

## STARTER TENANCY POLICY

### Statement of Purpose

This policy will help support successful tenancies and assist Sentinel's approach to safe and sustainable communities, in respect of:

- community safety,
- crime-reduction,
- the protection of individuals from the effects of anti-social behaviour
- good neighbour relations and tolerance of lifestyle differences

The policy applies to all new tenancies from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006. Existing assured tenants moving within our stock or transferring from other Registered Social Landlords are exempt unless already on a Starter Tenancy.

### Our Policy

- 1 All new tenancies will be offered for a probationary period of 12 months. The tenancy will be in the form of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy on a Starter Tenancy basis.
- 2 Those tenants who maintain their tenancies without breaching the terms of their agreement will convert to an Assured Tenancy at the end of the first 12 months.
- 3 Tenants who fail to remedy any breaches or fail to commit to a support package will be subject to tenancy enforcement action or an extension of the probationary period (up to a maximum of a further 12 months).

### Commitment to Support

- 4 We will seek to offer residents a range of support to assist them to sustain a successful tenancy.
- 5 We will conduct a pre-tenancy assessment and needs evaluation to develop a package of tenancy training and support based on the needs of the individual
- 6 We will work with other organisations to refer and / or deliver direct support to the tenant. These organisations may include, Floating Support Services, Housing Benefit Department, Probation Service, Social Services and Citizens Advice Bureau.
- 7 If at any time during the tenancy concerns or breaches of the tenancy are apparent we will expect the tenant to meet with us in order to understand the reason for the concern/breach and to explore any support needs.

### Tenant Responsibility

- 8 All tenants will be expected to abide fully with their tenancy agreement.
- 9 Tenants will be encouraged to engage with Sentinel staff and support workers from other agencies to assist them in maintaining their tenancy.

### Ending a Tenancy

- 10 As a last resort, we will evict tenants that have breached their tenancy. Any future applications will be considered with reference to our Suspensions Procedure.

### Right of Appeal

- 11 Customers have the right to request an appeal . This needs to be made within 10 working days of receipt of the S21 Notice. For more information please refer to our Appeals Policy

### **Approval Stages**

Named Director Sign off: Martin Nurse

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Committee Approval Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Implementation Date: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008

## STARTER TENANCY POLICY SUMMARY

### **Main Changes From Previous Version**

- Tenants who fail to pass their starter tenancy period may now be offered an extension of their probation instead of enforcement action automatically commencing.
- The provision of follow up visits for all new tenants 2-4 weeks after their tenancy begins has now been removed.

### **Regulation & Legislation**

Sentinel was given the right under the Housing Act 1996<sup>1</sup> to issue Starter Tenancies to new tenants. The introduction of Starter Tenancies was one of a number of initiatives brought in by the government to support housing providers in tackling anti-social behaviour.

The Housing Corporation Regulatory Code (3.5.2) states that housing associations must provide good quality housing services for residents and prospective residents by offering the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of the housing and sustainability of the community.

### **Equality & Diversity Impact**

The association is committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of customers and communities in a fair, respectful, and proportionate manner. Our approach to diversity and equality is to promote inclusiveness by recognising that anyone, regardless of origin or background, can make a positive difference in the achievement of the organisation's vision and in the wider society.

We will comply with best practice from legal, regulatory and inspection requirements. Codes of Practice and other guidance will be used appropriately to ensure progress on diversity.

### **Financial Impact Assessment**

The purpose of this policy is to combat the expenditure on anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that by introducing this policy we can reinforce positive behaviour and challenge inconsiderate behaviour, therefore reducing the associated costs.

### **Risk Assessment**

As there will be doubts as to the effectiveness of starter tenancies and because of the potential that exists for abuse (e.g. malicious complaints to be made against starter tenants), there is a need for systematic monitoring and reporting.

### **Consultation**

The stakeholders below have been consulted on the following dates:

Policy Committee (direction setting): 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Tenant and Leaseholder Forum Group: 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
Hampshire County Council: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008

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<sup>1</sup> Part 5, Chapter 1.

Hart District Council: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
Rushmoor Borough Council: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008