



TENANT SUPPORT FUND POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Tenant Support Fund Policy			
Last Reviewed	January 2025	Next Review	January 2026
Responsible Officer	Director of Operations		

Policy Statement:

We recognise that in some circumstances tenants can find themselves in financial hardship, where paying for essential outgoings becomes very difficult. This can lead to issues sustaining a tenancy including the accrual of rent arrears, reliance on creditors or the loss of essential needs such as heating or food.

In recognition of this and the challenges to tenants in many areas, we have increased and widened our support fund to help in these situations.

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework within which applications to the Tenant Support fund can be assessed and accessed.

The policy has been drafted in partnership with our Customer Voice Panel.

Policy Detail:

Scope

This policy extends to all current tenants and shared owners and will be considered on a case-by case basis. It is not applicable to leaseholders or garage tenants.

1 Eligibility and Assessment

The Tenant Support Fund is discretionary, and each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis against the criteria stipulated. The Tenant Support Fund is defined as: *targeted support/relief to tenants requiring our help to sustain their tenancies when they face hardship*. It is not intended as a means of long-term support.

The following criteria are not exhaustive but provide a framework for the application of the fund:

- Those who are impacted as a result of mental health/crisis or other medical issue.
- Those in fuel poverty/hardship
- Those who require intermittent support for household food and goods
- Those who have experienced a change in circumstances for example a loss

- of employment, changes in the household composition
- Support to move (downsize, pay arrears on mutual exchange to allow move to go ahead or to lower rent)
- Support to attend interviews/pursue employment (childcare, taxis etc.)
- To fund white goods/furniture where a third-party charity or agency is unable to help
- Any other factors that might cause hardship or financial difficulty

When considering any application, the following might be considered as part of the assessment:

- Is the support required of a temporary nature? We define temporary as up to a 12-month period
- Have all relevant avenues for alternative support been exhausted?
- Is the applicant in receipt of all the benefits they are entitled to?
- Can the household sustain their tenancy? Or is support required
- If support is required, is the applicant willing to engage with this?
- Could the applicant reasonably be expected to reduce their non-essential household expenditure? We will complete an income and expenditure assessment to help with this.
- Would it be beneficial for the tenant to consider moving to more suitable accommodation? Would support to do this be appropriate?
- Agreement of any repayment plans for rent arrears or recharges
- Has there been a previous award within the last 12 months? This is not to say that a further award will be granted however the circumstances and requirement will be considered.

Application Management

We want to make it as easy as possible for those in need to receive support. As such, we will accept applications in the following ways:

- Via the telephone or other communication channels
- Internal referrals from other teams
- Accept applications/referrals from third parties

We want to make sure that as many people as possible can benefit from this policy, so we may use information about the property someone lives in, or their household information to proactively offer this support fund.

We will discuss the financial position of each applicant to confirm eligibility, with a full financial assessment completed for the second or more vouchers issued.

A cap of £500 will be applied to a tenant/household within each year.

Exceptions to the amount and frequency of support will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require approval by the Head of Housing & Community Services or Director of Operations.

Reasons for Declining Support

We reserve the right to decline any application where a tenant, or their household, is in breach of their tenancy agreement, especially in cases of persistent and/or serious anti-social or criminal behaviour. When deciding, all known information regarding the household and their circumstances will be considered, to provide assistance wherever possible. Support will never be declined due to rent arrears.

2 Monitoring

All requests for assistance from the Tenant Support fund will be logged, with outcomes shared.

A quarterly report will be submitted to Leadership team showing amounts and decisions made for that quarter.

3 Review

This policy will be subject to an annual review in accordance with the budget and the fund's application.

Leadership team is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.

Day to day responsibility in the administration and issuing of the fund lies with the Tenancy Support & Income teams with the Head of Housing & Community Services and Director of Operations ultimately accountable for its administration.