

DRAFT
Tenancy Strategy
2026 - 2031

1. Introduction

This Tenancy Strategy sets out the Council's expectations for all Registered Providers operating within the district, who should have regard to the Strategy when developing and implementing their own Tenancy Policies.

The Tenancy Strategy guides Registered Providers in developing their own Tenancy Policies and ensures a consistent approach across the District.

2. Legislative and Policy Context

The Localism Act 2011 introduced significant reforms to social housing, including:

- The ability for Registered Providers to issue Flexible tenancies
- Greater local discretion in allocations
- Powers to discharge homelessness duties into the Private Rented Sector
- A statutory requirement for local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy

This Strategy aligns with national policy, the Council's Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategies, and the wider objectives of promoting independence, preventing homelessness, and making best use of limited housing stock.

3. Strategic Objectives

The Council's objectives are to:

- Ensure social housing is allocated to those in greatest need
- Promote long term stability for households who require it
- Make best use of existing stock, particularly family homes
- Support vulnerable households to sustain their tenancies
- Encourage mobility and independence where appropriate
- Maintain fairness, transparency, and consistency in tenancy decisions

These objectives underpin the Council's expectations of all Registered Providers.

4. Tenure Options and Expectations

Registered Providers should offer a range of tenure types that reflect household need and support sustainable communities.

4.1 Lifetime Tenancies

Lifetime secure or assured tenancies should be offered where:

- The household includes older people or those with long term disabilities
- The property is adapted or specialist accommodation
- Long term stability is essential for health or wellbeing

4.2 Flexible Tenancies

The Council supports the use of flexible tenancies to ensure ongoing suitability and effective use of stock.

Expectations:

- Minimum term of 5 years (2 years only in exceptional circumstances)
- Clear explanation to tenants at sign up
- Transparent review process

Flexible tenancies are appropriate where:

- Household circumstances may change over time
- The property is in high demand
- The household may be able to move to market housing in future

5. Tenancy Review and Renewal

Providers must undertake a structured review 6–12 months before the end of a flexible tenancy.

5.1 Renewal

Tenancies should normally be renewed where:

- The household continues to meet eligibility criteria
- The property remains suitable
- There are no serious tenancy breaches
- The household requires ongoing support

5.2 Non-Renewal

Non-renewal may be appropriate where:

- The household can reasonably access market housing
- The property is under occupied
- The property is no longer suitable (eg adapted property no longer required)
- There has been persistent anti social behaviour

Registered Providers must offer a clear appeals process and signpost tenants to advice services.

6. Allocations and Local Priorities

The Council expects Registered Providers to align with its Housing Allocation Policy, which reflects the flexibilities of the Localism Act.

Key expectations:

- Prioritisation of households in greatest housing need
- Use of local connection criteria
- Sensitive lettings for vulnerable households
- Support for downsizing to free up larger homes
- Transparent and fair assessment processes

Registered Providers should ensure that their own Tenancy Policies complement the Council's approach.

7. Homelessness Prevention and Discharge of Duty

The Council may discharge its homelessness duty into the Private Rented Sector where accommodation is suitable, affordable, and sustainable.

Registered Providers are expected to:

- Work collaboratively to prevent homelessness
- Support households placed in the Private Rented Sector
- Report concerns about tenancy sustainability promptly

This approach supports the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

8. Supporting Tenants to Sustain Tenancies

The Council expects Registered Providers to adopt a proactive approach to tenancy sustainment, including:

- Early intervention for rent arrears
- Support for households experiencing anti-social behaviour issues
- Access to financial advice, budgeting support, and welfare guidance
- Links to local support services
- Assistance with downsizing where appropriate

The aim is to reduce tenancy failure and promote independence.

9. Making Best Use of Housing Stock

To ensure efficient use of limited Registered Providers housing stock should:

- Prioritise family homes for households with children
- Encourage and incentivise downsizing
- Review the use of adapted properties regularly
- Use flexible tenancies to ensure ongoing suitability
- Minimise void periods through efficient reletting processes

10. Monitoring, Review and Governance

The Council will:

- Review this Strategy every 4 years, or sooner if required
- Monitor Registered Providers performance in relation to:
 - Tenancy renewal outcomes
 - Under occupation levels
 - Homelessness prevention
 - Tenant satisfaction
 - Use of Private Rented Sector discharge
- Engage regularly with Registered Providers to ensure alignment
- Report outcomes to Cabinet or relevant committees

Registered Providers are expected to supply data when requested.

11. Conclusion

This Tenancy Strategy provides a clear framework for how tenancies should be granted and managed across the District. It ensures that the flexibilities introduced by the Localism Act are used to promote fairness, stability, and effective use of social housing, while supporting the Council's commitment to preventing homelessness and building sustainable communities.

The Council recognises the significant reforms introduced through the Renters' Rights Act 2025, which strengthen tenant protections, enhance transparency, and modernise tenancy management across both the social and private rented sectors.

Registered Providers should have regard to these changes when reviewing and implementing their Tenancy Policies, ensuring alignment with new requirements relating to improved tenant information standards, strengthened rights to challenge decisions, enhanced property condition obligations, and updated processes for tenancy variation and redress.

The Council will continue to monitor the impact of the Act and will work collaboratively with Registered Providers to ensure that local practice remains compliant, fair, and responsive to the evolving national regulatory framework.