

MOLENDINAR PARK HOUSING ASSOCIATION

HOUSING BENEFIT POLICY

Date of Review: 15th November 2011
Date of Next Review: November 2016

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document outlines Molendinar Park Housing Association's policy in relation to the administration of Housing Benefit.
- 1.2 Molendinar Park recognises that, as a Housing Association, it will not be responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit to Molendinar Park tenants – responsibility for this role will rest with Glasgow City Council.
- 1.3 The Association will seek to maximise tenant income by offering assistance with housing benefit claims to tenants or by referring tenants to a specialist advice agency as appropriate.
- 1.4 This policy document covers the following information.
- Housing benefit claims
 - Welfare benefits advice
 - Information for tenants
 - Liaison with other organizations
 - Standards, targets and performance monitoring
 - Staff and committee responsibilities
 - Policy review

General Aims and Objectives

- 1.5 In relation to housing benefit, the overall aims of the Association will be:
- To ensure that policy and procedure guidance is constantly applied
 - To ensure that staff are adequately trained to provide the appropriate level of advice and assistance in relation to housing benefit
 - To co-operate with other agencies, such as the Council and Department of Works and Pensions.

Best Practice Guidance

- 1.6 This policy document reflects current best practice guidance in relation to the administration of Housing Benefit provided by the SFHA, The Scottish Housing Regulator, Audit Commission and the Chartered Institute of Housing:

2. HOUSING BENEFIT CLAIMS

- 2.1 Although Molendinar Park is aware that housing benefit claims will be assessed and processed by Glasgow City Council, the Association will ensure that housing benefit forms are available in the Association's office. Forms will also be sent out to tenants who request a form by telephone. The Association will also complete applications for Housing Benefit online where appropriate

- 2.2 Molendinar Park staff will be available to assist tenants with the completion of housing benefit forms.
- 2.3 All new tenants will be given information and advice about housing benefit during their “signing-up interview” and will be encouraged, where appropriate, to submit a claim.
- 2.4 Molendinar Park will ensure that housing management staff are trained in housing benefit entitlement. This training will enable staff to assist tenants with the completion of housing benefit forms.
- 2.5 Molendinar Park Housing Association will hold liaison meetings, wherever appropriate, with representatives from the council’s Housing Benefit Office to provide a forum for exchange of information and to endeavour to resolve any problems being encountered.

3. WELFARE BENEFITS ADVICE

- 3.1 Given the size of the Association, Molendinar Park will not be in a position to directly employ a Welfare Rights Officer.
- 3.2 Molendinar Park will, where appropriate, refer residents to an external agency for advice on Welfare Rights.

4. INFORMATION FOR TENANTS

- 4.1 The Association will provide tenants with clear information concerning the administration of housing benefit. This will include ensure that:
 - Housing benefit forms and information leaflets are available in the office
 - Information leaflets on other welfare benefits are available in the office
 - Contact information for the Council is provided
 - Support is given to local benefit take-up campaigns

5. STANDARDS, TARGETS AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 5.1 Molendinar Park will aim to send out housing benefit forms on the day of request.

6. STAFF AND COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Molendinar Park will ensure Management Committee and staff responsibilities in relation to housing benefit administration are clearly defined and understood.
- 6.2 The Association's staff will be responsible for implementing the policy on housing benefit. This will include:
- Providing information and advice to tenants on housing benefit matters.
 - Assisting tenants in their application for housing benefit
 - Liaising with the Council and other external organizations

Training

- 6.3 Staff will require specialized and regular training to keep up to date with the law, policies and practice in relation to Housing Benefit and the Association will ensure that staff has access to such training.

7. POLICY REVIEW

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every five years.
- 7.2 The review will take account of:
- Legislative and best practice revisions
 - The performance of the local authority's Housing Benefits Section
 - The performance of Molendinar Park Housing Association's own housing management service
 - The views of the tenants