

Tenancy policy

April 2023

Review April 2025

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 customers 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
- Key Worker
- Shared Ownership

Tenancy types

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

- by the Housing Act 1980 and 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:

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

The tenancies we offer

Assured

We'll offer an assured tenancy to new customers moving into our General Needs or Housing for Older Persons homes, which have three bedrooms or less.

We'll offer an assured tenancy to any existing customer who currently holds an assured or secure tenancy with Sovereign or another social housing landlord, regardless of property size.

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

Fixed Term

On our four bed homes and larger, we will offer a Fixed Term tenancy (FTT) of five years to customers who don't currently have an assured or secure tenancy.

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 accommodation, either to reflect a full academic year for students or where we work in partnership with NHS Trusts to ensure accommodation is readily available for new Trust staff when recruited. These are usually fixed to a period of less than 12 months.

Assured Shorthold

An Assured Shorthold 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 customers 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 cases we may offer a licence agreement 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 customers.

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

Customers who hold an assured tenancy can apply to mutually exchange their home.

When completing a mutual exchange, we'll make sure our customers keep their existing security of tenure.

Mutual Exchange is not available to Shared Ownership customers.

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 customer who's died.

For Shared Owners this will be dependent on the terms of the lease.

Support and advice

Whatever the tenure, we can provide support and advice to customers 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 customers to other Sovereign products, such as shared ownership.

For our Shared ownership customers, we may provide advice on downward staircasing or selling the property.

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.

We also provide support to our customers on issues related to Domestic Abuse. – please refer to our policy [here](#).

Our commitment to residents and employees

At Sovereign, our commitment is to make sure that no individual or group experiences unfair, discriminatory, or prejudicial treatment in recruitment, pay or promotions, housing, or any other service we provide, such as lettings, tenancy advice, repairs or rent collection. Sovereign strives to be an open, inclusive, and diverse organisation where everyone has a right to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. As an organisation we value the diversity and talents of all individuals and the richness that brings to our culture.

We understand the varying needs of our residents and communities and promote equality of opportunity in employment and service provision. We deliver appropriate, accessible, and flexible services, being tolerant, understanding and not judging others or their lifestyle choices. We stand up to and challenge prejudice, discrimination, and harassment in all its forms.