

Shared Statement: Social landlords working together with tenants to avoid evictions

In responding to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, local authorities, housing associations and cooperatives have gone further than ever before to engage and work with tenants in financial difficulty as more people find themselves having problems paying their rent for the first time because of Covid-19.

Our long standing shared commitment to keeping rents affordable and proactively working with tenants facing difficulty in paying their rent has never been more important. During the pandemic we have increased the number of people working on this type of support and seen strong results, and we will maintain this approach throughout recovery.

In line with this, eviction from homes managed by social landlords is only considered as a last resort, primarily for cases where there has been:-

1. Evidence of anti-social behaviour; criminality or deliberate avoidance of paying rent which has been tested in court.
2. A long standing history of failure to pay rent, extending before the pandemic.
3. A persistent failure to respond to the landlord's attempts to contact and support the tenant to pay their rent.

Paying rent is an important tenant responsibility. Supporting tenants who are struggling through no fault of their own to manage when they fall behind in their rent is an important responsibility of social landlords, especially in the context of Covid-19.

We work to the following principles and will continue to do so:

- Social landlords will act compassionately and quickly to keep people in their homes and offer the support they need to stay there.
- For those put on furlough, or where there has been a loss of income or employment, social landlords will offer support to apply for and access appropriate financial support and work with tenants to agree a plan to get rent payments back on track in a way that is manageable for the household.
- No one will be evicted from a local authority, housing association or co-operative home because of financial hardship when they are engaging with their landlord, have agreed a way to repay rent payments, and are keeping to the arrangement they have made.

The Scottish Government will continue to explore all options for policy and financial support to enable tenants to work with their landlords, to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and support them to address financial hardship due to Covid-19. Local authorities have also put in place local support in some areas. Alongside existing support of extended notice periods, Discretionary Housing Payments and the Tenant Hardship Loan Fund, this will include a new £10m Grant Fund package to support tenants in crisis who are struggling to pay their rent because of financial difficulty caused by the pandemic and help landlords to support them.

Purpose of this statement

1. To set out the current levels of support available for social housing tenants and to reaffirm our joint commitment to supporting people to keep their homes and avoid eviction where tenants are struggling through no fault of their own to manage their rent payments.
2. A complementary statement has been developed with the Scottish Association of Landlords.
3. More detail on the work undertaken by Social Housing Landlords to avoid evictions is available through the SFHA report: **Avoiding Evictions and Managing Rent Arrears: Covid Recovery:**
<https://www.flipsnack.com/housingscotland/sfha-summary-avoiding-evictions-and-managing-rent-arrears.html>.

Signatories

Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers
Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Scottish Government
The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

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