

Tenancy Sustainment Extra Help Funds Policy

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Scottish Social Housing Charter Relevant Standard Outcomes

STANDARD

Section:- Access to housing and support
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11. Tenancy sustainment

Social landlords ensure that:

- *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.*

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

STANDARD	
2	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. Relevant standards 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4

TENANCY SUSTAINMENT EXTRA HELP FUNDS POLICY

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APPENDIX A - TENANCY SUSTAINMENT EXTRA HELP FUNDS
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, or other routine domestic costs. It should be used to help empower the tenant(s) to take ownership and responsibility for their tenancy, where they have faced significant challenges in having capacity to do this independently or because of low income or safety reasons. See more in section 2.1.

1.1.2 The *Floor Covering and Furniture Fund* will enable the Association to follow approved procurement procedures 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, cooking facilities and white goods (this will exclude any appliance insurance, but can include delivery/installation costs).

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, or where the length of time taken to process and award the SWF will have a severely negative impact on the tenant, their tenancy and wellbeing.

These funds are not intended to duplicate the functions and eligibility of where LSHA can easily source donated goods, 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 operational staff will be able to make an application to use the fund. The staff member should 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. A referral to the Tenant Adviser or Tenant Engagement and Support Manager can be done if further advice or assistance is needed, and in every circumstance, to agree that the request is proportionate and will not deplete the funds.

- 1.2 The SWF provides a safety net for vulnerable people on low incomes through the provision of Community Care Grants (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**

The total budget will usually amount to £9,000 and can be split between each fund as deemed necessary by the applications submitted. There should be oversight from the Tenant Engagement and Support Manager to ensure that the budget is used appropriately each quarter and that no single application compromises the ability to offer others financial support later in the financial year. Both funds will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

2.1 **The Exceptional Circumstances Fund**

- 2.1.1. The maximum amount paid to a tenant or household per year should be aligned with the severity or impact of the situation.

- 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
- Purchase items or services to help victims/survivors of domestic abuse
- Purchase items or services to support victims/survivors of serious antisocial behaviour or neighbour disputes where all reasonable efforts have been made to resolve within our own services (for example, mediation services, installation of signage/boundaries that will resolve

long-term disputes that absorb staff time and can be fixed with simple infrastructure)

- Purchase items or services to help tenants who are facing challenges with hoarding, self-neglect or other safeguarding and mental health concerns that has led to a serious deterioration in their property standards and health.

2.2 The Floor Covering & Furniture Fund

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 completion of the Authorisation Form (Appendix A) which can be submitted by any member of staff with the support of the Tenant Engagement and Support Manager. A counter signature is not required unless the amount requested by the staff member exceeds the Scheme of Delegated Authorities permitted spend; then this requires a countersignature from the Tenant Engagement and Support Manager or Chief Executive. A condition of payment will be that the recipient engages with our Tenant Adviser/Tenant Engagement and Support Manager 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 Board or Sub-Committee set up for that purpose in accordance with the requirements of the Association's Register of Policies and Procedures. An equalities impact assessment has been completed for this policy and will be updated in accordance with the policy review schedule.
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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 (if costs exceed Scheme of Delegated Authorities)

Name

Job Title

Signature.....

Date

N.B.: Once authorised, this form is to be passed to Tenant Engagement and Support Manager for budget tracking and to Finance Services to arrange an appropriate payment method and receipt from the fund recipient.

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 - GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS
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: “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.”
13.11.2020	1.2	CHANGED: Management Committee to The Board
24.10.2024		Service: Amended from Corporate to Support
		1.1.1 DELETED: “heating bills” ADDED : It should be used to help empower the tenant(s) to take ownership and responsibility for their tenancy, where they have faced significant challenges in having capacity to do this independently or because of low income or safety reasons. See more in section 2.1.
		1.1.2 ADDED: “..to follow approved procurement procedures” “cooking facilities and white goods (this will exclude any appliance insurance, but can include delivery/installation costs)”. “, or where the length of time taken to process and award the SWF will have a severely negative impact on the tenant, their tenancy and wellbeing.” DELETED “engage with Scotland Excel Procurement Partners”
		1.1.2 (2 nd para) ADDED “of where LSHA can easily source donated goods,” DELETED “key Association” ADDED “operational staff” DELETED “in the Housing, Finance, Property Services and Energy Advice Services teams” ADDED “make an application to use the fund” DELETED “refer existing or new tenants to the Tenant Adviser (TA).

		ADDED “The staff member should” DELETED “TA will” ADDED “A referral to the Tenant Adviser or Tenant Engagement and Support Manager can be done if further advice or assistance is needed, and in every circumstance, to agree that the request is proportionate and will not deplete the funds. “
		1.2 ADDED “Community Care Grants (CCGs)”
		2.2 ADDED – New point
		2.1.1 DELETED – “This fund will amount to £3,000 and normally the maximum payment per tenant household will be of £100 in any one calendar year.” ADDED “The maximum amount paid to a tenant or household per year should be aligned with the severity or impact of the situation.” DELETED “The fund amount will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is meeting its objectives”
		2.1.2 ADDED: ➤ purchase items or services to help victims/survivors of domestic abuse ➤ purchase items or services to support victims/survivors of serious antisocial behaviour or neighbour disputes where all reasonable efforts have been made to resolve within our own services (for example, mediation services, installation of signage/boundaries that will resolve long-term disputes that absorb staff time and can be fixed with simple infrastructure) ➤ Purchase items or services to help tenants who are facing challenges with hoarding, self-neglect or other safeguarding and mental health concerns that has led to a serious deterioration in their property standards and health.
		2.2 DELETED “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.”
		4.1 DELETED “ approval of a Management Team member or the Tenant Adviser and will be support by the” ADDED “which can be submitted by any member of staff with the support of the Tenant Engagement and Support Manager. A counter signature is not required unless the amount requested by the staff member exceeds the Scheme of Delegated Authorities permitted spend; then this requires a countersignature from the Tenant Engagement and Support Manager” DELETED “ or Director of Investment” ADDED “Tenant Adviser/Tenant Engagement and Support Manager”
		6.1 ADDED “. An equalities impact assessment has been completed for this policy and

		will be updated in accordance with the policy review schedule.”
		Appendix A - Authorised by ..ADDED “ <u>AUTHORISED BY (if costs exceed Scheme of Delegated Authorities)</u> ” N.B. – ADDED “to Tenant Engagement and Support Manager for budget tracking and to”