



# The Havebury Housing Partnership Support Fund Policy

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Relevant corresponding Policy <i>(procedures only)</i>			
Approved by (inc date)	Resident Experience Committee		
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Accountable Director <i>(Relevant ED)</i>	Director of Operations		
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	JNC	N	
	Other		
Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment Outcome	Completed		
Legal Advice (inc date)	Legal oversight not required		

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 We recognise that in some circumstances our residents can find themselves in financial hardship or other difficulties, where the money they receive is less than the money needed for essential outgoings. This can lead to issues sustaining a tenancy including the accrual of rent arrears, reliance on creditors or the loss of essential items like heating or food.
- 1.2 In recognition of this and the challenges to residents in many areas, we have a discretionary support fund to help in these situations.
- 1.3 The aim of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework within which applications to the Support Fund can be assessed and accessed.
- 1.4 The support offered is to promote tenancy sustainment and is an enabler for this.

## **2 Scope**

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

## **3 Responsibilities**

- 3.1 Leadership team is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.
- 3.2 Board will have oversight of the fund in the form of an annual report.
- 3.3 Day to day responsibility in the administration and issuing of the fund lies with the Supported & Income teams with the Assistant Director of Customer & Housing Services and Director of Operations providing responsibility for its administration.

## **4 Assessment & Criteria**

- 4.1 The Support Fund is discretionary, and each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis against the criteria stipulated in conjunction with the availability of the fund. The 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.
- 4.2 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 key appointments, interviews or to 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.
    - Access to Mind Counselling sessions where a resident is needing to access support but has not been successful gaining support through other agencies
    - Access to wider support packages through our partner agency Leading Lives. These packages will be referred by the Supported team only and

are to be approved any member of the management team only. An initial meeting will be held with Leading Lives to decide on the package required. Please see the Leading Lives contract for more detail.

- 4.3 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.
  - 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. (Note, we are not financial advisors so will not provide this.)
  - Would it be beneficial for the tenant to consider moving to more suitable/cheaper accommodation? Would support to do this be appropriate? We will approach this sensitively and will not force anyone to do this.
  - 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.

- 4.4 Where an internal referral has been made, we will require details of the potential tenancy breach and expected outcomes to be included so that we can manage and support positive outcomes.

## **5 Application Management**

- 5.1 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
  - Internal referrals from other teams
  - Accept applications/referrals from third parties
    - Webform on our website
- 5.2 We want to make sure that as many people as possible are able to 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.
- 5.3 A cap of £1000 will be applied to a tenant/household within each year however more than one application can be made within a 12-month period. We will work with individual residents to determine the value and frequency of support, based on realising expected benefits and positive sustainment of the tenancy.
- 5.4 As part of our commitment to sustaining tenancies, we may ask applicants for the fund to commit to actions that will help their situation. This may also include an assessment of willingness.
- 5.5 Exceptions to the amount and frequency of support will be considered on a case-by-case basis, discretion can be used. Approval will be required by the Assistant Director of Customer & Housing Services.
- 5.6 Where we consider a case or referral is more complex, we will ensure all relevant teams and agencies are notified to agree what support is needed and may hold case conferences to realise outcomes.

## **6 Exclusions from the Policy**

- 6.1 Having consulted with residents and other parties, we reserve the right to decline any application where a resident, or their household, is in breach of the tenancy agreement, especially in cases of anti-social behaviour.
- 6.2 Any refusals will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.3 There will be no right to appeal a decision on the use or application of the hardship fund as there are no legislative provisions within this policy
- 6.4 It is not for payment of compensation or a substitute for insurance policies.
- 6.5 This policy will ensure due regard will be given to the following legislation and policies:
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Data Protection Act 2018
  - HS011 Complaints Policy
  - P032 Complaints Procedure
  - HS004 Customer Care Policy

## **7 Monitoring**

- 7.1 All requests for assistance from the support fund will be logged, with outcomes shared.
- 7.2 Where support has been provided that relates to another service area (for example garden maintenance), we will expect that team to ensure that provision is put in place to prevent reoccurrence of the same issue.
- 7.3 Weekly reports will be shared with all teams on the categories of support provided.
- 7.4 A quarterly report will be submitted to Leadership team showing amounts and decisions made for that quarter. This will also be presented to the Resident Experience Committee.
- 7.5 An annual report will be submitted to Board , providing an overview of the decisions and allocations made against this policy.

## **8 Review**

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