

Tenancy Sustainment Strategies

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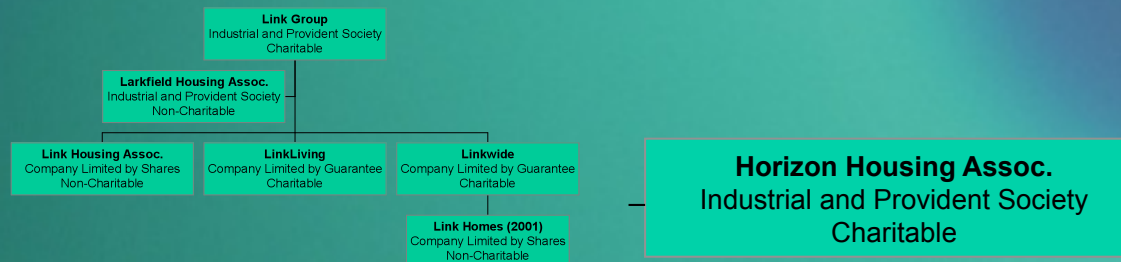
www.linkhousing.org.uk



Link - Background

- Formed in 1962
- 7,000 tenants and 4,000 others
- 26 Scottish Local Authorities
- Cost rent , fair rent , co-ownership , shared ownership , self build , students , homes for sale , Foyer , LSVT, wider role , supported / special needs housing , Homestake / LIFT
- 9 Mergers
- 4 'left home'
- 250 members – half of whom tenants
- 55 voluntary board / committee members
- 350 staff

Link Group Structure



What Is Tenancy Sustainment?

Shelter Scotland defines tenancy sustainment as

“Preventing a tenancy from coming to a premature end by providing the necessary information, advice, and support for tenants to be able to maintain their tenancies”



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Why is Link Involved In Tenancy Sustainment? Because we want to :

- Reduce the number of evictions
- Reduce the number of voids
- Reduce our costs
- Prevent homelessness

Why?

- This is our core business..... Link is fully committed to the prevention of homelessness and reducing the number of failed tenancies.
- We aim to work with our tenants and help them sustain their tenancies – this is included in our key strategic and operational objectives.
- This is what we are about and why we exist



What Is a Failed Tenancy and What Did it Cost Link?

- A 'failed tenancy' is deemed to be an abandonment, an eviction and any tenancy which terminated within 12 months
- In 08/09 the number and average costs were as follows:

Abandonments	83	£237,048
Evictions	43	£197,026
Total	126	£434,074

(At that point we had no recorded cost for other terminations within 12 months)



How Did We Compare To Other RSLs?

SHBVN benchmarking for 2008/09 (32 RSLs participated):

Expressed as a percentage of stock, we had the sixth highest number of recovery of repossession orders and

Fourth highest number of abandoned properties.



What Did We Do About It?

- Tenancy Sustainment Strategy – Approved Nov 09
- Two key Objectives
 - Prevention
 - Tenancy Support
- Produced an Action Plan
- Set realistic budget – ‘Spend to Save’ ethos
- Set up a small working party to take forward initiatives and pilots
- Ensured staff buy-in

Getting The Relationship Right From The Start:

- Improved pre- and post-tenancy information
- Support assessments carried out at pre-tenancy interviews
- Tenancy DVD (in conjunction with 5 other RSLs)
- Joint pre-tenancy visits with Welfare Rights staff
- Provision of recycled furniture for those with no resources
- Pilot with Cyrenians' homelessness project

Keeping A Close Relationship With Our Tenants

- Annual Tenancy Visits – 30% per year.
- Out on the estates 80% of the time
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Early contact with tenants who fall into arrears
- Combined Arrears visits with Welfare Benefits Staff
- Referrals for support to our LinkLiving Support service

Managing Our Performance

- Record details of those who had a failed tenancy, eg. any trends?
- Appreciate that there will be an increase in arrears over the first year
- Report to our Board regularly
- Set staff stiff targets to reduce abandonments, evictions and tenancy

How Are We Doing?

51% reduction in Evictions

53% reduction in Abandonments

Savings for Link £245,559



Link's Advice Services

- Welfare Rights and Benefits, Information and Advice/Advocacy
- Maximising income
- 3 Welfare Advice Teams - OPAP, OPAS, Money Advice
- 19 Staff

Growth of the Services

First Link Welfare Advice Officer 1999

March 2005 - the Older Persons' Advice
Project (OPAP)

Successfully initially worked with two partner
housing associations – now 6

Extended into Older Persons' Advice Service
(OPAS) Nov. 09 – Mar. 11



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Older Persons Advice Project (OPAP)

Income maximisation and holistic advice service for older person households (age 60+) of partner Registered Social Landlords and all tenure residents in Falkirk Community Planning Partnership Priority Regeneration Areas

750 referrals, advice and home visits per year

OPAP clients given energy advice including negotiating energy refunds with Fuel suppliers and ensuring client is put on provider's social tariff

Signpost referrals to support services such as Care and Repair, Social Work Aids and Adaptations Assessment and Tax Advice

£3m of weekly or backdated payments (£600k since April 2010)



Older People's Advice Service (OPAS)

Funded by The Scottish Government
(£700k till 2011) Financial Inclusion Funding
Clackmannanshire,
West Lothian and North Lanarkshire
Councils



Results so Far (OPAS)

Over £1,300,000 in extra benefit for over 60's

Back-dated lump sums(one of £34k)

1400 visits

Significant Rental Income to Link



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LinkLiving

- Housing Support/Care – ‘visiting’, ordinary housing
- 450 service users – young, with learning disability, mental health issues
- 130+ staff
- Smart Living
- From ‘charitable voluntary’ to a ‘social enterprise’



'Green' Projects

Combined Heat and Power (CHP) – MicroCHP
Air Source Heat Pumps - Ground Source Heat
Pumps

Solar Thermal - Solar Photo-voltaic (FiT)

Biomass - Hydro-electric - Exhaust Air Heat Pump

Community Energy-saving Programme (CESP)

Insulation Programme - Gas District Heating

Wind Turbines



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Tenant Engagement

- Energy –efficiency Tips Leaflets
- Website - Energy Advice Area, Policies
- Free Low-energy Light Bulbs (7,000) New Tenants
- Energy Display/Appliance Standby ‘Switchoff Adaptors’
- Energy Advice Booklet in Welcome Pack



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Other Strategies

- Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Affordable Warmth Strategy
- Energy Strategy / Sustainability policy
- Retrofit
- Affordable range of tenures eg Private Sector Leasing, National Housing Trust, LIFT
- Expanding the Link group – savings passed on to tenants/service users.
- Bulk Procurement – ditto
- Development /construction (MMC)
- Funding/borrowing



Change In Staff Culture

Change is not at all - or even mainly - about procedure. The essential change is in staff culture; getting back to what many staff came into housing management for – dealing with tenants as people and seeking to offer help rather than sanctions

