

# Royal Borough of Greenwich Tenancy Strategy

## Introduction

We want the Royal Borough of Greenwich to be a place where everyone is able to afford a decent home of their choice, and where people feel proud, safe and able to contribute to the life of their local community.

This Tenancy Strategy sets out the types of social rented housing tenancies the Royal Borough of Greenwich expects Registered Providers to provide in Greenwich. Registered Providers are landlords providing affordable housing, and are often known as housing associations. The Strategy covers information on how Registered Providers decide what type of tenancy to offer their tenants and how long the tenancy lasts for. Registered Providers should also publish this information in their own tenancy policies.

Our Tenancy Strategy has been formulated in consultation with Registered Providers and other stakeholders.

The aims of the Strategy are compatible with the Royal Borough of Greenwich's Homelessness Strategy and housing Allocations Scheme. It is in general conformity with the London Housing Strategy.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich will undertake future reviews of this Tenancy Strategy, to ensure it meets the housing needs in Greenwich.

## **The Royal Borough of Greenwich Tenancy Strategy seeks to achieve the following objectives:**

1. Making the best use of existing social housing stock
2. Achieving sustainable balanced communities, with a mix of residents from a range of income levels, ages, household sizes, needs and aspirations
3. Offering vulnerable tenants tenancies with the security to meet their needs
4. Ensuring social rented housing is provided and managed in an efficient and cost effective way
5. Providing the necessary advice and options to tenants who may need to move on from a fixed term tenancy
6. Meeting Greenwich's responsibilities to prevent and deal with homelessness and their obligations to support employment and training opportunities for residents
7. Support the use of tenancies with rents that are affordable and remain within the Universal Credit limit.

## **Specific expectations**

To ensure a stable future for people seeking housing in the social rented sector, Royal Greenwich expects all Registered Providers to use the most secure type of tenancies for all social rented and 'Affordable Rented' homes that Greenwich has nominations rights to. In cases where Registered Providers propose to offer fixed term tenancies, Greenwich expects Registered Providers to provide reasons for doing so.

Reasons why Greenwich prefers tenancies with long term security:

1. If tenants' income levels are used as a factor to assess whether or not to renew a fixed term tenancy, this may discourage tenants to improve their income through work or training. There is a greater likelihood of tenants moving from social housing into commercially rented homes or home

ownership if they have the option do this voluntarily, rather than being faced with this step after, for example, 5 years of living in a fixed term tenancy home.

2. In cases where a tenant's income rises to a level where their fixed term tenancy would be ended, this may result in estates being comprised solely of people on low income. This would be detrimental to sustaining communities with a social and economic balance of people.
3. A potentially high turnover of tenants required to move as their income levels increase, is likely to result in a reduction in tenant participation and the desire to become involved in the management of their homes and communities.
4. Fixed term tenancies that are not renewed may have a negative effect on social and economic factors. In particular, disrupting family life, if forced relocation results in children having to change schools. It may also be detrimental to the local economy and community cohesion.
5. Additional resources which will be required in terms of staff costs in assessing tenants' circumstances, dealing with appeals for fixed term tenancies and legal action to regain possession. These resources could be better spent on providing and improving core housing services for tenants.

## **Types of tenancies Greenwich expects Registered Providers to offer**

Greenwich would expect Registered Providers of social housing to use the following types of tenancies:

1. Lifetime Secure and full periodic Assured tenancies: should be used for all 'social rent' properties. As a minimum they should be used for:

- People considered to be vulnerable due to a disability or long term ill-health reasons, or their carers
- People aged over 60 years old
- Families with at least one child aged 16 or under

2. Assured Shorthold tenancies: may be used for 'Affordable Rent' properties. Tenants should be offered tenancies with a minimum duration of 5 years, in addition to any probationary or starter tenancy period. If an 'Affordable Rent' tenancy is offered to a vulnerable or an elderly tenant, a lifetime tenancy should be offered.

3. Introductory or probationary tenancies: where these are used, they should be offered for a minimum duration of 12 months. Following the 12 month term, subject to the satisfactory completion by the tenant of the probationary or starter tenancy, we expect tenants to be offered the most secure type of tenancy. Depending on a tenant's needs, the tenancy should have a minimum duration of 5 years.

4. Non-Secure tenancies: may be used for temporary accommodation, for example, for people who are homeless under a homeless assessment, or accepted as homeless and awaiting a Secure tenancy.

## **The duration Registered Providers will offer fixed term tenancy for**

When a tenancy is for a fixed time period, this is how long we expect them to last:

1. Introductory or starter tenancy: 12 months
2. Affordable Rent properties: a minimum of 12 months for probationary or a starter tenancy and then another 5 year term, subject to the satisfactory completion by the tenant of the probationary or starter tenancy.

## **The reasons Registered Providers will offer tenants with a fixed term tenancy another tenancy when the fixed term tenancy comes to an end**

Tenants who are given a tenancy for a fixed term may have their tenancy for the property where they are living in extended. These are the circumstances in which we expect the tenancy of the same property to be extended for a further period, or alternatively, the tenant is offered a lifetime tenancy:

1. Where the tenant's income has not increased above a threshold defined by the landlord.
2. The number of occupants in the household has not resulted in the property being too large for the tenant's needs.
3. If the tenant, or members of their family who live with them, are regarded as vulnerable. For example, a disability or because they are elderly, and moving would cause them unnecessary hardship and distress.
4. Not extending the tenancy and moving the tenant to another property would result in additional costs to the landlord and public services, including homeless, education and welfare provision.
5. Extending the fixed term tenancy is considered to be beneficial for the sustainability of balanced communities.
6. The tenant has complied with the terms of the tenancy conditions. For example, it has not been necessary to take enforcement action against them for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour.

In cases where the tenancy will not be renewed, we expect Registered Providers to:

- Give the tenant at least 6 months notice that the tenancy will end
- Provide the tenant with comprehensive advice regarding their future housing options, including finding alternative accommodation, and informing them they that may appeal against the decision not to renew their tenancy

Contact Registered Providers for more information about their policies and the type of tenancies they use.