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PURPOSE

This document sets out Adullam Homes Housing Association (AHHA) strategy for financial inclusion which is underpinned by the vision and cross cutting themes set out within its Strategic Plan.

The Financial Inclusion Policy comprises this document and the Financial Inclusion Action Plan, appended to this document. The action plan details the activities that will be undertaken to achieve the aims of this policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The policy covers the period April 2023 to March 2026 and will be refreshed annually in line with Co-production Strategy, Arrears Strategy, Adullam Social Enterprise priorities and others. To ensure the outcomes from the action plan continue to meet the Association's aims.

1.2 We manage over 600 units operating in several localities across the country in East and West Midlands, the Northwest, Wales, and South Yorkshire. According to the **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCL)** '*English Indices of Deprivation 2019 Statistical Release 2019*' (provides a relative measure at a small area level across England) the areas we work in based on the **Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)** - this measure summarises the proportion of neighbourhoods in a larger area that are in the most deprived 10 per cent of neighbourhoods in the country, shows AAHA works in areas that are included **within the 10% most deprived areas nationally**.

"This measure is only focused on illustrating the number of neighbourhoods within a larger area which are the most deprived in England. However, neighbourhoods just outside the 10 per cent most deprived are not included as part of this measure, so large areas, such as local authorities or local enterprise partnerships, may not appear to be so deprived relative to others if they contain zero or few of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country."

Most deprived local authorities based on Rank

1. Blackpool
2. Manchester
3. Knowsley
4. Liverpool
5. Barking and Dagenham
6. Birmingham
7. Hackney
8. Sandwell
9. Kingston upon Hull
10. Nottingham

Most deprived local authorities based on Score

1. Blackpool
2. Knowsley
3. Liverpool
4. Kingston upon Hull
5. Middlesbrough
6. Manchester
7. Birmingham
8. Burnley
9. Blackburn with Darwen
10. Hartlepool

Most deprived local authorities based on the Proportion of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally

1. Middlesbrough
2. Liverpool
3. Knowsley
4. Kingston upon Hull
5. Manchester
6. Blackpool
7. Birmingham
8. Burnley
9. Blackburn with Darwen
10. Hartlepool

2 Why Do We Need A Financial Inclusion Strategy?

2.1 Rising costs of living in relation to basic needs such as fuel and food, together with higher housing costs are exacerbating the problems of vulnerable tenants and pushing others currently at the 'tipping point' into potential difficulties. Having a Financial Inclusion Policy sets out our plans to help improve the financial wellbeing of tenants by offering a range of services which will help to minimise financial exclusion.

2.2 AHHA recognises that as part of an overall approach to address these high levels of poverty and to create sustainable communities that we need to help our tenants to lead a better quality of life by focusing on reducing financial exclusion. This is equally as important for those who are working but still struggling as it is for those who are benefit dependent and our approach will consider ways to help all tenants, irrespective of their employment status.

3 Definition - What Is Financial Exclusion & Inclusion?

3.1 There are a few definitions for Financial Inclusion the Financial Inclusion Commission, 2020 advises ***"Financial Inclusion the means by which people can make their money work well for them, enabling them to maximise opportunities, move into employment, become more self-reliant and enhance physical and mental wellbeing"*** The term financial exclusion is also used in different ways but is most often defined as a broad concept describing a lack of access to, and a use of a range of financial services.

3.2 As the impact of financial exclusion falls more heavily on low-income households, this strategy seeks to ensure sufficient support is provided to these households to maximise their income. This will be achieved through a number of means and will include supporting people of working age to access employment, and in overcoming barriers to work.



3.3 Financially excluded people typically exhibit one or more of the following characteristics: -

a) A lack of a bank account and the financial services that come with it.
b) A reliance on alternative forms of credit such as doorstep lenders and pawnbrokers.
c) A lack of other key financial products such as insurance, savings products and pensions.

3.4 Those who are unable to access basic financial services pay more to manage their money, find it difficult to plan for the future and are more likely to become over -indebted.

3.5 Financial exclusion is not just an individual problem; it reinforces social exclusion. Social exclusion is about more than just income poverty. It occurs where people or geographical areas experience a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, low incomes, lower level of educational achievement, skills and training, homelessness, family breakdown etc.

3.6 Links between financial and social inclusion are complex. Financial exclusion very often contributes to social exclusion -for example, not having a bank account into which wages can be paid can be a barrier to taking a job and not having access to credit can make it more difficult to be part of the wider consumer society. The combination of low incomes, pressures on expenditure and the use of expensive credit often leads to material deprivation, going without, inability to invest and debt spirals when more expensive debt is taken to cover the existing debt.

3.7 Financial Exclusion is the flip side of Financial Inclusion which ensures a person's income is maximised to ensure that they can meet their basic living costs, support is provided to help ensure their outgoings are controlled and they can exercise informed choices through access to basic financial services. Without this, people are often described as financially excluded. People who are financially excluded are often those in poverty or experiencing disadvantage and as a result might:

a) Struggle to meet normal living costs such as their fuel bills.
b) Struggle to budget, manage money and plan for the future.
c) Experience difficulties with problem debt.
d) Experience difficulties with rent arrears and homelessness.
e) Experience difficulties in accessing mainstream financial services.
f) Experience worse health and educational outcomes.

4 Who Is Most Likely To Be Affected By Financial Exclusion

4.1 Following national research those most likely to be affected by financial exclusion are:

a) Single parents
b) Over 60s
c) People with disabilities
d) Young adults between 18 and 24
e) People who are homeless
f) Low income households and /or in receipt of benefits
g) Refugees and asylum seekers
h) Living in local authority or housing association accommodation

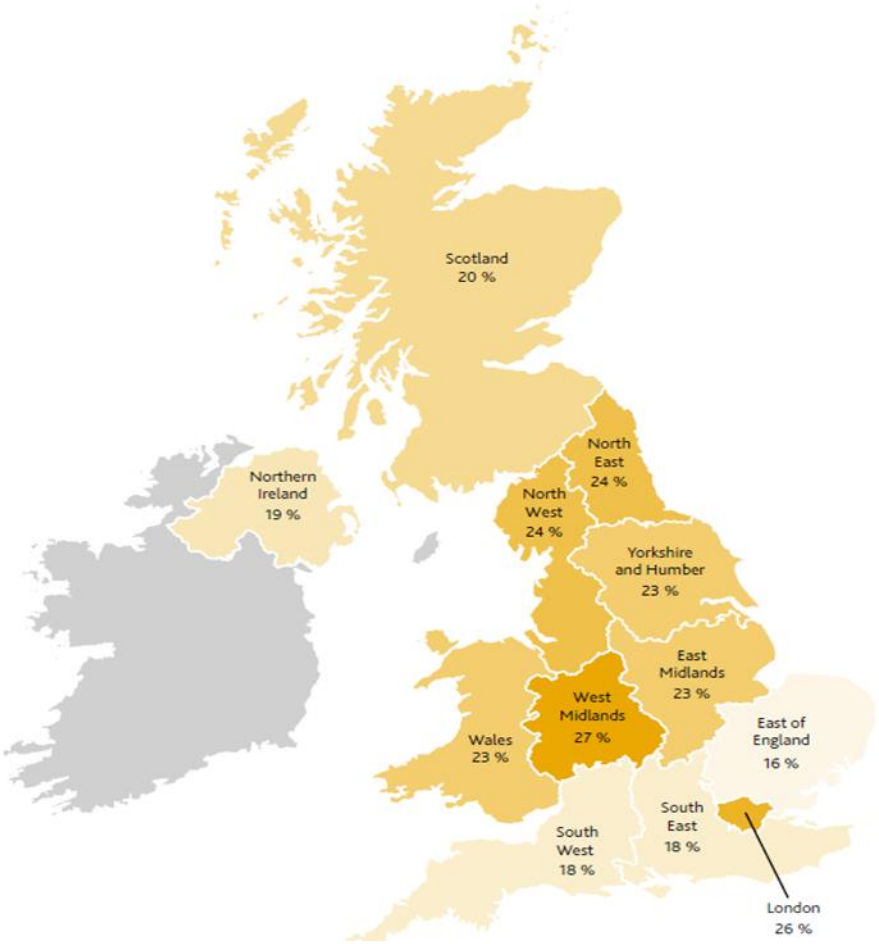
4.2 The causes of financial exclusion can be attributed to a variety of reasons but will usually be due to a change in circumstances such as: -

a) Losing your home
b) Losing your employment

c) Breakdown of relationship
d) Illness, disability or bereavement within the family
e) New parents
f) Change of benefit entitlement/delay processing benefit
g) Start of a new business
h) Going in to or coming out of prison
i) Reduction in income

4.3 Poverty has a major impact on society recent research completed by The Social Metrics Commission also shows geographically AHHA work in areas with the **top poverty rates** in the UK.

Figure 25: Poverty rates for the UK population, by English region, 2021/22



4.4 The poverty metric was developed by The Social Metrics Commission, who are an independent organisation dedicated to helping policy makers and the public understand and take action to tackle poverty.

5 National Context

5.1 Our policy must be informed by other external sources of information, intelligence and insight. For example, the "unknowns" that nobody can predict with any degree of confidence what the rate of inflation, the level of energy prices or what the actual "cost of living" would be. Therefore data included covers research done by 'National Energy Action' ***"The average annual energy bill, under the Ofgem price cap, is £1,928. We estimate that there are currently 6.5 million households in fuel poverty, unable to afford to heat their homes to the***

***temperature needed to keep warm and healthy. In October 2021, we estimated there were 4.5 million UK households in fuel poverty. For more information*."**

5.2 Around three million UK households are in the grip of fuel poverty, unable to afford to heat their homes to the temperature needed to keep warm and healthy. Cold homes can cause or worsen a range of serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, bronchitis, and asthma. Each year people die due to living in a cold home. Fuel poverty can also have a significant impact on mental health and is a known risk factor for suicide.

Fuel Poverty

5.4 The government uses the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) for fuel poverty definition in England (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland use different definitions). Under the LILEE indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if:

a) *"they are living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below and when they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line.*

5.5 *There are three important elements in determining whether a household is fuel poor: -*

a) *Household income.*
b) *household energy requirements – energy efficiency is a key driver of fuel poverty, as higher energy efficiency reduces a household's fuel costs for a particular size of property fuel prices – the energy price cap, which keeps suppliers from setting their default tariff higher than a set amount, is largely determined by wholesale energy prices.*
c) *The fuel poverty gap is the additional income that would be needed to bring a household to the point of not being fuel poor."*

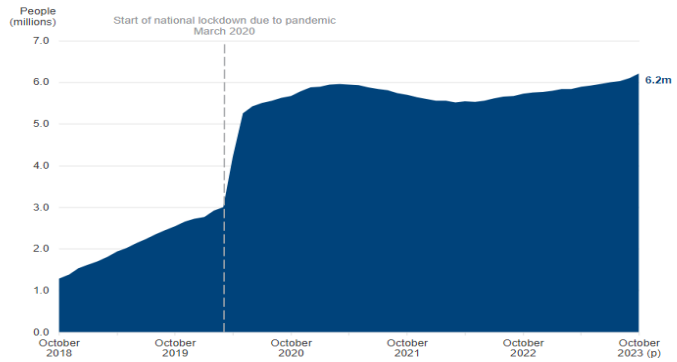
5.6 Under the new Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric, the number of fuel poor household in England in 2022 ***was estimated at 3.26 million, representing approximately 13.4 per cent of all English households***.

National Unemployment

5.7 The national unemployment rate for May to July 2023, was 4.3% In October to December 2023, the estimated number of vacancies fell by 49,000 to 934,000, the 18th consecutive period to show a fall on the quarter and the lowest number of vacancies since April to June 2021.

There were 6.2 million people on Universal Credit in October 2023

People on Universal Credit, Great Britain, October 2018 to October 2023



Note: (p) provisional

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore, People on Universal Credit

The number of people on Universal Credit in October 2023 was 6.2 million. This has been increasing since March 2022, when it was 5.5 million.

5.8 The government announced that during period October 2023 there were 6.2 million people seeking either Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit because they were "searching for work". This compares with 2 million in October 2019.

5.9 Key findings were:

a) The proportion of people in the 'no work requirements' conditionality regime continues to increase.
b) There were, on average, 53,000 claims and 43,000 starts per week in October 2023.
c) Universal Credit households with children accounted for half of all households with a payment in August 2023.

Ageing Population

5.10 State of Ageing 2023 report highlights that, among UK adults, people aged 60-64 now have the highest rate of relative poverty they advise in their report *"Millions of pensioners are living in poverty, but a number of trends suggest things could get even worse over the next decade."* It's estimated that 1.6 million pensioners live in poverty, whilst latest annual Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) 'take-up' figures show that over a million pensioner households are missing out on Pension Credit (worth up to £1600pa or £32pw) which they are entitled to receive.

5.11 As a means-tested, tax-free benefit for pensioners that would open the door to many other potential benefits including:

a) A free TV licence (if also over-75).
b) Free NHS dental treatment, help with the cost of glasses/travel to hospital.
c) A Cold Weather Payment during periods of prolonged cold weather.

Child Poverty

5.12 The Child Poverty Act details the 3 main causes of child poverty that make the Financial Inclusion policy relevant which are: -

a) Cost of living
b) Income from employment
c) Income from social security.

5.13 Child poverty will continue to rise says the Childrens Commissioner unless the Government commits to a bold, broad response. They advise "***We are one of the most prosperous nations yet the number of children living in poverty is shocking and it is a cause for national shame. Child poverty has long been a fundamental problem facing Britain and holding back millions of children. Even before Covid there were two fundamental facts that show how serious the situation has become: -***

a) Children are the group of the population most likely to be in poverty, and child poverty has been rising in absolute and relative terms for nearly a decade during which pensioner poverty has fallen consistently and dramatically.
b) The gap between children eligible for free school meals and their peers is now widening, after decades of continuous progress in closing this gap."

5.14 Providing advice on how to reduce outgoings and ensuring our tenants get the social security benefits they are entitled to will play a major role in reducing child poverty for our tenants.

The Cost of Living

5.15 The cost of living with the price of the most basic food stuffs is perceptibly increasing month-by-month at a rate well beyond the headline rate of CPI*. This hits the poorest and most vulnerable, those with children and people with disabilities hardest. Secondly, rising rate of inflation decreases the purchasing power of those on the lowest incomes. This inflationary

context makes the poorest poorer, those on low paid work, those on fixed benefits income and those on a basic state pension and pension credit.

5.16 In terms of energy, despite the reduction and standing charge price cap freeze announced in September 2022, households have continued to pay over and above this for actual fuel supply used and it is becoming increasingly obvious to services that people are indeed choosing 'food or fuel'.

5.17 The consequences for virtually all households will be significant in respect of tenants being materially poorer in real terms, the most vulnerable being further disadvantaged and many more households and people being drawn into poverty.

Food Poverty

5.18 The Minimum Income Standard (**MIS**) provides a minimum acceptable level of food expenditure based on household composition. Households are categorised as being in food poverty if their residual income after priority costs is less than the minimum income standard (MIS) of food expenditure, based on the number of occupants in the household.

Water Poverty

5.19 Households are categorised as being in water poverty if their estimated water costs account for 3% or more of their disposable income. The International Water Association report defines water poverty as "***is the lived condition households experience when they are struggling, or unable, to afford their water bills***." Despite a relatively low public profile, it affects approximately 20% of households in England and Wales in 2020. Currently, as many as 34% of bill payers are reported to be struggling to pay fairly frequently.

Digital Exclusion

5.20 Digital exclusion remains a contributing factor to financial exclusion. The digital divide is created by both a lack of skills to use technology and a lack of access to the internet, but it's also linked to the ability to pay for it. Tenants who live on a low income or social security benefits may be unable to afford access.

5.21 A lack of computer skills and /or the inability to access the internet can exclude people from a range of opportunities, for example, job searches and shopping around online for the best deals on essential expenses such as car insurance, and cheaper electricity tariffs. It is also the case that many goods and services are now advertised online through social media platforms and lack of access to the internet can further isolate those who need the help.

5.22 Universal Credit applications are accessed and managed almost exclusively via an online portal causing significant problems for those who are not computer literate and/or do not have internet access at home. Tackling digital exclusion is a fundamental facet of enabling financial inclusion.

Digital Inclusion

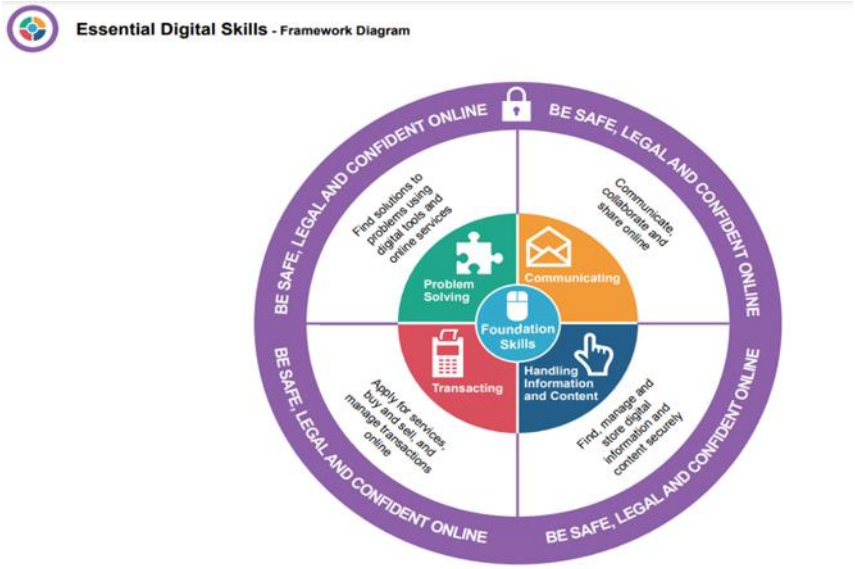
5.23 Beyond the recognised social value and the economic benefits of assisting tenants, there is an incentive for AHHA to provide opportunities for our tenants to have the capability and means to access services online. Through having the access to a connection and a digital device, and the capability and motivation to gain new digital skills, people can expect to receive the following social and economic benefits: -

a) Likely increase their earnings.

b) Have a greater chance of securing employment.
c) Have the skills and access to shop online means they will receive discount on bills.
d) Improved well-being. Being able to communicate with friends and family and the community we live in is key to our well-being. Having the access and the skill to do so results in this activity happening more frequently for those that have the access and skill to communicate online.

5.24 In terms of improving people's well-being there is also the benefit to individuals' health through accessing essential information (to improve their self-care) and through greater access to medical services. Having the required digital skills also allows people to utilize the benefits of technology used for assistive living which allows people who wish to, to live more independent lives. These benefits not only improve the individual's prosperity.

5.25 The government shared key information on the 'Essential Digital Skills' people require developing a framework that defines the skills needed to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world of today and the future. "***The framework is intended to be used by everyone in the UK engaged in supporting adults to enhance their essential digital skills. The benefits of working to a common framework include enabling progression and transferability of skills – as well as facilitating measurement."***



5.26 Applications for benefits and jobs are processed through online profiles along with monthly payment and transactional bank accounts required by universal credit will mean that more people need to manage their money online. It is therefore critical that delivery of this strategy has a strong focus on digital inclusion, to provide better online access and improve tenants confidence, skills and knowledge.

Mental Health

5.27 Mental health is shaped by the social, economic, and physical environments in which people live. Inequalities in society are associated with an increased risk of mental ill health and poverty is central to this. People living in poverty can face constant, high levels of stress, overcrowded or unsafe housing, fear of crime, and comparatively poor physical health. Poverty is clearly linked with a number of mental health problems, including schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and substance misuse. Poverty can be both a cause and a consequence of mental ill health.

5.28 As living standards decrease year on year, the mental health impacts of financial exclusion are becoming increasingly apparent, evidenced by the range of services our tenants require.

Tackling financial exclusion as early as possible can help to mitigate negative mental health impacts.

Improving Intelligence About Tenants

5.29 Grouping tenants 'needs' categories is critical not just to making sure tenants receive a suitable service response, but also to make best and most effective use of all available staff resources. In the following DWP matrix, tenants are segmented by their ability to manage money, and their level of anxiety about the transition to a new benefits system and all that this implies:

Ability

- **Able** = 1) can regularly budget, 2) does not run out of money all/most times, 3) have not borrowed if they have run out.
- **Mainly Able** = if they score poorly on one of the above aspects
- **Unable** = if they score poorly on two or all three of the above

	Able (budget well on all 3 questions)	Mainly able (does not budget well on one question)	Unable (does not budget well on 2 or 3 questions)
Not worried (not worried about any aspect of changes)	Ready & able	Ready & mainly able	Not worried & unable
Worried (worried about one aspect)	Worried but able	Worried & mainly able	Worried & unable
Very worried (worried about 2 or 3 aspects)	Very worried but able	Very worried & mainly able	Very worried & unable

Anxiety

- **Not Worried** – if none of the changes will make it harder to budget
- **Worried** – if one of the changes will make it harder
- **Very Worried** – if two or three of the changes will make it harder

5.30 Tenants in the **RED** could be assisted by referral for third party deductions arrangements where the housing costs are paid direct to AHHA as the criteria align with eligibility for alternative payment arrangements under the DWP's Personal Budgeting Support Guidance. In addition, customers in RED and **AMBER** groups are likely to be suited to budget accounts, while those falling into the **GREEN** are likely to find that basic or current account functionality meets their needs.

6 Local Context

6.1 Low levels of financial resilience following the period of austerity and welfare reform combined with the impacts locally of the pandemic have led to an increasing need for support among some of the AHHA most vulnerable tenants. The economic downturn has had a direct impact on the demand for financial inclusion services as more members of our community are affected by redundancy, shorter working hours, increased evictions and repossessions, unmanageable debt and insolvency. A further consequence of the macroeconomic situation is the squeeze on public sector finances and the resultant budget cuts at national and local level.

6.2 It is likely that a large number of AHHA tenants do not have access to mainstream banking products. For some this may not appear to present many problems as they may well operate in a predominately cash economy. Others, however, are excluded either because they have had applications rejected or they are so anxious and uncomfortable about engaging with a financial institution that they do not apply at all.

6.3 Savings and take up of home insurance from our tenants is also likely to be low because of the lack of spare income. This often means that people will have to go into debt when extra cash is needed for emergency situations; however, a high number of households are unable to access mainstream credit and this means that they will have to use expensive forms of credit such as door to door lending (Loan Sharks). Other sources of credit for our tenants will be through informal networks such as family and friends.

6.4 Financial exclusion does not only impact on our tenants but has a major impact on our Business Plan. Some of the impacts include: -

a) Increase in rent arrears
b) Reduction in rent collection
c) Increase in the number of abandoned properties
d) Increase in tenancy turnover
e) Reduction in demand for properties such as 3 Bedroom Houses
f) Increase in collection costs
g) Increase in the total number of evictions as a result of non – payment of rent
h) Increased demand for benefit and debt advice
i) Increase in management costs
j) Increase in re-let times
k) Reduction in demand for properties
l) Increase in void costs

6.5 Some of the financial challenges that our tenants face are: -

a) Changes to technology.
b) Lack of access to mainstream financial services.
c) Lack of employment opportunities.
d) Changes to welfare benefits.
e) Reduction in household budgets.

6.6 This policy and action plan outlines the steps AHHA plans to take over the next five years to ensure that our tenants are able to improve their finances, access to mainstream financial services, employment opportunities, financial literacy and IT access and skills. The policy will link other key strategies and policies. It is designed to enhance our tenant's ability to make the most of their money thus improve their wellbeing.

6.7 Ensuring our tenants are financially included is extremely important. There is a direct link between our tenant's ability to manage their money and ability to pay their rent and sustain their tenancies – which is vital to AHHA long term viability.

7 Strategic Context

7.1 This policy will provide a framework within which we can: -

a) Set out how we will improve our tenants access to affordable and responsible credit.
b) Identify key processes for improving access financial inclusion products such as an appropriate bank account.

c) Ensure we are focusing on the things that our tenants want and require with access to face to face debt advice.
d) Ensure that we embed improving financial capability to empower tenants to manage their money, have access to basic contents insurance and to saving facilities.
e) Demonstrate our commitment to Financial Inclusion to our tenants, staff, regulators and other stakeholders.
f) Deliver the aims of the policy through the Financial Inclusion Improvement Plan.

7.2 Key aims of this policy are listed below: -

a) **Supporting Tenants** - Minimising arrears and evictions by providing additional support, particularly in the early stages of tenancies.
b) **Providing advice and assistance to tenants** - Continuously providing advice and signposting to support and information.
c) **Maximise income**- Ensuring that tenants have access to support, for example via benefits or employment e.g. by applying for Discretionary Housing Payments, providing benefit calculations and identifying benefit entitlement.
d) **Increasing access points to Welfare Benefits advice and support** – Continuously review current access to services and consider alternative methods for communication
e) **Minimise debt** - Supporting tenants in avoiding or reducing debt and promoting access to lower cost credit as an alternative to doorstep lenders, e.g. benefit advice, debt counselling advice at an early stage.
f) **Working in partnership** - Working with others to exchange information and best practice to ensure tenants get the support they need.
g) **Accessing financial products** - Promoting access to appropriate financial products such as basic bank accounts and online services
h) **Improving money management skills** – Supporting opportunities for tenants to help themselves by improving their financial skills to increase confidence and encourage financial responsibility and preparing for further changes as part of the Government's Welfare Reforms.
i) **Reducing fuel poverty** - Providing support to help tenants deal with rising energy costs by investing in the energy efficiency of our homes.
j) **Minimise the impact of the Welfare Reforms** - Improving tenants access to the job market including offering opportunities to develop their skills and working with agencies and employers. Providing advice and support via in house welfare benefits service.
k) **Supporting tenants to become financially fit and sustain their tenancies** – Providing training on managing budgeting, savings, etc.

8 Links To Business Plan Strategic Pledges

8.1 The policy links to our four strategic pledges in the following ways: -

a) **Homes** – To provide homes that are fit for the future – Asset Strategy / Health & Safety Policy / Lettable Standards Policy / Tenancy Management Policy
b) **Investing In Our Workforce –** To be a well-run social business that delivers financial inclusion services – Training & Development / Personal Development Plans
c) **Managing Our Resources –** More staff empowered to provide advice on financial enquiries - Arrears Strategy & Action Plan, Income and Arrears Collection Policy and Procedures
d) **Being The Best We Can -** Support people to create thriving communities – CIE, EDI Policy & TPMG

9 Risk Management & Key Risk Indicators

9.1 In terms of identified corporate risks this policy impacts on the following: -

a) Failure to support tenants could result in loss of income for households, poor financial management and impact on their quality of life.
b) Failure to support tenants could result in an increase in rent arrears, rental income loss via an increase in voids.
c) There would be a significant risk to the business as revenue would reduce and costs increase.
d) Impact of Welfare Reform.
e) Tenancy turnover, voids and relet times.
f) Standards of tenant involvement and empowerment.

9.2 The 'visible' indicators of risk in this policy involve tenancy failure, as a poor approach to financial inclusion generally leads to evictions for rent arrears or to tenants abandoning properties. Whilst there are no control limits as such, we monitor closely the tenancy failure rate and reasons.

10 Monitoring Performance & Assurance of Delivery

10.1 This policy is aimed at improving financial inclusion levels for our tenants and in making a real difference in the localities we work in.

10.2 We will regularly provide, as required, to Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Operational Committee and Board performance information in the following areas: -

Key Performance Area	Measure
Lettings	• Turnover levels • Trends in tenancy failure • Trends in demand
Arrears	• Arrears % against total annual debit. • Collection rate % • Number of evictions for arrears
General	• Tenant Satisfaction levels

10.3 Progress and achievements will be publicised through the Staff Updates, Team Briefing and website.

10.4 The Action Plan is intended to be a live document to ensure it continues to meet our key objectives.

10.5 An annual report on progress of the policy will be taken to SLT and Operational Committee to describe progress and agree new plans and priorities as appropriate.

10.5 Financial Inclusion (including the development of new initiatives and monitoring progress against agreed actions) will come under the remit of the Housing Team, overseen by the Tenant Engagement & Satisfaction Lead and National Housing Manager.

Review

7.1 This document will be reviewed every 3 years by the Association where:

a) There are significant changes to legislation or regulation;
b) There are found to be deficiencies or failures in this document, or because of findings from complaints or any independent organizations at which point the lead officer will initiate an immediate review.

7.2 In any event the policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Association.

Links to Other Key Documents

11.1 There are various internal AHHA, policies and guidelines to be considered when implementing this policy, which include but are not limited to the following: -

c) Allocations & Letting Policy
d) Arrears Strategy
e) Arrears Policy
f) Co-production, Involvement and Engagement Strategy
g) Digital Inclusion Policy (Being Devised ITC Manager)
h) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
i) Financial Inclusion Action Plan (Appendix 1)
j) Social Value Policy & Adullam Social Enterprises (ASE) Social Value Delivery Plan
k) Neighbourhood Management Policy
l) Tenancy Management Policy
m) Welfare Fund Policy & Procedures

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Financial Inclusion Action Plan

Ref	Actions / What	Lead Partner /Who	Funding & Resources / How	To be completed by / When
AIM: **Supporting Tenants**				
Outcome: Minimising arrears and evictions by providing additional support, particularly in the early stages of tenancies.				
1.1	We will promote low cost access to digital skills and the internet.	Housing Teams		
1.2	We will promote the services of the National Energy Advice Line to tenants.	https://energyadvicehelpline.org/about/		
1.3	We will offer all applicants a benefit check when they apply for housing.	Tenancy Sustainment Officers		
1.4	We will offer all new tenants a benefit check prior to sign-up.	Housing Teams		
1.5	We will ensure all tenants who have rent arrears are offered a benefit check.	Housing Teams		
1.6	Provide online access to rent accounts to make it easier for tenants to check their account to move to online accessible rent accounts.	ITC / Communications Team		
AIM: **Providing advice and assistance to tenants**				
Outcome: Continuously providing advice and signposting to support and information.				
2.1	We will work to create more awareness of the impact of illegal money lending and participate in pilots to promote access to alternatives.	Housing Teams		
2.2	We will refer tenants to foodbanks where	Housing Teams		

	appropriate.			
Ref	**Actions / What**	**Lead Partner /Who**	**Funding & Resources / How**	**To be completed by / When**
AIM: **Maximise income**				
Outcome: Ensuring that tenants have access to support, for example via benefits or employment e.g. by applying for Discretionary Housing Payments, providing benefit calculations and identifying benefit entitlement				
3.1	Investigate and develop a tailored programme of short term vocational /soft basic skills training that help support individuals who are not eligible for mainstream provision.	Adullam Social Enterprise & Housing Teams		
3.2	Provide financial capability advice, debt advice and support to enter, remain and progress in employment.	https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/government-services/national-careers-service/ https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/ https://www.futuregoals.co.uk/about-us/		
3.3	Maximise opportunities for referrals to employability programmes, working with a range of partners to support people to enter and remain and progress in employment.	Housing Teams		
AIM: **Increasing access points to Welfare Benefits advice and support**				
Outcome: Continuously review current access to services and consider alternative methods for communication				
4.1	We will offer all new tenants a basic budget check-up prior to sign-up.	Housing Teams		
4.2	We will offer all housing applicants who are struggling financially a Financial Inclusion referral for crisis financial support where appropriate.	External Partners • CRISIS • CAB		
	Free independent debt/money/benefits advice	https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/about-us/our-		

	service available to those experiencing financial hardship.	work/advice-partnerships/money-advice-services/		

Ref	Actions / What	Lead Partner /Who	Funding & Resources / How	To be completed by / When
	Partner with CAB / CRISIS to ensure tenants have access to good quality financial advice.			
AIM: **Minimise debt**				
Outcome: Ensuring that tenants have access to support, for example via benefits or employment e.g. by applying for Discretionary Housing Payments, providing benefit calculations and identifying benefit entitlement				
5.1	To facilitate an information session for staff regarding loan sharks from a representative of Stop Loan Sharks organisation.	www.stoploansharks.co.uk		
AIM: **Working in partnership**				
Outcome: Working with others to exchange information and best practice to ensure tenants get the support they need. Effective services/tools to be available to AHHA tenants				
6.1	Involve agencies / companies/financially excluded people in the delivery of the Financial Inclusion Action Plan.	Tenant Engagement & Satisfaction Lead /Housing Teams		
6.2	Incentivise tenants who are potentially financially excluded and/or not financially capable to participate in consultation, which will help shape the development of actions.	Tenant Engagement & Satisfaction Lead /Housing Teams		
AIM: **Accessing financial products**				
Outcome: Promoting access to appropriate financial products such as basic bank accounts and online services.				
7.1	Produce an information pack and aim to distribute to the majority of properties. The information pack will include: -	Housing & Communications Teams		

	• Dangers of loan sharks • Benefits of Credit Unions • Budgeting tools			

Ref	Actions / What	Lead Partner /Who	Funding & Resources / How	To be completed by / When
	• Where to go to get financial advice •			
7.2	Hold a Money Fair to provide tenants with information and advice from a range of agencies, e.g. benefits, housing, debt etc.	Tenant Engagement & Satisfaction Lead /Housing Teams		
7.3	Investigate and develop a scheme to allow AHHA tenants to acquire free or subsidised computer equipment and broadband access. As part of Digital Inclusion strategy to ensure: • Digital skills – people being able to use digital devices • Connectivity - people's access to the internet and the right infrastructure • Accessibility - services should be designed to meet all users' needs to access digital services.	ITC / Adullam Social Enterprise		
7.4	Ensure financial inclusion activities continue to be incorporated into digital inclusion interventions like providing all AHHA's tenants free temporary access to a connected digital device. Providing access for individuals to access to the identified benefits, and to ensure a better understanding of the potential impact of participating and contributing to the digital world could have on their day to day lives.	Housing Teams https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework		

Ref	Actions / What	Lead Partner /Who	Funding & Resources / How	To be completed by / When
7.5	Map existing Credit Union provision to enable Tenants to seek Credit Union membership and financial in each locality we have accommodation to work with.	Housing Teams https://www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk/about-credit-unions/		
7.6	Ensure up to date information on where to get help to open a fee free bank account / credit union budgeting account is widely available – including on Moneymadeclear (MMC)website.	Housing Teams https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en		
AIM: **Improving money management skills**				
Outcome: Supporting opportunities for tenants to help themselves by improving their financial skills to increase confidence and encourage financial responsibility and preparing for further changes as part of the Government's Welfare Reforms.				
8.1	Create a 'financial inclusion web page' which gives tenants of AHHA information.	Communications & ITC Teams		
8.2	Frontline staff have access to updated and relevant information about products and services in their local area.	Housing Teams		
8.3	Ensure mechanisms are in place to enable front-line staff to access accurate, up-to-date information and resources to support their tenants.	Housing Teams		
AIM: **Minimise the impact of the Welfare Reforms**				
Outcome: Improving tenants access to the job market including offering opportunities to develop their skills and working with agencies and employers.				

Providing advice and support via in house welfare benefits service.				
9.1	We will utilise multiple methods of contact to target pensioners and highlight potential income they might be missing.	Tenant Engagement & Satisfaction Lead /Housing Teams https://maps.org.uk/en/about-us/who-we-are#		

Ref	Actions / What	Lead Partner /Who	Funding & Resources / How	To be completed by / When
AIM: Supporting tenants to become financially fit and sustain their tenancies				
Outcome: Providing training on managing budgeting, savings and tenants have access to free impartial, professional money advice.				
10.1	We will review the information given in sign-up packs to ensure basic financial information is available to all new tenants.			
AIM: **Tackling & reducing fuel poverty**				
Outcome: Providing support to help tenants deal with rising energy costs by investing in the energy efficiency of our homes. Safe homes, in a good state of repair, free from risks to occupants health including offering adequate thermal comfort.				
11.1	Implementing the Asset Management Strategy / Damp, Mould & Condensation Policies.			
11.2	Increase capital programme expenditure on heating upgrades and energy conservation.			
11.3	Ensure tenants have information and advice on how to access the cheapest utility suppliers for example by advertising websites such as U switch.			
AIM: **Ensure tenants have access to good quality affordable home contents insurance.**				
Outcome: Good quality low cost home contents insurance policy available to tenants.				
12.1	Find a suitable provider to partner with.	www.thistlemyhome.co.uk or call Thistle on 0345 450 7288.		
12.2	We will encourage all new tenants to take out			

	home contents insurance.			