



# TENANCY SUSTAINMENT STRATEGY 2021/24



Creating the right environment for people to flourish



[www.linc-cymru.co.uk](http://www.linc-cymru.co.uk)

# Facing the Challenge Ahead



## Contents

Introduction	04
UK and Wales Context	05
Linc Context	06
Preventing failed tenancies and sustaining successful ones	08
The impact of poverty on Tenant Sustainment	10
The Right Vision	11
The Right Principles and Behaviours	14
The Right Services at the Right Time	18
The Right Approach	20
The Right Commitments	24
Evaluating the Results	28
Links to other Strategies	28
The Journey Begins	29

# Introduction



“Sustaining tenancies is at the heart of our business”

**A sustainable tenancy is one which can be maintained successfully by the tenant throughout the life of the tenancy (CIH)**

We are pleased to present our Tenancy Sustainment Strategy for 2021–2024.

Our strategy tells the story of the challenges faced by ourselves, by our tenants and by society. It illustrates how we intend to work in future, what we will do at what point in time and how we will measure whether our actions have worked. It is set against a backdrop of years of austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a story of hope in which we can all come together to make a difference.

'Tenancy failure; is an emotive term and ultimately one we want to avoid at all costs. Where tenancies fail there are implications for Linc, for tenants and to society and they go beyond the day-to-day to encompass a huge range of social and economic implications too'.

We have become increasingly aware that it is not possible to do everything ourselves. Our aim is to become part of the picture and part of the solution to enable tenants, where needed, to thrive in their tenancies and meet their ambitions.

We invite you to become part of the story.

**NICOLA SMITH**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LINC HOMES

# UK and Wales Context

And so, the story unfolds. We have seen the results that Welfare Reform has had on many tenants over the past couple of years. We changed the way we delivered our services in light of it. Our experience to date tells us this will make it more difficult for many of our tenants to sustain their tenancies and require more intensive management on our part. These changes add to the financial difficulties being experienced by our tenants and are likely to have a long-term impact going forward.

It is now time to look at where we are now, but also be mindful of continuing policy changes such as 'The Renting Homes Act' [Renting Homes Act 2016](#) and the drive to end evictions into homelessness, as well as issues such as poverty that now affects [over 700 families across Wales](#)

We operate in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales including many of them in the top 30% highlighted in the [Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) The WIMD states the main deprivation indicators relate to employment, income, health, education, access to services, housing, community safety and physical environment.

As we go through a global pandemic, it is becoming increasingly clear that for some years ahead we will not return to where we left off as a country or as a landlord. Communities will be faced with:

- [The impact of an economic downturn](#)
- [Increasing hardship and financial pressures](#)
- [Rising levels of unemployment](#)
- [Increasing levels of ASB, domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns](#)
- [An increase in the number of tenants 'at risk'](#)
- [Poorer mental health](#)
- [Increasing pressures on public sector services](#)
- [A lack of community cohesion](#)

The recent changes to the law around commencing legal action for possession action means that in some situations landlords must give tenants more notice than usual, from one month to six months. This will allow us more opportunity to work with tenants in financial difficulty, but it may also result in increasing arrears levels. This together with the Welsh Government policy to **reduce evictions into homelessness** will present new opportunities to work more closely and build important relationships with tenants to deliver shared outcomes. This signals a change in the way we undertake our housing management activities and means it is far more important now to interact and work with tenants. We must understand the issues they face better and build better relationships.

As a landlord we are committed to an ambitious programme of new builds, in a variety of tenures. We are confident this will help alleviate some of the issues we are faced with.

Finally, public services are coming under increasing pressure. It is likely that we will house more tenants who face increasing hardship and have more complex needs. This in turn may have a detrimental effect on our ability to maximise rental income and stretch resources, as we look to support those most at risk. The need to collaborate and engage with tenants and other agencies is now even more important and key to successful outcomes.



# Linc Context



We manage 3819 'general needs' properties and 1075 'Independent Living' specialist houses and apartments for people over 55 or with a disability/support need, spread across 10 Local Authority areas. The annual turnover of tenancies is currently 9% of our stock, or approximately 343 properties.

The number of terminations of tenancies over the last three years has averaged at 225 per year. Tenancy terminations over the last three years show the top three reasons for ending their tenancy as:

Change in family size	81
Transfer	62
Death	62

Rent arrears over the last three years have averaged at 2.03%. We have not seen the increase we were anticipating given the challenging environment we are now in. This has primarily been because of a slower roll out of Universal Credit coupled with our own internal measures to prepare tenants for the welfare changes.

Tenancy evictions over the last three years have remained steady at 19 (17 for arrears (including abandonments or moving out before eviction) and 2 for ASB). We want to reduce this number, these will always be seen as a 'failure' and taken as a last resort. Currently, 1314 tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit, 1079 are on Universal Credit, 1415 tenants are in arrears with their rent. 42% of tenants are under the age of 50 with only 10% of tenants in the 18-34 age bracket.

The following chart illustrates the properties we have split by bedroom size and by area.

Area	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Blaenau Gwent	126	231	160	14	2	533
Bridgend	57	244	149	12	2	464
Caerphilly	53	258	368	10		689
Cardiff	192	505	358	65	10	1130
Neath Port Talbot	205	90	105	2	1	403
Newport	35	224	166	38	1	464
Powys		1				1
Rhondda Cynon Taff		11	8			19
Swansea		2				2
Torfaen	12	51	51			114
<b>Total</b>	680	1617	1365	141	16	3819

## Purpose

The strategy is based on the OneLinc purpose contained within the 2020-2021 Business plan which is to create the right environment for people to flourish.

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Reduce tenancy failure – prevent homelessness and minimise the costs associated with tenancy failure
- Support tenants where needed
- Put in place robust processes to allow early identification of potential risks or vulnerabilities
- Maximise resources and services available to tenants to assist them to manage their tenancy successfully
- Promote collaborative working
- Promote digital and financial inclusion
- Improve our understanding of why tenancies fail
- Maximise income collection

# Preventing failed tenancies and sustaining successful ones

Proactive supportive Interventions	Reactive responsive interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification, assessment, and intervention</li> <li>• Tenancy support</li> <li>• Financial management and life skills</li> <li>• Customer focused services</li> <li>• Intensive case management</li> <li>• Support into training and employment</li> <li>• Support tenants suffering domestic abuse</li> <li>• Tenant engagement and involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling rent arrears</li> <li>• Financial help and advice</li> <li>• Dealing with anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Process for managing breaches of tenancy</li> <li>• Process for managing eviction</li> <li>• Referrals to debt advice agencies</li> <li>• Support with Universal Credit claims</li> </ul>

## Tenancy Outcomes

Tenancy Failure	Tenancy Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eviction into homelessness</li> <li>• Tenant left under threat of eviction</li> <li>• Abandonment</li> <li>• Tenant left because of negative housing experience</li> <li>• Poor conditions</li> <li>• Hardship and poverty</li> <li>• Unable to sustain tenancy due to not receiving the right care or support</li> <li>• Tenant left because they do not feel safe in their home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant feels safe and secure</li> <li>• Tenant believes they have a decent home that is affordable safe and secure</li> <li>• Collaboration is taking place to achieve shared outcomes and meet needs</li> <li>• Rent paid on time with no arrears</li> <li>• Tenant is satisfied</li> <li>• Tenants able to live fulfilling life and meet own ambitions</li> <li>• Thriving communities with homes where people want to live</li> </ul>

Vulnerabilities /risk factors that can lead to a failed tenancy	Possible Triggers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior debt</li> <li>• Mental illness</li> <li>• Cultural factors</li> <li>• Prior housing instability Housing factors (amenity, appropriateness, location etc)</li> <li>• Inability to secure basic household items and furniture</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate support</li> <li>• Drug/alcohol/dependency issues</li> <li>• Household/ family instability/chaotic lifestyles</li> <li>• Inability to secure basic household items</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate support/unmet support needs</li> <li>• Offending background/risk of offending</li> <li>• Language of literacy difficulties</li> <li>• No support network, social connections or community involvement</li> <li>• Self neglect, hoarding etc</li> <li>• Households with a history of homelessness, previous eviction</li> <li>• Care leavers</li> <li>• First time tenants with no experience of independent living</li> <li>• Physical disability &amp;/or learning difficulties</li> <li>• Domestic abuse</li> <li>• Young person (16 -24)</li> <li>• Refugee/non UK national</li> <li>• Prison leaver</li> <li>• Vulnerable single parent/expectant mother</li> <li>• Safeguarding issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and personal change/crisis</li> <li>• Neighbourhood conflict</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Unanticipated expenditure</li> <li>• Loss of income</li> <li>• Relationship breakdown</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Accumulation of stressful life events</li> <li>• Rent arrears</li> <li>• Financial difficulties/multiple debts</li> <li>• Universal Credit claim</li> <li>• Isolated from family and friends</li> <li>• Breach of tenancy</li> <li>• Condition of property</li> <li>• Lack of engagement</li> <li>• Dis-satisfaction</li> <li>• Death of close family member</li> <li>• Household make up changes</li> <li>• Global issues e.g. pandemics/crises</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate support/unmet need</li> <li>• Change in circumstance</li> </ul>

The biggest reason tenancies fail is through poverty.



# The impact of poverty on Tenancy Sustainment

The definition of poverty used by several international organisations (such as the UN and the World Bank) is that you cannot afford the basic needs of life—food, clothing, shelter. As we go through a global pandemic, it is becoming increasingly clear that there are rising levels of poverty affecting local communities.

Communities will be faced with:

- The impact of an economic downturn
- Increasing hardship and financial pressures
- Rising levels of unemployment
- Increasing levels of ASB, domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns
- An increase in the number of tenants 'at risk'
- Poorer mental health
- Changes in household composition that affect people's health and well-being, as well as their financial circumstances.

Here we have set out some of the factors that can lead to poverty and ultimately put tenancies at risk of failure:

- Unemployment and long-term economic inactivity
- Low paid jobs lacking prospects or security
- Low levels of skills or education
- Poor housing /location
- High housing costs
- Debt and debt repayments
- Digital exclusion
- Fuel poverty
- Lack of affordable childcare
- Food, clothing and transport
- Old age (over 65 are at more risk of relative poverty), youth and ethnicity
- Mental health
- Addiction

A failed tenancy can be represented in different ways. Moving forward, we will define one where tenancies have ended because of:

- Eviction or the threat of eviction
- Abandonment
- Negative housing experiences
- Affordability issues (e.g: rent affordability, struggle to adequately furnish, decorate and maintain a home and to live well, free from food and fuel poverty)
- Not receiving the correct care or support
- Tenant left because they do not feel safe in their home
- The support of our Strive Team, in helping to manage crisis situations, providing domestic abuse support, engagement and referral to external services.

We must accept that it is not always possible, or even desirable for a tenancy to be sustained. For example, in some serious cases of anti-social behaviour or where a victim of domestic abuse is at increased risk if they remain. But equally there are many positive reasons why a tenancy may end. There can also be a good news story.

# The Right Vision



Along with our own vision of what a good tenancy looks like, we have listened to tenants and colleagues who have told us what it means for them. To have homes and places where people want to live, together we believe tenancy success must include the following proactive

and reactive measures. These measures consider key issues such as poverty and hardship, changing ways of working and key factors associated with achieving success. It is quite clear at this stage that this chapter will continue for the next few years.

Householder/s	Home	Community
Applicants having access to <b>pre-tenancy training</b> if needed <b>Individual Housing Plans based on need</b>	Home is ready when needed, has the right features and facilities, and meets tenant requirements	Well-connected and welcoming; demand for homes is high
In a home that suits tenant's needs and is <b>adapted</b> if necessary	Designed well	Homes look well maintained and not stigmatised

Takes <b>responsibility</b> and <b>understands expectations</b> in tenancy agreement <b>Extensive case management</b> where needed.	Is maintained to a good standard	Understands the needs and aspirations of the community and understands how their behaviours may have a positive or negative impact
Maintains a <b>good relationship</b> with Linc	Home is a place of belonging and enjoyment	Supports community action to create more cohesion
Access to best deals - <b>reducing bills</b> by finding the best tariffs and deals	Energy efficient Low fuel costs and income maximisation	Community Input/local initiatives supported
<b>Seeks advice and support with rent</b> to maximise income and <b>reduces poverty</b>	An affordable place to live	Has an understanding of needs
Seeks support from outside agencies where possible	Is in a place where support is accessible	A community with a variety of services accessed

<b>Has a positive experience</b>	Home is in a lettable standard	Community supportive of new tenants and homes
Accesses simple, accessible, and <b>modern services</b>	Is maintained to good standard	Opportunities to get involved and community togetherness
New tenants move into homes that bring <b>positive improvements</b> to their lives and increase affordability	Homes are greener, fuel efficient, designed well	Will benefit from house building programme that meets needs of today's tenants e.g. storage space
Lives fear free from domestic abuse/harm	Home is safe and secure	Multi-agency approach
Knows where to go to reduce hardship/improve life chances if needed and accesses range of grants and place-based services	Affordable services around home Close to public transport (with incentives to use it)	Flourishing communities <a href="#">Community Food Share Pantries</a> <a href="#">Community cycle paths</a> Community Educational health/well-being facilities



# The Right Principles and Behaviours

Principles	Behaviours – staff	Behaviours - tenants
Empowerment	<p><a href="#">Aim to with work tenants or encourage tenants to do things themselves</a></p> <p>Develop shared outcomes with tenants - enable tenants to act on their concerns</p> <p><a href="#">Supporting the channel shift towards digital</a></p> <p>Support tenants to manage expectations of tenancy</p> <p>Look at what the data and insight is saying</p> <p>Make own decisions</p>	<p>Work with staff when there is a concern</p> <p>Share information/concerns early</p> <p>Develop trust in Linc</p> <p>Stay informed</p> <p>Learn new things</p> <p>Understand expectations</p> <p>Makes own decisions</p>
Strengths based	<p>Identify team skills and talents</p> <p>Understand what tenants can do</p> <p><a href="#">Harness restorative approaches</a></p> <p>Support individuals to build on their own strengths</p> <p>Provide money and budgeting advice</p> <p>Utilise skills of different teams</p> <p>Identify key front-line contact staff to signpost</p>	<p>Build on strengths</p> <p>Work together to achieve better outcomes</p> <p>Harness and develop own skills</p> <p>Self-serve where possible</p> <p>Manage my own tenancy</p>
People-centred	<p>An approach to identify risk</p> <p>Behaviour based on respectfulness</p> <p>Acting as one team – OneLinc</p> <p><a href="#">Know and understand needs of tenants</a></p> <p>Holistic approach</p> <p><a href="#">Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)</a></p> <p>Works restoratively</p>	<p>Come up with a solution that suits</p> <p>Tenant expresses own needs</p> <p>Tenant involved to the level they wish</p>

Well-being and Personal development	<p>Focus on what matters most</p> <p>Develops and maximises talents</p> <p>Manageable workloads</p> <p>Work/life balance</p> <p>Agile working</p> <p><a href="#">Training and Personal development</a></p> <p>Learning and Reflection</p>	<p>Build a good network of support around own wellbeing</p> <p>Engages digitally as much as is possible and learns new skills</p> <p>Maximises income to live a healthy life</p> <p>Seek help with employment opportunities if needed</p>
Collaboration	<p>Building good networks</p> <p><a href="#">Listening to tenants and other business insight</a></p> <p>Working across teams and with external agencies</p> <p>Signpost to appropriate agencies</p> <p>Knowing your patch – acting on the information you receive</p> <p>Knowing what agencies operate locally and nationally to maximise benefits</p>	<p>Tap into support to strengthen ability to manage my tenancy</p> <p>Get to know other tenants and other agencies that can provide support</p>





# The Right Principles and Behaviours



Across our diverse array of services for older people we will strive to ensure that our Independent Living staff offer a dynamic and inclusive service to the older people who live in our schemes. Many are vulnerable and have care and support needs. From catering and domestic to service managers, our 140 staff are trained and experienced in providing support and assistance to help people manage and maintain their tenancies.

We recognise that by putting the wellbeing of our tenants at the heart of what we do, we can create sustainable communities and nurture mutual support networks which enable people to flourish and thrive. As we move forward, we will look to ensure that our services and staff operate as flexibly as possible in accordance with the needs of the people who use our services.

Face to face contact, particularly in Extra Care and Sheltered housing will continue to be the mainstay of our communications but this will increasingly be augmented by assistive technology, while our excellent partnership working arrangements will enable us to access health, social care and support services to enable our tenants to live independently.



# The Right Services at the Right Time



As the demands of the business change, as well as the social and economic situation of our tenants, we need to make adjustments to how these services are delivered and it is important that we evolve and change with these demands.

We recognise that we need to move to a more generic structure to restore the personal relationship between tenants and their Housing Officer.

The overall vision is for the Housing Officers to provide a holistic service bringing in any specialist services they need to support them to provide an excellent, responsive service that engenders trust and confidence with our tenants. Specialist teams within the organisation will support Housing Officers in more complex situations. The specialist teams will offer high level support to the Housing Officer team. As highlighted through tenant and staff consultations, we will need to continue to change the perception of Housing Officers as 'enforcers' to that of 'enablers'. This is also reinforced by recent changes to the process for issuing legal notices on tenants in arrears <https://gov.wales/eviction-during-coronavirus-pandemic>. With this now changing to 6 months from 1 month, we must move from a punitive type of response to one of collaboration and engagement, so we understand everything that is happening in that tenants' life so we can empathise and respond accordingly. Having honest conversations will be paramount to success.

It is not just Housing Officers that will provide that early identification of potential problems. This is a company-wide responsibility, and we want to work with other teams to ensure that we can gather data to inform our actions with the ultimate aim of keeping tenants in their homes and managing their tenancy obligations.

As the journey unfolds, there will be various times when additional support or additional services can be tapped into. Internally, these may include the need to work closely with:

- The Strive Team – to support the Housing Officer Team to manage crisis situations and make referrals to external support agencies
- The Independent Living Team
- The Community Safety Team (ASB) – when a situation requires more detailed solutions and/or legal actions
- The Customer Contact Team – to [triage the need of tenants](#) contacting Linc and to appropriately deal with the enquiry or direct the tenant to the most appropriate team member
- Assets, especially contractors to [act upon a concern](#), referring through appropriate channels
- Community Engagement team or Regeneration team to develop skills/capacity, opportunities to strengthen our engagement and involvement, to maximise resources held within the teams and amongst tenants' groups and to and support group led initiatives
- Development Team before planning stage to ensure we learn from experience

## Tenancy Management Register

To help us understand the complexities that may influence some negative tenant responses, we intend to produce and populate a matrix to ensure tenants get the support they need and so we can identify tenants at most risk of tenancy failure. This will be a risk based early interventionist approach.

The intention is to work across the business to pull together everything we know e.g. no repairs reported, not providing access, gas capped, recharges, arrears, behaviour, what the outside of the property looks like etc. This gives us the opportunity to focus in areas of highest need.

Where agreed, we will develop personal housing plans with tenants and this will help us determine the frequency of on-going visits.

## The Tenancy Management Register aligns with our pillars – its aim being to -

- Identify those tenants who are struggling to maintain their tenancy earlier.
- Provide the right services to those in the greatest need.
- To understand our tenancies in a more defined way and record the journey.
- To target resources – a switch from reactive to proactive.
- To train our staff on being involved – that reporting an issue will not always lead to a negative outcome – that protecting property and people is what we want to achieve.

In terms of tenancy sustainment, early, proactive engagement is key. This is backed up by what tenants reported back to us (and the findings of leading organisations).

# The Right Approach

We have identified four pillars of tenancy sustainment that can help to provide a stable platform for tenants to be able to maintain their tenancies: These illustrate the core themes and our key priorities moving forward.

<b>Homes that are safe, affordable, and secure</b>	<b>Data and Insight</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Relationship Building</b>
A home to flourish in, to maximise income where needed and reduce evictions into homelessness	A service built on insight to target resources in the right places	Targeted & appropriate support for at risk tenants to reduce tenancy failure and alleviate poverty - improving social and economic conditions where needed	Engagement and Trust  Improving tenant satisfaction and improving access to services through modernisation

These pillars are underpinned by our [OneLinc Business Plan](#) which outlines Linc's goals and its responsibility to meet the ambitions of the Welsh Government and the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#):

- [A Prosperous Wales](#)
- [A Resilient Wales](#)
- [A More Equal Wales](#)
- [A Healthier Wales](#)
- [A Wales of Cohesive Communities](#)
- [A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language](#)
- [A Globally Responsible Wales](#)

Our overriding purpose is to create the right environment for people to flourish and this is supported by our values which are:

**Passionate. Ambitious. Respectful.**

The right environment for us means that we will develop shared outcomes with tenants, work with other teams and external organisations and act upon the warning signs we see and hear, through gathering data across the business and everyday insight. The following chart outlines the outcomes that can be achieved by implementing this strategy. But it is by no means exhaustive. As part of our strategy, we will look again at a wide range of outcomes to ensure maintain of focus. We will examine the use of both soft and hard indicators of success and implement what is valuable and workable.

<b>Outcomes aligned to the four pillars of delivery</b>	<b>Homes that are safe, affordable, and secure</b>	<b>Data and Insight</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Relationships Engagement Trust</b>
Increased assistance from UC support teams				
Prevented 'failed' tenancies				
More knowledge and understanding of needs				
More tenants save money and pay off rent arrears				
Reduced hardship due to interventions (no. of tenants supported to reduce arrears)				
More support from outside agencies				
Local Area Information Packages collated and accessed (increased knowledge and feedback)				
More tenants digitally engaged with Linc (increase in accessing website/information)				
More tenants are self-serving (no. of tenants)				
Reduced fuel poverty with property upgrades/retrofitting (no. of homes upgraded)				
Reduced fuel poverty with advice and contact with support agencies (no. of contact agencies)				
Increased support for people facing under-occupancy charge				



More adapted tenants' homes				
Increased early intervention				
More tenants signposted to free digital skills courses				
More tenants shift channels towards digital				
More people in work				
More higher needs mental health support located				
More tenants feel safe in home and community				
More tenants live free from domestic abuse				
More tenants feel their rent provides value for money				
Less evictions into homelessness				
New lettings meet customer expectations				

More tenants feel that we listen and act upon their views				
Reduced recurring complaints				
Reduced arrears				
Reduced void turnover				
Identify risks - use of rag system				
More tenants signed to wellbeing initiatives				
Tenants stories collected				
More tenants' voices are heard (improved services informed by insight)				
More communities access funding for initiatives				
Improved housing design to meet needs of tenants				
Research areas prioritised and conducted				



# The Right Commitments

We have put together several commitments which form the framework for how we propose to work with tenants to achieve our aim of retaining successful tenancies.

## Commitment 1: Pre-Tenancy and Beyond

### Every tenant has the best possible start to a safe, secure, and affordable home

This will be a key part of the strategy. How a tenancy starts can play a big part in the relationships we develop. Getting our relationship right at the beginning of their housing journey – developing trust and lines of communication in order to come to us whenever they need support. This includes working with tenants to outline not only our expectations, but their rights and levels of support needed.

Initiatives to support young, inexperienced tenants such as MyPad are tried and tested and Linc were partners in this. We will support other 'at risk' tenants too.

We want to continue to ensure rents are affordable so that no tenants suffer hardship due to their housing costs. The results from our STAR survey show that rent offers good value for money and we will

### To achieve this, we will:

- Review our sign-up process with the aim to improve new tenants' experience
- Create a personal housing plan based on the risk assessments
- Identify what information tenants need when they start their tenancy and how they would like to receive it
- Review how we can identify any support needs at the earliest point and ensure we have this support in place
- Be proactive as a landlord in building relationships with support agencies
- Continue to ask tenants and use our own data to ensure that rents continue to remain affordable for all.
- Develop a plan that sets about how we can build partnerships to reduce evictions into homelessness
- Poverty Reduction Plan
- Ensure tenants who can self-serve do so and access our modernised services
- Ensure we learn from our tenants, what works and what does not in terms of starting a tenancy and in terms of the design of new homes

## Commitment 2 : Collaboration

### We have the right support in place for people who need it

We recognise we cannot do everything ourselves and that some tenants will need extra support. This support can range from a short intervention aimed at helping them through a specific issue or on-going.

The housing services' priority when providing support is centred around equipping tenants with the tools and skills, they need to resolve issues for themselves. It is also about working with them to identify how their choices or behaviour can influence their ability to maintain their tenancy.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Provide proactive intervention and support
- Ensure staff are well trained and supported to deliver money advice and budgeting support with tenants
- Help tenants struggling to maintain their tenancy
- Look at where we can access resources to deliver enhanced services
- Work more closely with agencies that could support tenants to reduce tenancy failure, such as those who may support tenants who suffer mental health problems
- Identify trigger incidents and widely distribute what this might look like
- Involve partners and support agencies to deliver successful outcomes
- Maintain smaller patch sizes around 300, and shift patch size according to need.
- Empower both tenants and staff to understand how to access local services and initiatives to meet their ambitions
- Clearly set out what we can do ourselves and where we will need to work with others in terms of poverty reduction
- How can we effectively contribute towards the [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) agenda or is awareness enough?

## Commitment 3 : Relationship Building

We recognise that high quality relationships are key to effective service delivery. We will work with our staff to ensure they have the time to develop trusting relationships with people using our services, and that they are using psychologically informed approaches regardless of whether experiences of trauma are known. We will take a restorative approach, communicating in a clear, consistent and respectful way that avoids re-traumatising people.

This will enable us to get the basics right. We will work with our tenants around their responsibilities. For example, the understanding that not paying rent, engaging in anti-social behaviour, not keeping a home or garden clean and tidy can affect not just the tenant, but the wider community too. However, our relational approach will ensure that where tenants need additional support to meet our shared goals, we will take a strength based approach to get there.

### Restorative approaches all around

The aim is that the staff will develop strong and [restorative relationships](#) with those most at risk, calling upon the services of others from within and external to Linc as and when is needed.

[Meeting tenants' needs](#) will involve moving away from more paternalistic approaches such as doing things for tenants. Moving forward, we will take further steps to ensure we are working in [Psychologically Informed Environments \(PIE\)](#) but also ensuring that more staff are supported to work with tenants to build upon their strengths. It is also about establishing a relationship with tenants where they feel confident to act on our advice.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Explore how we can recognise 'responsible tenants'
- Be proactive in our approach to tenancy audits to identify issues and work with tenants to solve them
- Ensure our approach to enforcement is proportionate, but sets out clear consequences
- Support and empower tenants to deal with anti-social behaviour
- Identify opportunities to build trusting relationships at the outset
- Identify those most at risk
- Ensure we hear the tenants voice/story
- Encourage restorative approaches within our communities
- Identify how can we engage with younger people and Black and Minority Ethnic communities to ensure to inform service improvements
- Identify tenants that create high levels of demand on the service and work with them to understand the cause
- Roll out training to build talents and skills of staff
- Ensure more tenants are included digitally to increase uptake of a self-serve function
- Ensure tenants feel they can approach us when needed but accept that there will be limited intervention when not



## Commitment 4 : Data and Insight

### We take an informed approach to managing tenancies

With our commitment to continuously improve our service we can use the knowledge, skills and experience of our officers combined with data to make informed decisions.

For many, it will involve a [digital shift](#) towards tapping into digital services. For some, it will involve support where needed and signposting to essential services. This will offer flexibility for those who need it within our digital offer, targeted support to reduce rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, and tenancy failures.

By building our knowledge we can streamline our approach to managing tenancies and provide better value for money.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Build up the information we hold on tenants and use it to tailor our services based on changes in need or demographics
- Continue to work with tenants to review our performance to take part in our self-evaluation and improve services
- Deliver a generic housing needs-led, flexible tenancy support service to Linc's tenants to promote independence and support sustainable tenancies
- Acknowledge that the best insight can be achieved by simply asking tenants what they need and when they need it.
- Where needed, we will consistently engage with tenants
- We will increase our understanding of tenants' advice, care, and support needs.
- Risk assess tenants to identify those at most risk of tenancy failure

## Commitment 5 : Modernisation

We will continue to modernise our approach to service delivery, e.g.. more use of digital methods of delivery for tenants with the capacity to use online services. We know many tenants have requested better online services because of the flexibility this offers, particularly intermediate and private tenants and those who work.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Work effectively across all teams to achieve the OneLinc purpose
- Use technology effectively to reduce costs compared to more traditional ways of delivering services.
- Adopt technological improvements that will ensure we can adopt new ways of working to respond to Universal Credit for instance.
- Work to ensure great service design.
- An inclusive strategy to encourage the take-up of digital services.
- We need to use mechanisms for engaging with those tenants who do not have the [capacity or desire to go digital](#).
- Analyse patterns of behaviour and service delivery and using our profiling and satisfaction data we can adopt a more proactive approach to tenancy management.
- Trigger the right actions at the right time.



# Evaluating The Results

## Links to Self-Evaluation

How well we manage to achieve success or otherwise against our vision and priorities will be set out in our framework for self-evaluation. We will measure success against key priorities set out in our Action Plan and report on these annually.

## The Costs and the Benefits

We want to further understand and demonstrate the costs and benefits of delivering our strategy. We will explore the use of the latest HACT social value measurement tool across our housing services.

# Links to other strategies

Ensuring tenancy sustainment sits alongside other strategies, such as the **Asset Management Strategy, Environmental Strategy, our Value for Money, Equality and Diversity and Community Engagement Strategy**. It also links to other areas of our work such as **Live Fear Free, Safe at Home** and **Black Lives Matter**.

It is clear from the research that has been done to inform this strategy, we also need to further develop our work on our **Poverty Reduction Plan** and a **Reducing Evictions Into Homelessness Plan** to ensure we can maximise the goals and outcomes that we hope to achieve as part of this strategy.



# The Journey Begins



We have outlined our plans to support this strategy and believe we have taken a forward-thinking approach. Now, what's left is for the journey to begin and for us to continue to build goodwill and trust with tenants, provide opportunities to develop long-lasting and meaningful relationships and build a better platform to enable them to flourish.

The strategy will be supported by an annual action plan.



Creating the right environment for people to flourish