

TENANCY SUSTAINMENT FUND POLICY

The purpose of the fund is to be an 'invest to save' basis, to provide a homeless prevention tool in line with the new duty to prevent homelessness. The average void cost is around £5,000 so avoiding eviction can save BHEMB money. There are also substantial costs for other agencies in responding to homelessness following a failed tenancy.

The tenancy sustainment fund can be used for the payment towards rent arrears and some associated costs to prevent evictions.

Eligibility

The scheme will be used for council tenants whose homes are managed by BHEMB and who are threatened with eviction as a result of rent arrears or in substantial arrears (£1000 or more).

The following provisos would also be included:

- Payment would be entirely discretionary – there is no right of appeal
- Payments would normally be up to £1,100 direct to the rent account (or other housing revenue account such as court costs).
- Assistance will only be provided up to 50% of the total outstanding debts
- Payments would be made only where it is considered there is a good prospect of the tenancy being sustained as a result of the tenant making regular payments of rent and arrears.
- If the tenancy is not sustainable, for example as a result of the Bedroom Tax, then help will be conditional on the tenant moving to accommodation where the Bedroom Tax would not apply
- We will not accept repeat applications.

Payments would not be made where:

- The applicant(s) has sufficient financial resources to make the payment themselves. *(We may require evidence that a financial statement has been completed)*
- The tenant's recent payment history suggests they are deliberately not paying their rent
- The applicant(s) would be unable to manage their rent account successfully even if they received this support
- The tenancy is unaffordable or unsustainable
- It is a repeat application (unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated).

- There has been serious anti-social behaviour or arson offences.
- False information has been supplied or circumstances have been deliberately worsened.

Who can complete the application?

- Tenancy / Income / team members

Assessing the Claim

- The senior management team will ensure that the qualifying criteria are met
- The application needs to be considered as soon as possible after receipt and in any event within 10 working days of submission of a fully completed application.
- The decision may include requirements of the applicant to undertake / engage with necessary debt advice, active engagement with their Income Management Officer and sticking to a repayment plan. Where repayment amounts are small help would be conditional on sticking to the plan for 6 months, or 3 months where the amounts are more significant.
- The Business Services team will process the request and make payment to the relevant account.

The application will be considered taking into account the following:-

- The reason the assistance is needed
- The reason for any debts
- Attempts to reduce debt
- Mitigating circumstances such as ill health or trauma
- Vulnerability

There is an application form available which must be completed for all cases.

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