

Tenancy policy

Last updated October 2020

Review October 2022

Tenancy policy

Why we have this policy

We provide good quality affordable homes and services within successful, sustainable communities

We take into account the needs and aspirations of existing and potential residents and offer a range of housing options to meet their requirements.

We'll offer tenancies or terms of occupation compatible with the:

- purpose of the accommodation
- needs of individual households
- sustainability of the community.
- efficient use of our housing stock

This policy sets out the type of tenancy agreement we'll offer when letting our homes for the following tenures:

- General needs
- Housing for older persons
- Supported (and Specialist) housing
- Intermediate Market Rent
- Private Market Rent
- Shared Ownership
- Key Worker

Tenancy types

Tenancies are determined by law and current tenancy types were introduced:

- by the Housing Act 1988,
- amended by the Housing Act 1996,
- and further changes were introduced by the Localism Act 2012, Immigration Act 2014 and Deregulation Act 2015.

The range of tenancy types we offer are:

- Probationary
- Assured (lifetime tenancy)
- Fixed Term (five year)
- Assured Short hold
- License Agreements
- Leases (for Shared Ownership)

The tenancies we offer

Probationary

We offer applicants who don't have a current Assured or Secure tenancy, a Probationary tenancy for a period of 12 months.

If the resident keeps to the terms of the tenancy, at the end of the 12 months it will become an Assured tenancy, or a Fixed Term tenancy of five years for our four bed homes and larger.

If they've not kept to the terms of their agreement, the probationary period can be extended for a further six months, or it could be ended.

The probationary period can only be extended once and cannot be any longer than 18 months.

Residents have the right to request a review of decisions taken to extend or end probationary periods.

Assured

We'll offer an assured tenancy to any existing social housing resident, of any social landlord, who holds a current assured or secure tenancy and moves into one of our homes.

An assured tenancy is considered a lifetime tenancy and can only be ended by a Court order if the resident breaches their tenancy conditions.

Fixed Term

On our four bed homes and larger, we will offer a Fixed Term tenancy (FTT) of five years. If the applicant does not have a current social housing tenancy, they will be granted a probationary tenancy of 12 months first.

12 months before the end of the fixed term, we will carry out a review of the household circumstances.

In most cases we expect to issue a further FTT and only where there have been significant changes in housing need, issues with the conduct of the tenancy or a significant improvement in a household's financial circumstances will we consider bringing the tenancy to an end.

Where the home is larger than the household need at the end of the term, we will look to support the household to move to a smaller home.

In the event we don't offer a further FTT, we will advise of different housing options available and offer support through this process.

We will also offer FTTs in our Key Worker student accommodation to follow the academic year, so these will be less than five years.

Assured Short hold

An Assured Short hold Tenancy (AST) will generally be for no longer than two years, with the exception of some Supported Housing.

We will offer ASTs in:

- our temporary accommodation where we're assisting a local authority to meet their homelessness duty
- our supported accommodation, which has shared facilities where a longer-term solution is needed. We don't set a time period on these
- our Intermediate Market Rent and Private Market Rent homes
- our Key Worker accommodation, where customers intend to stay over 12 weeks
- homes designated for regeneration.

Licence Agreement

We'll offer license agreements to residents moving into our supported housing homes or shared accommodation schemes and where they've got a support package in place as part of the home that's provided to them.

We may also use license agreements:

- following a decant (where we've had to move someone out of their home for a period of time)
- to allow a relative who has no right of succession to stay in a home for an agreed period of time while they find alternative accommodation
- in our Key Worker accommodation where the customers stay is for less than 12 weeks

In exceptional case in self-contained properties where we're assisting a local authority to meet their homelessness duty.

A licence agreement is not a permanent arrangement.

Leases

We will grant leases to our Shared Ownership residents.

A lease gives our customers the right to occupy their home for a long period of time and is an affordable pathway to full homeownership.

Tenancy changes

Mutual exchange

At the end of any probationary period, residents who hold an assured tenancy can apply to mutually exchange their home.

When residents do a mutual exchange, we'll make sure they keep their existing security of tenure.

Succession

The tenancy type granted on succession depends on whether it's a statutory, contractual or discretionary succession.

We'll grant statutory or contractual successors the original tenancy of the resident who's died.

Support and advice

Whatever the tenure, we can provide support and advice to residents about their tenancy.

We'll advise them of other possible housing options, such as applying for a transfer or mutual exchange.

We may also signpost residents to other Sovereign products, such as shared ownership.

Through our approach to tenancy we are ensuring that Sovereigns homes are used to demonstrate our social purpose and support customer aspirations and social mobility.

Our commitment to residents and employees

We'll be transparent about our responsibilities around equality.

We'll treat everyone fairly and respectfully, regardless of their:

- age
- gender
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- disability
- religion
- race
- nationality
- ethnicity or national origin.

We'll make sure our services and workplaces are as inclusive and accessible as possible.

We'll take seriously any concerns that we've not acted in a fair way, dealing with them as quickly as we can.