

## **Spend to Save Policy**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Spend to Save grant assists the Housing Options team to fund innovative ways to prevent or relieve homelessness for eligible households.
- 1.2 Kettering Borough Council has a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This 'prevention duty' means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live before they actually become homeless.
- 1.3 If the applicant is already homeless, or becoming homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, the reasonable steps will be focused on helping the applicant to secure accommodation. This is called the 'relief duty'.
- 1.4 The spend to save grant will assist the Housing Options team to meet their obligations under the prevention and relief duties. Such assistance may include (but is not restricted to).
  - Paying rent arrears in cases where the landlord has agreed the tenant can remain in the property and the reasons for the rent arrears accruing have been investigated and found to not be intentionally unpaid by the tenant.
  - Make good tenant damage to a property in exceptional circumstances (e.g. damage caused by a former partner of the tenant) where the landlord has agreed the tenant can remain in the property and the tenant has signed a behavioural contract.
  - Financial assistance to secure a privately rented property.
  - Paying for a mediation service.
- 1.5 The Spend to save grant is a discretionary grant provided by the Council. The grant can be withdrawn at any time.

## **2 Scope of policy**

- 2.1 This policy provides the framework in which the Housing Options Team will operate when issuing a spend to save grant to eligible households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## **3 Policy aims**

- 3.1 When awarding a spend to save grant we aim to:
1. Encourage Housing Options Advisors to use the grant to fund innovative ways to prevent or relieve homelessness for their applicants
  2. Prevent the need to use temporary accommodation for eligible households
  3. Secure suitable accommodation for applicants which has a reasonable prospect of being available for the applicants occupation for at least 6 months
  4. Secure accommodation that is safe for occupation and free from hazards

## **4 Eligibility Criteria**

- 4.1 The spend to save grant will only be awarded when the following conditions apply:
- 1) Applicants must be eligible for assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
  - 2) Applicants must be owed a prevention duty (under Section 195 of the Housing Act 1996) **or** a relief duty (under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996)
  - 3) Unless otherwise agreed by the Homelessness Manager, applicants must meet the local connection criteria. This means they must have been residing in Kettering borough for at least 6 months during the previous 12 months, or for three years during the previous five year period.
  - 4) Criteria 3 does not apply if the applicant is a care leaver. In the case of care leavers:
    - a. a young person owed leaving care duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 will have a local connection to the area of the children services authority that owes them the duties. If the children services authority is a county council and not a housing

authority, the young person will have a local connection with every housing authority district falling within the area of the children services authority.

- b. Where a care leaver is aged under 21 and normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area.
- 5) There must be a reasonable prospect that the accommodation secured will be available for the applicant's occupation for at least 6 months. If applicants have been assisted to remain in a private sector tenancy a new Assured Shorthold Tenancy would be required (rather than the continuation of a periodic tenancy).

## **5 Sustainability assessments**

- 5.1 The Housing Options Advisor must assess the sustainability of any planned outcome before Spend to Save is used. The Spend to Save budget should not be used to defer homelessness it should be used to address the root causes. For example a Housing Options Advisor should not clear rent arrears if those arrears have occurred because an applicant has a tenancy for which the liability is far in excess of their Local Housing Allowance. This will lead to the same problem reoccurring within in a short time period. An applicant should only be eligible for a Spend to Save grant in a case of this kind where a change of circumstances has occurred that would result in the intervention creating a sustainable outcome. For example, the applicant becoming eligible for a higher Local Housing Allowance which covers the rental liability.
- 5.2 Income and expenditure assessments must be completed to ensure the property is affordable for the applicant.

## **6 Suitability of accommodation**

- 6.1 All private rented sector properties which have been accessed by applicants through a Kettering Borough Council grant must have been assessed as safe for the occupants to live in. Properties must be inspected by a member of the Private Sector Housing Team prior to the commencement of the tenancy or funds being released by KBC.
- 6.2 To request an inspection, Housing Options should complete a private sector housing referral form (Appendix C). To ensure the

resources of the Private Sector Housing Team are utilised efficiently, inspections should only be requested once the tenancy period, gas & electricity certificates and rental amount has been agreed by all parties. In all cases where the rent exceeds the Local Housing Allowance rate, an affordability assessment must be completed to ensure the property is affordable and sustainable.

- 6.3 The Private Sector Housing team will complete an assessment of the property under the Housing and Health Safety Rating System. The officer completing the assessment will complete section 5 of the Private Sector Housing Referral Form (Appendix C) and return it to the Housing Options Advisor. Where a property is found to have Category 1 hazards, no tenancy can proceed until the hazard has been removed.
- 6.4 Spend to save grants must only be made to properties that meet the following criteria:
- Free from Category 1 hazards
  - Have a valid gas safe certificate
  - Have a (within 10 years of issue) Electrical Installation Condition Report issued by a competent electrician
  - Have a current EPC (Energy Performance Certificate)
  - Be affordable for the new tenant (Tenancies above the Local Housing Allowance Rate must have affordability assessments)
  - Be suitable in size for the household composition
  - Tenants has been advised of Deposit Protection Scheme
- 6.5 If a landlord is required to complete work on the property to remove any hazards this should be completed and a new fixed term tenancy issued (rather than a continuation of a periodic tenancy) before funds are released.
- 6.6 In cases where the property is out of the Borough, and therefore cannot easily be visited by the Private Sector Housing Team, the Housing Options team must take reasonable steps to investigate the suitability of the property. For example, this may include contacting the local authority in which the property is located to establish if they have previously taken any enforcement action on the property.

## **7 Personal Housing Plans**

- 7.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a duty for local housing authorities to conduct assessments for all eligible and homeless (and threatened with homelessness) applicants.

Following the assessment the local housing authority must produce a 'personal housing plan' which details the actions to be taken by both parties to ensure the applicant has and is able to retain suitable accommodation. These plans must be recorded in writing and given to the applicant.

- 7.2 Payment of a Spend to Save grant should not be issued if the applicant is failing to meet the actions required of them in their Personal Housing Plan. For example if the Personal Housing Plan requires the applicant to claim Housing Benefit the applicant must be proactively doing this.

## **8 Approval of Spend to Save grant**

- 8.1 A spend to save checklist for Housing Options Advisors is available at Appendix A.
- 8.1 Evidence must be placed on file that applicants are owed a prevention duty (under Section 195 of the Housing Act 1996) or a relief duty (under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996)
- 8.2 Housing Options Advisors can seek approval for the grant by completing the 'Approval of spend to save' form (Appendix B).
- 8.3 Spend to save grants up to the value of £2,500 can be approved by the Homelessness Manager. Grants between £2,501 and £5,000 must be approved by the Housing Solutions Manager.

## **9 Maximum assistance**

- 9.1 The maximum assistance payable per grant is £5,000.

## **10 Terms and Conditions Applicable**

- 10.1 All decisions to award grants will be made subject to funds being available.
- 10.2 The grant is payable at the discretion of the Council and will only be awarded where there are tangible benefits for both the applicant and the Council.
- 10.3 Where a spend to save grant is being utilised to pay off an applicant's rent arrears, grants will only be awarded after

repayment agreements between the applicant and landlord have been explored.

10.4 Where an applicant has previously been awarded a spend to save grant for the same issue a grant will not normally be awarded.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Spend to Save: checklist for Housing Options Advisors

Appendix B: Spend to Save Approval Request

Appendix C: Private Sector Housing Referral Form

## Appendix A: Spend to Save: checklist for Housing Options Advisors

Spend to Save checklist	
Applicant is eligible for assistance	
Applicant is owed a prevention or relief duty – evidence saved on file	
Has the applicant previously been awarded a spend to save grant?	
Housing Options Advisor satisfied that accommodation has a reasonable prospect of being available for the applicant’s occupation for at least 6 months. If the applicant has been assisted to remain in a privately rented property then a new AST has been issued. In cases where the grant is being used to pay off rent arrears, a repayment agreement between the applicant and the landlord must have been explored and proved unsuccessful.	
Housing Options Advisor has completed an income and expenditure assessment and is satisfied that the accommodation is affordable – evidence saved on file	
<p>If applicable, property has been inspected by the Private Sector Housing team and they have confirmed the property :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is free from Category 1 hazards</li> <li>• Has a valid gas safe certificate</li> <li>• Has a (within 10 years of issue) Electrical Installation Condition Report issued by a competent electrician</li> <li>• Has a current EPC (Energy Performance Certificate)</li> </ul>	
Applicant is meeting their commitments in their Personal Housing Plan	
If Category 1 Hazards were identified – the landlord has completed the works (if applicable)	
Spend to save grant approval request (Appendix A) signed and returned by Homelessness Manager or Housing Solutions Manager	
Funds issued	

## Appendix B: Spend to Save Approval Request

<b>App Name:</b>		<b>Current Address:</b>
<b>Contact No:</b>		
<b>Date of Birth:</b>		
<b>National Insurance:</b>		
<b>Family Details:</b>		

- **Prospective Property:**  
**Funding Requested:**

*Deposit £XX*  
*Rent in Advance £XX*  
*Static Arrears £XX*

### Summary and justification of expenditure:

*Please include details of the households current circumstances and why the payment is required.*

*Please confirm that the PSHT have been out to inspect and that the property is up to standard. (Please include a copy of their report with this Request.)*

This payment would prevent XXXX and their household's homelessness and it would avoid the need for temporary accommodation. This request should be provided under "Spend to Save" as this payment requested equates to approx. XX weeks of KBC stock / bed and breakfast / nightly charged private sector accommodation (at £20-50 per night) should it be required. Due to the current demands on the Housing Options Team and the Homelessness Services it is *highly* likely that XXXX stay in interim accommodation at the current time would exceed XX weeks and prove more costly than this prevention payment.

Report by:	Signature:
Job Title: Housing Options Advisor	Date:
Agreed by: <b>Grants up to the value of £2,500 must be approved by the Homelessness Manager</b>	Signature:
Job Title: Homelessness Manager	Date:
Agreed by: <b>If the grant is between £2,501 and £5,000 it must be approved by the Housing Solutions Manager</b>	Signature:
Job title: Housing Solutions Manager	Date:



## Appendix C: Private Sector Housing Referral Form

<b>Housing Officer:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
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### Section 1. Landlord details:

<b>Landlord Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone no:</b>	
<b>Email Address:</b>	

### Section 2. Property details:

<b>Property Address:</b>	
<b>No of Bedrooms:</b>	
<b>Current Gas certificate:</b>	
<b>Current Electricity certificate:</b>	

### Section 3. Client details:

<b>Clients Name:</b>	
<b>Current Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone No:</b>	
<b>Email Address:</b>	
<b>Reason for Request:</b>	

### Household Composition:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>DOB</b>	<b>Sex</b>
<b>Housing Options – is size of property suitable for household?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comment</b>	
<b>Private Sector Housing - is size of property suitable for household?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comment</b>	
<b>Any disagreement in the above must be discussed with the Homelessness Manager</b>			

### Section 4. Tenancy Details:

<b>Rental amount (PCM):</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Tenancy period:</b>	
<b>Is the property suitable in size for the family:</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>

<b>Has an I&amp;E been completed?:</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Is the property affordable</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>

**Section 5. PSH feedback:**

<b>Inspecting Officer:</b>		
<b>Date of inspection:</b>		
<b>Is the property compliant with HHSRS:</b>		<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Comments:</b>		