <i>All payments will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and a report completed in March 2019 to detail the usage of the Fund. The Policy will also be reviewed at this time to ensure that it is meeting its overall objectives.</i> ” TO: <b>“All payments will be reviewed on an annual basis and a report completed in March each year to detail the usage of the Fund. The Policy will also be reviewed by the Management Committee or Sub-Committee set up for that purpose in accordance with the requirements of the Association’s Register of Policies and Procedures.”</b>