



Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

**BUILDING BETTER
FUTURES:
TENANCY
SUSTAINMENT REPORT**



**FREEBRIDGE
OUT &
ABOUT**

BACKGROUND

In 2021 we launched our Tenancy Sustainment Plan to assist our Corporate Strategy, of Building Better Futures - and this report details what we achieved in the first year.

Our Corporate Strategy of 'Building Better Futures' is our commitment to delivering our unwavering mission of to be a top performing Housing Association (as measured by our customers, colleagues and stakeholders) that improves the quality of life for our customers and our communities.

With homes rather than housing mattering more now than ever we are committed to helping West Norfolk residents access the quality homes and opportunities they deserve. Within the strategy we seek to 'Create Homes, Communities and Local Spaces to be proud of', in many ways not least through focusing on preventing tenancy breakdowns and homelessness.

We understand that tenancies can sometimes be difficult to maintain, and that some of our customers require additional support or to develop new skills to make a success of this. We are committed to doing all that we reasonably and practically can to ensure as many tenancies are sustained as possible, with all interventions intended to resolve problems rather than take away a customer's home.

When tenancies do become at risk, we will work with partners to ensure the provision of relevant additional support wherever possible. When enforcement action does become necessary, we will endeavour to take the least punitive action that we can to achieve a resolution.

Over the next few pages we'll cover all the themes covered in the plan in more detail.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN YEAR ONE



your own place



Orwell
Housing



Saffron
Housing Trust

UNIVERSAL SUSTAINMENT

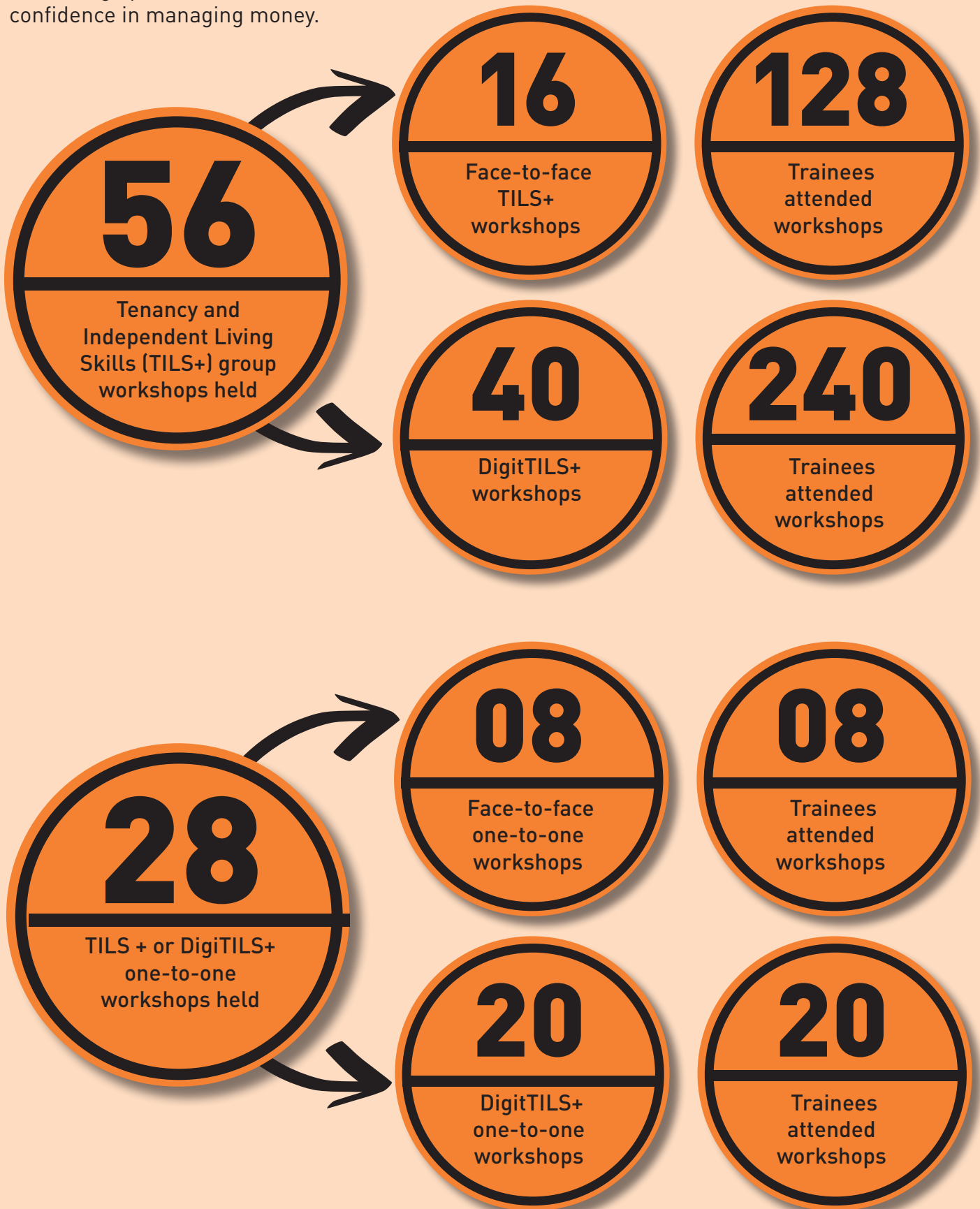
We have reviewed and amended our allocation and lettings policy and lettings procedure, making changes to clarify and strengthen our position on removing all barriers to re-housing and support customers where nominations are declined to find alternative accommodation.

We have collaborated with Orwell Housing, Broadland Housing and Saffron Housing Trust to commission Tenancy Independent Living Skills (TILS) training delivered by Your Own Place. This training provides customers with access to free training where individual tenancy skill gaps are identified. This Commission has provided access for over 400 trainees to improve their tenancy knowledge, confidences, skills and resilience.

ACCESS TO TILS

Since January 2022, 26 Freebridge tenants have been referred onto TILS courses.

Through the courses completed so far 80% of attendees have reported increased knowledge of housing options available and 60% increased confidence in managing money.



TILS CASE STUDY

Joan's story

Joan is a resilient woman with a strong dedication to keep going. Before attending the workshop, she was adjusting to life on her own - she speaks highly of Hollie, the warden in her accomodation, and the support she gives her.

She bought her tablet each day, and developed her skills to expand from playing games to opening her emails, going online on a browser and using the calculator. On the final day of the workshop, her taxi did not arrive: so she walked to the workshop to join us on the last day.

Joan's outcomes

Joan was asked to score herself from one to five against each statement at the beginning and end of each workshop to show distance travelled during the session:

I am looking forward to the future

Before the workshop = 3, after = 4

I feel confident about keeping my home

Before the workshop = 3, after = 4

I know how to manage my money

Before the workshop = 1, after = 4

I know how to pay my bills

Before the workshop = 3, after = 4

I understand how debt works

Before the workshop = 2, after = 4

I understand the housing options available to me

Before the workshop = 1, after = 4

I feel confident about looking for information and getting help

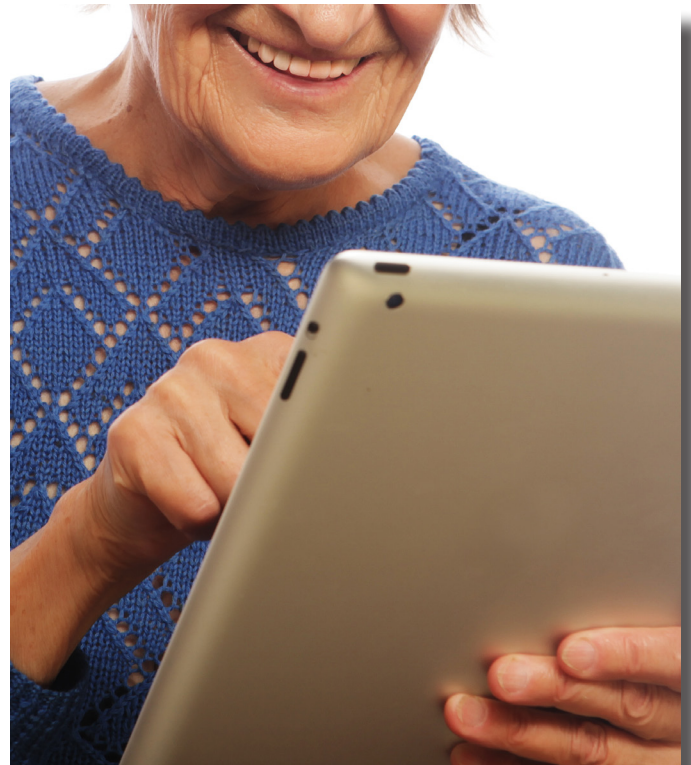
Before the workshop = 1, after = 4

I feel confident using technology

Before the workshop = 2, after = 5


I am good at finding my own solutions to problems I face

Before the workshop = 1, after = 4



TILS+

Of the nine outcomes, Joan reported positive improvements in all of them. She particularly benefitted from the housing options activity - she is considering whether to move or stay in King's Lynn,



As well as promotion of TILS, we have regularly used our website, social media and Streets Ahead to promote way in which our customers can maximise their income and gain advice on welfare benefits.

37

customers helped by our Tenancy Support Fund

£14,950

of support given through our Tenancy Support Fund

281

customers completed our money management survey



← **HELP**

SUPPORT →

← **SERVICE**

GUIDANCE →

← **ASSISTANCE**

ADVICE →

TARGETED SUSTAINMENT

We have amended our procedures to ensure early help principles and a discipline of multi-agency meetings are created to ensure we are working collaboratively with other organisations in providing support. In order to strengthen our collaborative working we have become proactively involved in the following new partnerships:

Community Alcohol Partnership - CAPs is a partnership between local authorities, housing, police, schools, retailers, neighbourhood groups and health providers, working together to highlight the risks of underage drinking and improve the health and wellbeing of local young people.

The CAP works with youth services and local organisations to provide alcohol-free activities for young people. It will also work with local schools to take a proactive approach to alcohol education and ensure that young people are equipped to make the right decisions about issues including alcohol and drugs and anti-social and criminal behaviour. Working with local retailers aims to help them avoid making underage sales and reduce 'proxy' sales where adults buy alcohol for under-18s.

In King's Lynn, partners include the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Norfolk Constabulary, Norfolk County Council (Children's Services, YOT), West Norfolk Secondary schools, Freebridge Community Housing, Longhurst Group, Broadland Housing Group, YMCA, Community Action Norfolk, Matthew Project, Momentum Norfolk, Swan Youth Project, alcohol retailers and the community.

Addiction, diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery partnership (ADDER) - The purpose of this agreement is to enable routine and effective information sharing between partner agencies in support of the following objectives:

- A reduction in drug related reoffending amongst prolific offenders;
- Increase in the numbers of drug users engaging in treatment;
- Increases in those achieving and sustaining recovery, and reduction in drug related deaths;
- A reduction in drug supply;
- Increase in number of young and vulnerable people safeguarded.

Project ADDER is a project aimed at meeting the needs of people with multi-vulnerabilities and reducing related crime and offending behaviour. The outcome of the data analysis from data matching will provide further insight into the needs and current joint working arrangements of this group of people. This insight will provide valuable to wider Norwich/County multi-agency programmes in developing this and future joint partnership approaches to working with vulnerable people.

TARGETED SUSTAINMENT

continued

DAHA - The DAHA accreditation is a process that will transform our approach to dealing with domestic abuse, ensuring that we have the most effective approach to supporting customers and colleagues should they be suffering. The accreditation will see us aiming to match standards set by sector leaders in this area and will provide us with an opportunity to develop our wider safeguarding practices. Work with DAHA will begin shortly, with an aim of achieving accreditation within the next three years.

As well as working more collaboratively, we have funded and embedded specialist tools to assist us with the delivery of expert advice to customers on welfare entitlement and budgeting, Such as “Entitled to”.

Entitled to provides us access to an online benefits calculator that we have provided our customers access to use via our website or through our income and support team. The benefits calculator is used to determine if there is any national and local government claims that customers are not yet receiving but are entitled to receive.

Since relaunching the benefit calculator to our tenancy support and income teams in December 2021, we have now completed 51 benefit calculators since 01/01/22 identifying £6,450.66 of claims that our customers could be receiving to maximise their income.

“Entitled to” also provides us access to complete an affordability calculator which allows us to assess the sustainability of the tenancy at an early stage as well as looking for areas where we can work with the customer to maximise income. By entering information such as monthly spend and income we can assess if the tenancy is affordable or if the customer is likely to be in a position of financial risk in taking on the tenancy. Where customers are identified as at risk steps are taking to review how we can assist in maximising income to ensure the tenancy is sustainable.

Since
January
2022

100

affordability calculators
completed
through entitledto

£12,050

of claims identified that tenants
could have been receiving to maximise their income

£18,501

identified in total through the use of entitledto,
that customers are entitled to claim and
offered support to complete the relevant
applications

CRISIS PREVENTION AND RELIEF

Reviewing our relevant policies and procedures to remove barriers to rehousing in suitable cases - Our Allocation and Lettings Policy and Lettings Procedure were amended in September. Changes were made to clarify and strengthen our position on removing all barriers to re-housing and support customers where nominations are declined to find alternative accommodation.

Commitment to refer

The Commitment to Refer is commitment made by Freebridge to refer an individual or household to a local housing authority if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, thereby supporting the aims of the Homelessness Reduction Act and particularly the Duty to Refer. In order to strengthen our response we have updated our Commitment to refer procedure and delivered refresher briefings to all of our Tenancy, Income, Support, Lettings, PlaceShaping and Estates teams to ensure we refer.

Something Not Quite Right – Freebridge SNQR scheme is a simple referral process for colleagues to report any concerns raised when visiting a customer. This allows our tenancy and support team to make contact with customers to ensure that appropriate support is offered.

Since the promotion and updating of our something not quite right procedures as part of the tenancy sustainment plan, we have completed 143 referrals compared to just 43 over the previous two years. As a result of further development of our teams safeguarding awareness we have also seen a dramatic rise in our adult, children and domestic violence reporting.

Increases in safeguarding awareness, reflected in the reporting rates, shows us that whilst we are still keen to improve further, we are recognising and therefore able to support our customers further to ensure that we can sustain tenancies, positively impact on our customers wellbeing and improve lives.

As well as internally we work closely with our contractors to be assured of that their commitment to safeguarding our customers is as strong as ours. As a result, we have contacted 55 Contractors who visit customers' homes to ensure they have appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure they report any concerns and respond appropriately to allow us to best support our customers.

Referrals	2021 - 2021				2021 - 2022				2022 - 2023			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Something Not Quite Right	0	0	0	11	32	41	34	37	31	-	-	-
Adult Reporting Form	1	0	0	3	6	11	8	32	21	-	-	-
Child Reporting Form	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	1	1	-	-	-
Domestic Abuse Referral Form	2	0	1	3	2	3	3	5	2	-	-	-





RECOVERY

Our tenancy support team have been vital to achieving our commitment of working closely with local partners to refer customers in need of housing related support in a timely manner. This ensures we are providing holistic support in the areas that our customers need it the most.

Since the start of our tenancy sustainment plan, our tenancy support advisors have managed 751 cases, covering areas highlighted below:



MOVE ON

We work closely with West Norfolk HomeChoice on complex cases to support 'Direct Lets' via the housing register. Since the launch of our tenancy sustainment plan we have worked with housing options at the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk on 42 of direct let properties.

We have worked with partners such as The Purfleet trust to deliver five shared house properties with appropriate support to assist customers to maintain a tenancy. This has presented the opportunity for 18 rooms across the five properties.

All of the above steps ensure that we are able to support customers to sustain their tenancies. The steps above have assisted in the following eviction rates:

Eviction rates

Between 1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018
22 evictions took place - 17 due to rent arrears, five due to breaches in tenancy.
Between 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019
22 evictions took place - 13 due to rent arrears, nine due to breaches in tenancy.
Between 1 April 2019- 31 March 2020
21 evictions took place - 15 due to rent arrears, six due to breaches in tenancy.
Between 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021
No evictions took place during this year.
Between 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022
One eviction took place due to rent arrears.


What else?

- We have reviewed our allocations and lettings policy to ensure that it meets the needs of the community in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.
- Reviewed our commitment to refer policy and procedures to ensure its embedded into what we do.
- Reviewed our policies and procedures to remove barriers to rehousing in suitable cases – this includes a review of our internal transfer procedures.
- We have reviewed all cases in which a nomination has been refused to identify opportunities to improve our offer to customers.
- Amended our income management and maximisation policy and procedures to make clear our commitment to never seeking possession of homes on mandatory grounds or where customers are engaging with us about repayment of arrears.

What's next?

Year two of our tenancy sustainment plan will focus on further assessments of our support offer to customers, continuing our partnership working as well as further building on our safeguarding and tenancy policies. Our full Tenancy sustainment plan, with our commitments for year two can be found here:

[Tenancy Support | Freebridge Community Housing](#)



Our eviction rates
have dropped considerably
in the last couple of years, with

NO EVICTIONS

taking place in 2020 - 2021, *and only*

ONE EVICTION

taking place in 2021 - 2022

