

# Tenancy Support Policy 2019-2024

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# 1. Forward

- 1.1. The Council is committed to helping its tenants to sustain their tenancies. It is recognised that vulnerable tenants may need additional support and advice to help them live independently and safely.
- 1.2. Some tenants need help to set up a new tenancy or to begin living independently for the first time. Vulnerable tenants may also need on-going or occasional help to maintain their tenancies. This could be because of, for example, mental health problems, alcohol and drug dependency, debt or difficulties making benefit claims.
- 1.3. This policy sets out how support needs are identified and met.

# 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Vulnerability and support needs are identified at various stages throughout a tenancy. The first assessment is carried out at the point an applicant is offered a tenancy. Support needs may be identified during subsequent routine contacts with tenants or when tenants begin to get into arrears with their rent, struggle with their behaviour or with maintaining acceptable home conditions.
- 2.2 Direct support is provided by housing staff in Landlord Services. Tenants may also benefit from support from external agencies such as Social Services, health providers, and the voluntary sector. Staff in Landlord Services aim to work with partners to maximise the support available to tenants.

# 3. Aims and objectives

The objectives of the tenancy support policy are to:

- support and empower tenants to sustain tenancies;
- help tenants deal with any problems or issues that arise during their tenancy such as rent arrears or problems with welfare benefits;
- provide direct support through tenancy support officers and Financial Inclusion Officers;
- refer tenants to partner agencies for more specialist or long term advice and support when needed;
- liaise with other statutory agencies, and make representations on tenants' behalf;
- create safer and more stable communities;
- reduce the economic and social effect of failed tenancies;
- prevent and reduce rent arrears, and the associated costs of legal action;
- maximise tenants' incomes;

- help tenants to maintain their independence;
- prevent and reduce homelessness and the associated costs.

### 3.2 These objectives are delivered by:

- identifying tenants at risk of vulnerability or support at the beginning of and during their tenancies;
- providing support either in-house or by accessing support from partner agencies;
- encouraging and promoting partnerships with external agencies to maximise support for our tenants;
- following robust safeguarding procedures that will help to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse;
- continually seeking to improve the information we hold about the needs and vulnerability of our tenants in order to best direct resources into meeting the needs of vulnerable households.

## 4. Defining vulnerability

### 4.1. Examples of people who may be vulnerable or who may need support (this is not an exhaustive list) include:

- 16-17-year olds;
- Young people who have not held a tenancy before;
- Young people “moving on” from supported housing into an independent tenancy for the first time;
- Care leavers;
- People with drug / alcohol misuse issues;
- People with an offending history;
- People with poor mental health;
- People with behaviour problems or personality disorders;
- People with learning difficulties;
- People with physical disabilities;
- Frail older people;
- Families whose children have behavioural / emotional / mental health issues that affect parents’ ability to comply with tenancy conditions;

- Families with ‘children in need of services’ or ‘children in need of protection’ where the children’s problems affect their parents’ / carers’ ability to cope with maintaining their tenancy;
- Households with a history of tenancy failure;
- Households with significant debts / financial difficulties;
- People from abroad or who do not have English as a first language;
- Teenage parents;
- People who have suffered domestic abuse.

## 5. Identifying who needs help

- 5.1. Landlord Services assesses the vulnerability and support needs of all prospective tenants at the point an applicant is offered a tenancy.
- 5.2. A tenancy and estate management officer visits all new tenants within the first four weeks of their tenancies and uses this as an opportunity to check if all support needs have been identified and that any support needs are met. If a support need has been identified and is unmet, the officer will make a referral to the tenancy support team.
- 5.3. When the tenancy and estate management officer visits, they ask the tenant to complete a form called ‘Knowing you’ which asks for information about gender, sexuality, disability, age and vulnerability. This form is also completed during routine tenancy visits. The information gained from completed ‘Knowing You’ forms is used to record levels of vulnerability. This helps us to ensure that support is directed to the most vulnerable tenants, and also shape our services to meet the needs of vulnerable people.
- 5.4. Officers check for vulnerability and support needs whenever a significant problem occurs with a tenancy i.e. tenancy breach, anti-social behaviour or rent arrears. A vulnerability risk assessment is carried out on all complainants of anti-social behaviour, with linked support where necessary.
- 5.5. Known vulnerabilities and disabilities are recorded on Landlord Services’ integrated housing management system (QL).
- 5.6. Information held on QL about vulnerability is used to alert all staff to the needs of that tenant.

## 6. The Tenancy Support service

- 6.1. Landlord Services currently employs a tenancy support team Leader and three tenancy support officers to deliver the in-house tenancy support service.
- 6.2. The tenancy support service provides advice and assistance to vulnerable tenants to help them sustain their tenancies. Help can be given in the following areas:
  - Housing benefit and universal credit;

- Other welfare benefits;
- Making referrals for debt and financial advice;
- Budgeting;
- Moving in and setting up utilities;
- Acquiring furniture;
- Making referrals for help with health issues, education / training, parenting;
- Household routines;
- Maintaining properties and gardens to an acceptable standard;
- Keeping safe;
- Managing behaviour;
- Applying for re-housing / transfer.

6.3. The tenancy support service concentrates on helping new vulnerable tenants set-up and establish their tenancies as well as assisting existing vulnerable tenants who have encountered a crisis in their tenancy. For example, they may be threatened with legal action because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, they may have fallen into serious debt affecting their ability to pay essential bills, they may have allowed their home conditions to deteriorate to an extent that poses a risk to themselves or others, (including hoarding and self-neglect), or they may be suffering a health problem that is affecting their ability to cope with everyday life. Tenancy support officers will offer assistance in the initial stages of a tenancy or in the event of a crisis and will where necessary try to refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency who will be able to offer longer term, more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health.

6.4. The tenancy support service also offers ad-hoc tenancy support for vulnerable people who do not engage well with other agencies or whose needs are too substantial or long-term for other tenancy support agencies to meet.

## 7. Financial inclusion

7.1. There are two financial inclusion officers based in the tenancy support team who provide support to tenants on:

- how to maximise income and apply for welfare and housing benefit and universal credit;
- how to minimise household expenditure;
- advice on budgeting;
- where to get more in-depth advice and debt management advice if necessary.

7.2. The income team currently has five housing income officers who have a role to play in advising tenants in relation to rent arrears, helping them resolve housing benefit and

universal credit issues, and helping them to pay their rent by negotiating agreements to pay by instalments. There is also a former tenant arrears officer attached to the income team.

## **8. Universal Credit**

8.1. Universal credit started to affect working age tenants in Charnwood from June 2018

By 2022, most working age people in need of benefits to help them with their income and housing costs will be claiming this new benefit. Universal credit represents a significant change in how benefits are claimed and paid, and many tenants need help and support in making and maintaining claims.

8.2. Landlord Services has appointed a universal credit officer, part of whose role will be to assist tenants to apply for and maintain claims for universal credit and to ensure that their housing costs are paid. tenancy support officers and financial inclusion officers will also provide this support but will focus on the needs of the most vulnerable and financially disadvantaged.

## **9. Warden and Lifeline Services**

9.1 Landlord Services has a warden allocated to each sheltered scheme and this is also available to tenants in properties designated for older people.

9.2 In sheltered housing and other properties designated for the elderly, tenants receive help and support through an individual support plan tailored to their needs. Wardens visit tenants on a regular basis as part of implementing the support plan.

9.3 The Lifeline service is available for anyone who needs it who lives in Charnwood regardless of age and regardless of whether they live in a Council property. Service users can use their alarm 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to ask for assistance.

9.4 Warden and Lifeline services have an important role to play in delivering the council's policy for the protection of adults in need of safeguarding. Potential risk is identified, referred to other agencies where necessary, and monitored with a key focus on prevention and maintaining people safely in their own homes.

## **10. Partnership working**

10.1 Landlord Services recognises the importance of working in partnership to help tenants sustain their tenancies.

10.2 Landlord Services also works closely with other external agencies. The most common agencies are the police, DWP, Social Care, GPs, mental health professionals, Turning Point, Probation, Youth Offending and Living Without Abuse in order to maximise support and successful outcomes for vulnerable tenants. Referrals are also made to Housing Matters (Leicestershire-based floating support service) which provides more long term and structured support than can be provided by Landlord Services.

- 10.3 Tenancy support officers can advise and assist tenants with disabilities on aids and adaptations to their home by making referrals to Leicestershire County Council, who will advise on and recommend the scope and type of support needed.
- 10.4 Officers in Landlord Services make referrals to Leicestershire County Council's 'Early Help' service to secure additional support for children and/or their carers who are encountering difficulties with issues such as behaviour, school attendance and effective parenting.
- 10.5 The tenancy support team refers tenants who are exhibiting signs of self-neglect and/or hoarding behaviours to Adult Social Care and to health professionals for further assessment and support. Tenancy support officers work closely with these agencies to try and improve living conditions for tenants in these circumstances and also attend relevant safeguarding and vulnerable adult risk meetings (VARMS).

## **11. Dealing with anti-social behaviour**

- 11.1. When anti-social behaviour is reported, a risk assessment of the complainant is carried out. Vulnerabilities and support needs are identified at the earliest opportunity for both complainants and perpetrators. Support is generally provided, where necessary, to both parties in order to resolve the situation.

## **12. Additional support prior to legal action**

- 12.1. Where it is identified that it is necessary to take legal action (for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour), a multi-agency meeting generally takes place to review the circumstances of the case, to identify what support is required, and to check that it has been provided. This ensures that as far as is reasonably practicable no support opportunities have been missed.

## **13. Safeguarding**

- 13.1. Every effort is made to ensure that vulnerable adults and children are kept safe from harm and abuse. Landlord Services follows Charnwood Borough Council's safeguarding policies for children and adults. These have been jointly developed by all Leicestershire district councils. The adults policy reflects the principles of 'No Secrets' and the Care Act 2014.
- 13.2. Within Landlord Services, there are five designated safeguarding officers (DSOs) who are trained to deal with safeguarding incidents for both children and vulnerable adults. This includes the tenancy support team leader and the principal officer - tenancy and income management.
- 13.3. All front-line staff working with vulnerable adults and/or children receive safeguarding training in relation to child protection matters and support for vulnerable adults. This equips officers with the skills to identify potential risk and support issues, as well as making sure that officers know how to refer to appropriate agencies. This training is ongoing and



is updated every three years either by attending a training session or completing on- line training.

- 13.4. Officers work closely with other DSOs in the council in relation to safeguarding. A summary of all safeguarding incidents and the action taken by DSOs is recorded on Charnwood Borough Council's central safeguarding database. This allows Landlord Services and Charnwood Borough Council to identify patterns or frequent incidents relating to a particular child or vulnerable adult as well as providing a secure record of action taken on each incident. DSO's also attend quarterly liaison meetings.

## 14. Links to other policies

- 14.1. Landlord Services seeks to consider the needs of vulnerable tenants in other relevant housing management policies such as those surrounding harassment, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.

- 14.2. The following Landlord Services and Charnwood Borough Council policies have relevance for the tenancy support policy:

- Charnwood Borough Council anti-social behaviour policy and procedures including domestic abuse, hate incidents, harassment;
- Charnwood Borough Council housing income and financial inclusion policy 2019-2024;
- Charnwood community safety partnership plan 2017-20;
- Charnwood Borough Council homelessness strategy 2018-20;
- Charnwood Borough Council equality and diversity strategy 2016-20;
- Charnwood Borough Council customer services strategy 2016-20;
- Hoarding procedure
- Care Act 2014 (Hoarding, self-neglect and safeguarding are included in this Act)
- Leicestershire district and borough councils' children and vulnerable adults safeguarding policy and procedures.

### VERSION CONTROL

Title:	Tenancy Support Policy
Author:	Claire Westrup & Gill Taylor
Version x dated:	November 2019
Version x.x dated:	
Review details:	
Major review date:	January 2024
Review to be carried out by:	Principal Officer, Tenancy & Income Management & Tenancy Support Team Leader

# APPENDIX – Equality Impact Assessment

Charnwood Borough council

## Equality impact assessment 'Knowing the needs of your customers and employees'

### Background

An equality impact assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

### Legislation- equality duty

As a local authority that provides services to the public Charnwood Borough council has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

1. Direct discrimination
2. Indirect discrimination
3. Harassment
4. Victimisation
5. Discrimination by association
6. Discrimination by perception
7. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination
8. Discrimination arising from disability
9. Failing to make reasonable adjustments

**Note: Complete the action plan as you go through the questions**

## Step 1 – Introductory information

<b>Title of the policy</b>	Tenancy Support Policy
<b>Name of lead officer and others undertaking this assessment</b>	Claire Westrup and Gill Taylor
<b>Date EIA started</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2019
<b>Date EIA completed</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> October 2019

## Step 2 – Overview of policy/function being assessed:

Outline: What is the purpose of this policy? (Specify aims and objectives)
<p>The objectives of the Tenancy Support Policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support and empower tenants to sustain tenancies;</li> <li>▪ help tenants deal with any problems or issues that arise during their tenancy such as rent arrears or problems with welfare benefits;</li> <li>▪ provide direct support through tenancy support officers and Financial Inclusion Officers;</li> <li>▪ refer tenants to partner agencies for more specialist or long-term advice and support when needed;</li> <li>▪ liaise with other statutory agencies, and make representations on tenants' behalf;</li> <li>▪ create safer and more stable communities;</li> <li>▪ reduce the economic and social effect of failed tenancies;</li> <li>▪ reduce rent arrears, and the associated costs of legal action;</li> <li>▪ maximise tenants' incomes;</li> <li>▪ help tenants to maintain their independence;</li> <li>▪ prevent and reduce homelessness and the associated costs.</li> </ul>
What specific group/s is the policy designed to affect and what is the intended change or outcome for them?
All current tenants of council-owned dwellings and any potential tenants to help them manage and sustain their tenancy
Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the policy?
Housing Management Advisory Board, Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum, Policy Scrutiny Group

### Step 3 – What we already know and where there are gaps

<p>List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this policy? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy &amp; maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.</p> <p>Data/information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation</li> <li>▪ Previous equality impact assessments</li> <li>▪ Demographic information</li> <li>▪ Anecdotal and other evidence</li> </ul>
<p>A range of diversity information is available from our records and held in QL (our housing management system) for all those customers receiving housing management services. This includes information on age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, religion and disability of tenants who receive help from the tenancy support team.</p>
<p>What does this information / data tell you about diverse group? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)</p>
<p>This information enables support to be directed to the most vulnerable tenants. The information allows us to identify which groups of tenants most need help and support to maintain their tenancies and to direct resources accordingly. We can also use the information to ensure that support is delivered fairly and that no group is being overlooked or disadvantaged.</p>

### Step 4 – Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?

<p>In light of the answers you have given in step 2, do you need to consult specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not please explain why.</p>
<p>Staff in the tenancy support team, Financial Inclusion Team, Children, Families and Partnerships Manager at Charnwood Borough Council, Principal Officer – Customer Engagement &amp; Older Person’s Services, Housing Income Team Leader and Head of Landlord Services have all been consulted.</p>

### Step 5 – Assessing the impact

<p>In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the policy has a positive or negative impact on the individuals or community groups (including what barriers these individuals or groups may face) who identify with any ‘protected characteristics’ and provide an explanation for your decision (please refer to the general duties on the front page).</p>	
	Comments
<b>Age</b>	Support will be offered to tenants of all ages where deemed appropriate and beneficial to the tenant.

	<p>Older people may be less able to identify and access benefits to which they may be entitled. This increases their vulnerability and may lead to deterioration in their health and wellbeing. Support will address this by providing financial inclusion and welfare benefits advice.</p> <p>Older people can begin to struggle to live independently due to dementia or physical frailty. tenancy support officers will, where required, offer older tenants help to access appropriate health and social care services to support them to continue to live in their own homes or to access more supported accommodation.</p>
<p><b>Disability (Physical, visual, hearing, learning disabilities, mental health)</b></p>	<p>Not all tenants with disabilities will need help to live independently or maintain a tenancy. However support is offered to those where it is identified they may need it.</p> <p>Many of our tenants have mobility, mental health and other disability needs.</p> <p>Health problems, including mental health problems and learning difficulties (which may also include problems with reading and writing) might, affect how a person can manage their tenancy. For example tenants in these groups may have difficulty in managing their benefits and in budgeting and therefore in paying their rent. They may need additional support in understanding what is acceptable behaviour, in keeping themselves safe and in maintaining clean and tidy homes and gardens.</p> <p>tenancy support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health.</p>
<p><b>Gender reassignment (Transgender)</b></p>	<p>Support will be offered to all tenants regardless of their gender identity.</p> <p>tenancy support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health.</p>

<p><b>Race</b></p>	<p>Support is available to all tenants regardless of their race where deemed appropriate and beneficial to the tenant.</p> <p>People from abroad or who do not have English as a first language may be susceptible to tenancy failure. Tenants who have been former asylum seekers may have mental health difficulties that make living independently more of a struggle.</p> <p>Tenancy Support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health or to another service that supports people from other countries offering language and cultural support. Gaining access to external support may also include paying for interpreting services such as Language Line.</p>
<p><b>Religion or belief (Includes no belief)</b></p>	<p>Support is available to all tenants regardless of their religion or belief.</p> <p>Tenancy Support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health or to another service that supports people of other religions or beliefs. We will make reasonable adjustments in the nature of support offered according to someone's religious or cultural needs.</p>
<p><b>Sex</b></p>	<p>Support is available to all tenants regardless of their sex.</p> <p>tenancy support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health. We will make reasonable adjustments in the nature of support offered according to someone's sex.</p>

<p><b>Sexual orientation</b></p>	<p>Support is available to all tenants regardless of their sexual orientation.</p> <p>tenancy support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health. If necessary we will make reasonable adjustments in the nature of support offered according to someone's sexual orientation. We will, if necessary try to refer the tenant to an external support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service that supports LGB tenants.</p>
<p><b>Other protected groups (pregnancy &amp; maternity, marriage &amp; civil partnership)</b></p>	<p>Support is available to all tenants, including these protected groups. Pregnant tenants and / or those on maternity are more likely to be vulnerable and in need of support.</p> <p>tenancy support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health. We will make reasonable adjustments in the nature of support offered according to someone's pregnancy &amp; maternity, marriage &amp; civil partnership status. We will, if necessary try to refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health.</p>
<p><b>Other socially excluded groups (Carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, health inequalities, rural isolation, asylum seeker and refugee communities etc.)</b></p>	<p>These groups are more likely to be vulnerable and in need of tenancy support.</p> <p>tenancy support officers will offer specialist advice and support where that is deemed to be appropriate and beneficial. We will, if necessary refer the tenant to an external tenancy support agency that might be able to offer longer term more structured or specialist support or to another service such as Social Care or Health.</p>

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

Please note:

- a) If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- b) Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

There is no adverse impact or discrimination identified in this assessment.

Tenancy support will benefit vulnerable tenants by providing help and support when needed to sustain their tenancies.

Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the policy will meet Charnwood Borough council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

Delivery of the council's general equalities duties is supported by the provision of general professional advice and assistance from the Tenancy Support team.

### Step 6- Monitoring, evaluation and review

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this assessment and make appropriate changes? In particular, how will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?

The needs of tenants are assessed and monitored at every contact with the tenancy support team.

How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes?  
e.g. policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.

No recommendations have been identified in this assessment.

### Step 7- Action plan

**Please include any identified concerns/actions/problems in this action plan:**  
**The problems etc. identified should inform your service plan and, if appropriate, your consultation plan**

Reference number	Action	Responsible officer	Target date
	No actions have been identified in this assessment		



**Step 8- Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?**

	<b>Who needs to know</b> (Please tick)	<b>How they will be informed</b> (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
<b>Employees</b>	✓	Team meetings
<b>Tenants</b>	✓	Publication on the council's website
<b>Partners and stakeholders</b>	✓	Publication on the council's website
<b>Others</b>	✓	Future and potential tenants through publication on the council's website.
<b>To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?</b>		None identified.

**Step 9- Conclusion (to be completed and signed by the service head)**

<b>Please delete as appropriate</b>
<b>I agree with this assessment.</b>
<b>Signed (service head):</b>
<b>Peter Oliver - Head of Landlord Services</b>
<b>Date: 08/10/2019</b>

**Please send completed & signed assessment to Suzanne Kinder for publishing.**