

MAKE  
A HOUSE  
A HOME

Q&A

# Housing Management Team



TOGETHER  
WE CAN  
END FURNITURE  
POVERTY

FUSION<sup>21</sup>

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# ABOUT END FURNITURE POVERTY

End Furniture Poverty is the campaigning arm and social research arm of FRC Group, a group of charities and 100% not-for-profit social businesses. FRC Group has been providing furniture, both new and preloved, to people living in Furniture Poverty for nearly 40 years and reducing and eradicating Furniture Poverty is FRC Group's core mission.

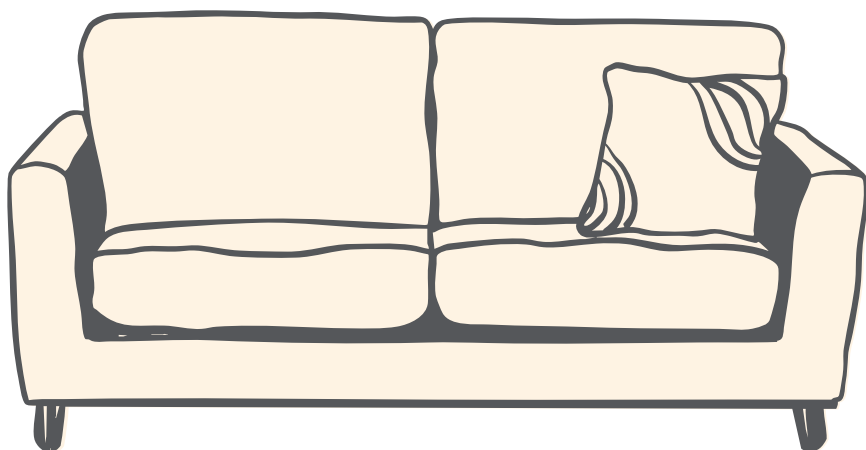
End Furniture Poverty was created in 2015 to raise awareness of the issue of Furniture Poverty; to improve our understanding of the consequences and the reality of living in Furniture Poverty; and to develop potential evidence-based solutions to ensure that everyone has access to the essential furniture items that they need to participate in their society and lead a secure life.

We also work closely with the grant making sector, the preloved furniture sector and the social housing sector. Currently we are undertaking a campaign to Make a House a Home by ensuring that at least 10% of social housing properties are let as furnished. Information about this campaign can be found on our website, along with a myriad of useful research, guidance and support.

We would like to thank Fusion21 for their support with the production of these guides.



**endfurniturepoverty.org**



Disclaimer: The views expressed in these guides are solely those of End Furniture Poverty

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# Introduction

Our research shows that 6 million people in the UK are living in furniture poverty, including 26% of social housing tenants yet only 3% of social homes are let as furnished. End Furniture Poverty is here to raise awareness of the issue, but also to help social housing providers to find solutions which help them and their tenants. We believe a blended approach is key, with furnished tenancies being an important part of the answer.

This suite of Q&A documents is aimed at the various departments who would normally be involved in establishing a furnished tenancy scheme. You will find some duplication in these documents, simply because some departments will raise the same questions. You may want to read this in conjunction with our Blueprint for Furniture Provision In Social Housing, which is a detailed guide to tackling furniture poverty in the sector.

This Q&A is for housing management team members from social housing providers concerned with helping their tenants who are affected by furniture poverty.

## How can furnished tenancies help tenants and wider communities?

Having the items a household needs to settle in their property and sustain their tenancy is critical. Supporting tenants in need to furnish their homes will help them to sustain the tenancy and help to make their tenancy a success. They will settle more quickly and this in turn, leads to more stable communities. Our research has shown that furniture poverty has a significant impact on mental and physical health and having access to equipment that means a household is able to cook nutritious food (instead of relying on convenience food and takeaways) and store medication, which will contribute to entire household wellbeing.

Our research has also demonstrated that people living without the essentials can lead to shame and unwillingness to allow people into their home. By ensuring that a tenant is not living in these conditions, they are not only more likely to build social bonds within their community, but are also more likely to allow support agencies (e.g. their landlord) into their home to help them maintain a stable life.

A survey by Stop Social Housing Stigma indicated that seven out of ten social housing tenants feel stigmatised by living in social housing. By supporting tenants to have essential items of furniture and white goods we can help them to overcome that sense of being different or not worthy and help them to feel more able to be an active part of their communities.



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## How can furnished tenancies complement other support we offer?

Furniture, flooring and white goods are not inexpensive items and sourcing them can prove incredibly financially challenging for tenants – especially new tenants who are from the most vulnerable groups such as women fleeing domestic abuse, BAME communities and people with disabilities. Providing furnished tenancies can help tenants to avoid high-cost credit, which in turn, can help them to be more financially stable and able to pay their rent.

A furnished tenancy scheme can ease the pressure on other support services and can supplement gifting schemes, grants and local authority welfare provision.

Our experience tells us that a blended approach is key – some tenants who only need one item may benefit better from accessing a furniture recycling scheme or applying for a grant. For other tenants, who are in need of more items may find a furnished tenancy can help them.

## Which tenants will furnished tenancies help the most?

Here at End Furniture Poverty, we believe that use the practices your organisation has in place such as pre-tenancy assessments and tenant visits should be offered a furnished tenancy. However, we know that they are more suitable for some tenants than others.

As described above, furnished tenancies are not the only answer to alleviating furniture poverty. Those tenants who are in deep furniture poverty (in need of three or more items), who rely on benefits and who are likely to rely on them in the long term can be the best candidates for a furniture rental package. That being said, if a flexible rental scheme is in place (such as Furniture Flex), often renting one item (e.g. a cooker) whilst the household 'gets on its feet' can be a fantastic short-term solution for some people.

## Do furnished tenancies create a poverty trap?

Sometimes it is argued that furnished tenancies discourage people from finding work as benefits cover the cost of the furniture as a eligible service charge, therefore the overall rent is higher. However we would argue that a furnished tenancy can be the opposite of a poverty trap, helping tenants to lift their heads and look forward to work and training opportunities because they are living in a home, something that is much harder to do when you are existing in an empty box. A furnished tenancy isn't appropriate for every tenant, but it can be useful for those who will need that additional support to begin to move forward, or for those who are unlikely to move away from claiming benefits. It is important to consider the use of a flexible scheme – Furniture Flex enables tenants to increase and importantly, decrease the amount of items they rent over time. It may be the case that at the point of sign-up and starting out, a tenant may rent many items and gradually reduce their pack size over time, as they enter the job market or are able to acquire items by other means.

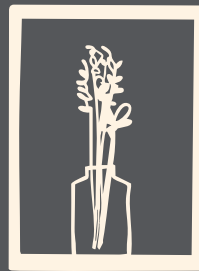
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## What is my role in the delivery of a furnished tenancy scheme?

The role of housing management colleagues will vary from organisation to organisation but we would urge you to use the practices your organisation has in place such as pre-tenancy assessments and tenant visits. You can make a real difference. The success of scheme and the number of tenants benefitting from it can hinge on front line staff and their support and promotion of the scheme. The more you support and encourage your customers to take up the offer of furniture, the more people will be lifted out of furniture poverty and thrive in their tenancies.



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**Pledge your support**  
[endfurniturepoverty.org](https://endfurniturepoverty.org)