



Draft Tenancy Policy
June 2026

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1. Introduction

Canterbury City Council (“the Council”) is a local authority registered provider of social housing. This Tenancy Policy is the council’s response to the Tenancy Strategy 2026 and explains the types of tenancy it grants, the principles that guide tenancy management, and how the Council meets its regulatory duties under the Regulator of Social Housing’s (RSH) consumer standards.

This policy replaces the Tenancy Policy adopted on 7 December 2020. Many aspects of this new Tenancy Policy are unchanged from the 2020 edition, but it has been updated to reflect changes to legislation, regulation, national and local housing policy including:

- Updated regulatory requirements, particularly the strengthened Tenancy Standard and consumer regulation framework, which came into force from April 2024, with more emphasis on transparency, fairness, data-led assurance and demonstrable outcomes for tenants
- The Council’s decision to cease granting Flexible Tenancies, which now exist only as legacy arrangements for a small number of households and are governed through Annex A of this policy; and

This policy is part of a suite of aligned housing strategies and policies that collectively set out how the Council manages its social homes. Documents can be viewed on the Council’s Housing Plans webpage <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/strategies-and-policies/housing-plans>

Operational processes are explained in separate procedural documents, service standards and the Tenant Handbook, which form the detailed operational framework supporting the principles in this document.

This Tenancy Policy is intended to be accessible, transparent and clear for tenants, staff, councillors and regulators. It explains what tenants and prospective tenants can expect from the Council as a landlord and the principles that guide tenancy related decisions.

2. Purpose

This Tenancy Policy sets out the principles that guide the Council’s approach to:

- The types of tenancy it offers
- Granting, managing, altering and ending tenancies
- The rights and security associated with each type of tenancy
- Making decisions affecting a tenancy that take account of the need to provide secure homes, support vulnerable households, create and support sustainable communities
- Acting fairly, transparently and consistently in all tenancy-related decisions
- Complying with current legislation, regulatory standards, Government guidance and the Council’s Tenancy Strategy
- Ensuring tenants receive the level of security appropriate to their circumstances

- Making the best use of the Council's limited housing stock, supporting effective occupation, household mobility, and information about housing options to meet identified needs
- Helping tenants to understand their rights, responsibilities and the Council's expectations, supported by clear information in the Tenancy Agreement and the Tenant Handbook
- Discretionary decisions (such as succession, assignment, and right-sizing moves) are taken with consideration to fairness, vulnerability, proportionality and the efficient use of the limited supply of council homes
- Ensuring that tenancy related decisions in age restricted accommodation have particular regard to its purpose, and the needs and expectations of existing residents
- The expectation that each property is occupied only by the approved household
- Ensuring that no person may live at a Council property on a permanent or long-term basis unless they were a member of the approved household at the start of the tenancy or the Council has given written permission
- Ensuring that any request for additional household members considers whether the proposed occupation will overcrowd the property and whether it is compatible with the nature and purpose of the accommodation, including any age restriction
- Identifying and tackling tenancy fraud, unlawful occupation and misuse of properties
- Enforcing tenancy conditions in ways that are always lawful, proportionate and aligned with the Council's strategies for community safety and neighbourhood management
- Ensuring that in exercising its duties as a landlord, all decisions by the Council comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory standards.

3. Scope

This policy focuses on the residential properties owned and managed by Canterbury City Council in the HRA and their occupants.

It does not apply to:

- The allocation of social housing, which is covered by the Housing Allocation Scheme 2023
- Homelessness duties and the use of private rented sector accommodation
- Leasehold or shared ownership accommodation
- Operational tenancy management processes, which are governed by separate internal procedures and the Tenant Handbook

4. Background

The situation facing RPs is challenging. Expectations of social landlords have increased, with updated regulatory standards, and greater prominence for the Regulator of Social Housing and the results of their inspections. There is more emphasis on improving the quality of housing management and maintenance, on healthy homes, fire safety and compliance, based on sound information about the housing stock and tenants, and by listening to the tenants' voice.

High property prices and rents in Canterbury District mean that many local households cannot afford to rent or buy a home on the open market. Affordable housing is in short supply:

accommodation provided by the council and RPs makes up about 11% of all homes in the district, so many people who need an affordable home cannot get one.

There is considerable political and financial support nationally and locally to build more affordable housing. The council is making strenuous efforts to increase the number of new homes it owns and to rationalise its existing residential portfolio by disposing of properties that cannot be brought up to modern standards at reasonable cost.

The council has also stopped offering Flexible Tenancies in the light of case law and legal advice, although other RPs may choose to continue.

The Government would like to extend the Renters Rights Act to the social housing sector, but first the Regulator of Social Housing must amend the Tenancy Standard to clarify the expectations of RPs under the new system. This change will require statutory consultation, and it is not yet known when the new system will apply to social tenancies. Therefore, the Tenancy Policy reflects the current legal position and will be amended in due course.

Since the adoption of the Tenancy Policy 2020, the Council:

- No longer grants Flexible Tenancies because of evolving case law and legal advice
- Reaffirmed its commitment to secure lifetime tenancies for eligible households following the successful completion of an introductory period
- Increased its focus on preventing and addressing tenancy fraud
- Embedded enhanced consumer regulatory requirements, including proactive assurance, transparency of policies, and evidence-based reporting

5. Legislation and Guidance

Canterbury City Council's Tenancy Policy is developed in accordance with the statutory framework governing social housing in England, including but not limited to:

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Housing Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011
- Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013
- Care Act 2014 and Children Act 2004
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Social Housing regulation Act 2023
- Consumer Standards 2024
- Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2018

6. Related strategies, policies and key documents

The Tenancy Policy sits within a framework of strategies, policies, statutory documents and operational information that guide how the Council manages its homes and fulfils its duties as a social landlord and include:

- Draft Tenancy Strategy 2026
- Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 - 2023
- Draft Housing Strategy 2026 – 2030
- Housing Allocations Scheme 2023
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2019

- HRA Rent Setting Policy 2020

Key documents provide tenants with clear information about their rights, responsibilities and how the landlord service operates are:

- **Tenancy Agreement**

The legally binding contract between the Council and the tenant, setting out respective rights and responsibilities. Except for minor changes, variations to the tenancy agreement will be made through sections 102 and 103 of The Housing Act 1985.

- **Tenant Handbook**

Provides practical guidance on day-to-day tenancy matters, service standards and operational processes. The handbook supports the Tenancy Agreement but does not form part of the tenancy contract or this policy.

Supporting procedures

A range of supporting procedures provide the operational detail to deliver the principles in this Tenancy Policy. These procedures are operational in nature and do not form part of this policy or its decision-making criteria.

These procedures include, but are not limited to:

- Tenancy management procedures
- Succession and assignment guidance
- Mutual exchange assessment processes
- Tenancy fraud framework
- Tenancy audit and visit arrangements
- Vulnerability and reasonable adjustments framework
- Neighbourhood and estate management standards

These procedures are reviewed periodically to support the application of this policy and to reflect changes in legislation, regulation and Government guidance.

7. The types of tenancy the Council grants

The Council grants appropriate types of tenancies and occupation agreements, depending on the household's circumstances, eligibility, property type, and statutory requirements. The Council ensures applicants understand the nature of the tenancy offered.

7.1 Introductory tenancies

All new Council tenants are granted an Introductory Tenancy for a period of 12 months.

An Introductory Tenancy:

- Acts as a trial period to demonstrate that the tenant can sustain the tenancy successfully
- Contains fewer rights than a Secure Tenancy
- May be extended by up to six months where there are concerns about tenancy conduct
- May be ended early where the terms of the tenancy agreement are breached

Following successful completion of the Introductory period, the tenancy normally converts automatically to a Secure Tenancy. The Council no longer grants a Flexible Tenancy following an Introductory Tenancy.

7.2 Secure tenancies

Secure Tenancies are granted to eligible tenants who have successfully completed their Introductory period. The Council's offers Secure (lifetime) Tenancies in most cases, providing long-term stability for households.

Secure Tenancies:

- Do not have a fixed end date
- Provide enhanced statutory rights, such as Right to Buy, succession, and assignment in limited circumstances
- May only be ended through lawful possession proceedings, if justified
- Are the default tenancy type for most general needs and sheltered housing

Certain property types, such as older persons designated housing or adapted properties may have additional eligibility criteria and there may be circumstances when Secure Tenancies may not be granted for that property type, for example, if a non-statutory successor does not have a requirement for an adaptation or the size of a property.

7.3 Flexible tenancies

The Council issued tenancies with a five-year term between April 2016 and November 2021 and stopped because of developing case law and legal advice.

A small number of flexible tenancies granted previously remain in place as legacy arrangements. Flexible Tenancies remain lawful for the remainder of their existing terms, and the Council will continue to manage them fairly and transparently.

7.4 Demoted tenancies

A Demoted Tenancy may be granted following a court order where serious anti-social behaviour or tenancy breaches have occurred.

Demoted Tenancies:

- Last for 12 months (unless extended by the court)
- Provide reduced security like an Introductory Tenancy
- Allow the Council to take prompt action if further breaches occur
- Convert to a Secure Tenancy after the demotion period if no further action is taken

The Council will apply for demotion only where it is reasonable, proportionate and supported by evidence.

7.5 Non Secure tenancies

Non-Secure Tenancies are used for temporary accommodation provided under the Council's homelessness duties. They:

- Offer short-term accommodation in HRA accommodation
- Do not qualify for the same statutory rights as Secure Tenants
- Last only while the homelessness duty is being assessed or discharged
- Convert to an appropriate tenancy type if the household is permanently rehoused in Council accommodation

7.6 Licences to occupy

The Council may use licence agreements in temporary accommodation where the Housing Act 1996 places an interim duty to accommodate, such as s.188 of the Housing Act 1996.

Use of licences is appropriate where:

- The household is awaiting a decision about a homelessness application
- Accommodation is provided on a nightly or emergency basis

- The household does not meet the criteria for a tenancy

The Council will ensure licence holders understand their rights and responsibilities and that licences are used lawfully and proportionately.

8. The circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted when an existing tenancy ends

This section relates to:

- Introductory Tenancies
- Demoted Tenancies
- Flexible Tenancies
- Non-Secure Tenancies

8.1 Introductory tenancies

At the end of the 12-month introductory period, the tenancy will normally convert automatically to a Secure Tenancy unless:

- The Council has issued a Notice of Proceedings for Possession
- The introductory period has been extended due to tenancy breaches
- The tenant has not complied with the terms of their tenancy agreement, such as serious rent arrears or anti-social behaviour

The Council will provide clear reasons and rights of review where action is taken to extend or end an Introductory Tenancy.

8.2 Secure tenancies

Secure Tenancies do not end unless:

- The tenant voluntarily surrenders the property
- A court grants possession to the council
- The tenancy ceases to be the tenant's only or principal home
- Statutory succession or assignment leads to the creation of a new tenancy

Secure tenants are not subject to fixed term review, so it is not necessary to grant another tenancy.

8.3 Flexible tenancies

The Council no longer grants Flexible Tenancies. This section applies only to tenants who were granted a Flexible Tenancy before the Council discontinued their use in November 2021. Flexible Tenancies remain lawful for the remainder of their existing terms, and the Council will continue to manage them fairly and transparently.

8.3.1 Nature and length of Flexible Tenancies

The Council issued tenancies with a five-year term between April 2016 and November 2021.

For existing Flexible Tenants:

- The fixed term remains valid until its expiry
- Tenants retain all rights and responsibilities that apply to Flexible Tenancies under the Housing Act 1985, as amended
- During the fixed term, tenants have security of tenure unless they breach tenancy conditions

8.3.2 Reviews prior to the end of the fixed term

Between 9 and 12 months before a Flexible Tenancy is due to end, sometimes sooner if appropriate, the Council reviews the household's circumstances. The purpose of the review is to determine whether a new tenancy should be granted and, if so, the most appropriate tenancy type and property.

The outcome of the review may be:

- A new Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy for the same property
- A new Secure Tenancy for a different property if the household's needs have changed
- A decision not to grant another tenancy, with appropriate statutory notice and appeal rights

There remains a presumption in favour of granting a Secure Tenancy unless specific grounds apply.

8.3.3 Circumstances when a further tenancy may be offered for a different property

A new tenancy may be offered for a different home if:

- The current property is underoccupied by one or more bedrooms
- The property contains significant adaptations no longer required by the household
- The household's size or mobility needs have changed
- The property is needed for better use of the stock of council homes
- Any alternative property must be suitable, reasonable, and consistent with the Housing Allocation Scheme

8.3.4 Circumstances in which a further Secure (lifetime) Tenancy will be refused

The Council may decide not to grant a new tenancy at the end of a flexible term if:

- There are rent arrears or other housing related debts owed to the Council
- The tenant has breached the tenancy agreement
- The tenant does not occupy or intend to occupy the property as their only or principal home
- There is evidence of tenancy fraud

If the Council intends to refuse a new tenancy:

- At least six months' written notice will be provided
- Reasons will be set out clearly
- The tenant will be informed of their right to appeal

8.3.5 Notice and support if another tenancy is not granted

If a new tenancy is not granted, the Council will:

- Serve the required statutory notice
- Provide clear advice on alternative housing options
- Offer referral to Housing Solutions for support into private rented or other accommodation
- Avoid homelessness wherever possible in line with statutory duties
- Pursue eviction proceedings only if the tenant refuses to move after the notice period expires

8.3.6 Appeal process for legacy Flexible Tenants

Flexible Tenants who disagree with a refusal to grant a new tenancy may request:

Stage 1 Review

Submit a written appeal within 15 working days

Reviewed by a manager uninvolved in the original decision

Written outcome normally within 10 working days

Stage 2 Review

Submit a written request within 15 working days of Stage 1

Reviewed by senior officers

Written outcome within 10 working days (or advised of alternative timescale)

Review decisions will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998

8.3.7 Tenancy rights during review and notice period

Until the fixed term ends, Flexible Tenants retain:

- All rights set out in their current tenancy
- The right to request repairs
- The right to be treated fairly and consistently
- Protection from eviction without a court order

8.4 Non Secure Tenancies

A Non-Secure Tenancy ends when:

- The council has discharged its homelessness duty
- The household is no longer eligible for temporary accommodation
- The household is permanently rehoused
- A notice to quit or equivalent lawful notice has been served

The granting of a further tenancy in these cases will be governed by:

- The outcome of the homelessness decision; and
- The housing allocation scheme

A Non-Secure Tenancy does not normally convert to a Secure Tenancy unless a permanent tenancy is granted for a home in the HRA.

If a Non-Secure Tenancy is replaced by a License to Occupy, this will be indicated in a published officer decision with an effective date.

9. Tenancy Management

9.1 Tenancy Sustainment

The Council aims to support all tenants to maintain successful and secure tenancies. Sustainment activities are delivered operationally through tenancy management procedures and may include early intervention, referral to support services, and collaborative work with partner agencies.

9.2 Sole tenancies and joint tenancies

Both sole and joint tenancies are permitted under the Housing Act 1985. Decisions relating to granting or changing the legal status of a tenancy must:

- Reflect statutory succession rights
- Ensure fairness and transparency
- Consider risk management and safeguarding best practice
- Avoid creating fraudulent or non-qualifying occupation; and
- Consider the suitability of the household for the property

9.3 Requests to change a sole tenancy to a joint tenancy

The Council will consider requests for joint tenancies in line with statutory eligibility, the risk of tenancy fraud, and evidence of long-term, settled residence. A joint tenancy will not be granted where:

- The household member seeking to join the tenancy does not meet statutory or policy eligibility criteria
- Granting the tenancy would undermine the council's duty to prevent fraud
- The property would be under-occupied or otherwise unsuitable

It is made clear that the additional tenant is normally protected by a right of succession.

Request for a joint tenancy must be made in writing to the council. The council always informs the applicant of its decision in writing.

9.4 Requests to change a joint tenancy to a sole tenancy

When either or both joint tenants give notice to the Council that they wish to end the tenancy, the tenancy ends for both joint tenants.

However, if one joint tenant gives notice and vacates the property, leaving the remaining joint tenant in occupation, it may be possible for the remaining former joint tenant to become a sole tenant. In certain circumstances it may be possible to assign the tenancy.

In all other cases (where assignment cannot apply), the council considers granting a new sole tenancy to the remaining tenant, which is usually granted if:

- The property is the right size and type for the former joint tenant who wishes to become the sole tenant (according to the active Housing Allocation Scheme).
- Any adaptations made to the property are required by them.

In deciding whether to grant a new sole tenancy, the Council considers all relevant circumstances. These may include (but are not limited to) whether:

- The tenant who wishes to remain would be eligible for housing under the council's Housing Allocation Scheme
- There are any rent arrears
- There are any breaches of the terms of the tenancy agreement.
- Any other housing debt is owed to the council
- There is a valid Notice in place for any breach of the tenancy agreement, or a County Court Order has been obtained because of such a breach
- There is evidence that the person who wishes to remain does not intend to use the property as their main or principal home
- The proposed sole tenant is subject to immigration control

Where a joint tenancy ends following notice served by one joint tenant, the Council's Housing Management Service will take the lead in establishing the facts of occupation and determining the tenancy position. Referral to the homelessness service will be made only where the Council's landlord decision results in the occupier being threatened with homelessness.

The Council always changes a joint tenancy into a sole tenancy if instructed to do so by the County Court after a divorce or legal separation. Therefore, it is strongly advised that joint tenants consider their tenancy when getting legal advice on these matters.

If a new tenancy is granted, the type of tenancy is determined by the criteria set out this policy.

The council always informs applicants of its decision in writing.

9.5 Succession

Succession is the statutory or contractual right for another person to take over a council tenancy following the death of a tenant.

9.6 The right to succeed

A council tenancy can only be succeeded to once. Where a joint tenant dies, the tenancy passes automatically to the surviving joint tenant. This counts as the single statutory succession.

If the deceased tenant themselves became the tenant because of succession, no further person has a right to succeed to the tenancy.

9.7 Who can succeed to a tenancy

The right to succeed to a council tenancy is governed by the Housing Act 1985, as amended, and by the terms of the Council's tenancy agreement.

While legislation limits statutory succession rights for certain secure tenancies, the Council's current tenancy agreement provides succession rights which extend beyond the statutory minimum.

Where the tenancy agreement applies, the tenancy may pass on the death of the tenant to:

- The tenant's husband, wife or civil partner, or a person living with the tenant as if they were their husband, wife or civil partner, provided the property was their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death; or
- Where there is no such partner, another qualifying family member who occupied the property as their only or principal home for at least 12 months prior to the tenant's death, as defined in the tenancy agreement

Where the (non-statutory) successor occupies a property that is larger than reasonably required for their household, the Council will, after an appropriate bereavement period, work with the successor to move to accommodation that is more suitable for their housing need.

9.8 Changes to succession rights

Succession rights are determined by the terms of the tenancy agreement in force at the time of the tenant's death.

Any future changes to succession rights arising from amendments to the Council's tenancy agreement will be made lawfully and in accordance with the statutory framework that applies to the type of tenancy concerned.

In the case of Secure Tenancies, any variation of tenancy terms will be subject to consultation and notice requirements under sections 102 and 103 of the Housing Act 1985.

Nothing in this policy removes or limits any succession rights granted by the tenancy agreement.

9.9 If there is no right to succession

Where no legal or contractual right to succession exists, the Council may, at its discretion, grant a new tenancy.

A new tenancy may be granted for the same property where:

- The occupier has lived with the tenant for at least 12 months prior to the tenant's death
- The property is the right size for their household; and
- The occupier would have qualified as a successor had a previous succession not already occurred

If the property is not the right size for the household, the Council may consider granting a new tenancy of alternative accommodation of a suitable size.

In deciding whether to grant a new tenancy, the Council will have regard to:

- Whether any duty is owed under homelessness legislation; and
- The qualifying criteria of the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme

If no housing duty is owed, the decision will be made under delegated authority by the appropriate officer according to the council's scheme of delegations.

The factors considered may include, but are not limited to:

- The person's age
- Length of occupation
- Household size
- Medical needs
- Suitability of the property, including adaptations
- Income
- Social and welfare needs

All relevant circumstances are considered, and the applicant is informed of the decision in writing.

9.10 Assignment

In certain circumstances, Secure Tenants have the right to assign their tenancy to someone else. As assignments use up the right of succession and a tenancy can only be succeeded to once, someone who was granted their tenancy as a succession cannot carry out an assignment.

Secure Tenants have the right to assign their tenancy if:

- 1) A succession to the tenancy has not previously taken place
and
- 2) The proposed assignee would be eligible for housing under the council's Housing Allocation Scheme

and either

- a) The proposed assignee would be eligible to succeed to the tenancy on the death of the tenant
or
- b) An order is made by the Court

If an assignment takes place, this uses the right of succession and there is no further right of succession to the tenancy. The Council will not approve assignments intended to circumvent statutory succession rules.

9.11 Mutual exchanges

Mutual exchanges are recognised as an important means by which tenants may improve their housing circumstances and by which the Council promotes the effective and sustainable use of its housing stock.

Secure Tenants and legacy Flexible Tenants with preserved statutory rights have the right to mutually exchange their tenancy with another qualifying tenant of a local authority or Registered Provider, subject to the Council's consent and the relevant legal and regulatory provisions.

The Council will offer and publicise access to a mutual exchange service, enabling eligible tenants to identify potential exchange matches without payment of a fee, in line with the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenancy Standard.

Link to a free mutual exchange service <https://www.homeswapper.me/>

The Council takes reasonable steps to ensure that tenants who may otherwise be unable to access the mutual exchange service are provided with appropriate assistance.

Tenants seeking to mutually exchange are provided with clear information about the potential implications of an exchange, including the impact on tenure, rent and service charges, if applicable.

Applications for mutual exchange are determined in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985, associated legislation, and regulatory requirements. Consent is not withheld unreasonably.

The Council may refuse consent where one or more statutory grounds for refusal apply, including (but not limited to):

- The existence of possession proceedings, legal notices or court orders relating to breach of tenancy
- Breaches of tenancy conditions
- If the accommodation is not suitable for the incoming household, including under occupation or overcrowding
- If the property has been adapted for a person with disabilities and the exchange would result in the loss of suitable provision
- If the property is not occupied as the tenant's only or principal home; or
- Any other ground set out in schedule 3 of the housing act 1985

If consent is refused, the Council will provide clear written reasons, setting out the statutory basis for the decision.

9.12 The Assisted Moves Scheme

The Council supports tenants to rightsize if appropriate, enabling better use of the council's homes and supporting independence. This scheme is carried out through our Sustainment offering.

9.13 Tenant engagement and consultation

The Council is committed to involving tenants in shaping policies and services. This may include formal consultations where required and engagement through resident panels, workshops and surveys.

9.14 Tenancy fraud

It is fundamental to the effective management of the Council's housing stock that homes are allocated and occupied only by households who are eligible and entitled to do so. The Council therefore adopts a zero-tolerance approach to tenancy fraud.

Tenancy fraud undermines the integrity of the housing system, deprives eligible households of access to a home, and may constitute a criminal offence under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. If tenancy fraud is identified, the Council will take appropriate civil and/or criminal action, which may include possession proceedings and prosecution.

The prevention of tenancy fraud is addressed across the full housing lifecycle, with clear accountability at each stage.

The Council's Allocations Team is responsible for establishing and verifying an applicant's eligibility and qualification for social housing prior to any offer being made, whether the resulting tenancy is granted by the Council or through nomination to a Registered Provider. This provides assurance that allocations decisions are lawful, fair and consistent with the Council's Allocation Scheme.

The Council's tenancy management function is responsible for maintaining the integrity of occupation throughout the life of the tenancy and for identifying, investigating and responding to suspected tenancy fraud after a tenancy has been granted.

Tenancy fraud includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing false or misleading information, or failing to disclose material information, when applying for housing or responding to an allocation offer
- Unlawful subletting or parting with possession of the property
- Retaining a property following the death of a tenant where there is no right to succeed
- Carrying out an unauthorised mutual exchange
- Selling or transferring keys for financial gain
- Providing false information in connection with statutory housing rights, including right to buy and succession

The Council maintains appropriate governance arrangements to ensure effective information sharing between allocation, nomination and tenancy management functions, and with Registered Providers where applicable, to prevent, detect and address tenancy fraud.

The Council also promotes reporting of suspected tenancy fraud and publicises enforcement action where appropriate, as part of its wider deterrence strategy.

<https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/housing/report-tenancy-fraud>

To support these principles, the Council may carry out tenancy audits and proportionate verification activity to confirm that homes are occupied by the approved household as their only or principal home. This may include announced checks and, if appropriate, unannounced visits to make contact and seek verification.

Tenants are expected to provide accurate and complete information about household composition and occupation and must not withhold material information where it affects their tenancy rights, eligibility or the lawful occupation of the home. The Council will carry out all verification and audit activity in a way that is lawful, proportionate, and respectful, balancing effective fraud prevention with tenants' right to live in their home without unreasonable interference.

9.15 Tenant improvements

Tenants may only carry out improvements or alterations to their home with the Council's prior written consent unless the works are expressly permitted without consent under the tenancy agreement. Requests for permission must be put in writing to the council.

The Council recognises that a tenant's home is their principal place of residence and that tenants may wish to make improvements or alterations to better meet their household's needs.

Consent is not withheld unreasonably, but the Council must ensure that any works are safe, lawful, and do not adversely affect the condition, value, or future management of its housing stock. Therefore, tenants must obtain permission first which will usually require a specification of works. If permission is granted, access must be given for post inspections ensure works are completed to a satisfactory standard.

9.16 Household changes

The Council takes a proportionate, risk-based approach to requests that affect who is permitted to live in a Council home, including requests for additional long-term household members.

Requests for changes to household composition are considered on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the tenancy agreement, safeguarding considerations, the prevention of unlawful occupation and the effective use of housing stock.

The Council expects each property to be occupied only by the approved household. No person may live at a Council property on a permanent or long-term basis unless they were included in the approved household at the start of the tenancy or the Council has given prior written permission. In considering any request for additional household members, the Council will assess whether the proposed occupation is compatible with the nature and purpose of the accommodation, including where the property is age restricted, for example, Independent Living Schemes sometimes still referred to as sheltered housing.

9.17 Abandonment

The Council expects all tenants to occupy their home as their only or principal residence, in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

If it appears that a tenant has permanently vacated the property without formally bringing the tenancy to an end, the Council may treat the tenancy as having been abandoned.

In cases where abandonment is clear and unambiguous, the Council may recover possession of the property without serving a Notice to Quit, where it is lawful to do so.

If this occurs, the handling of any goods left at the property and any further action is carried out in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions and the Council's procedures.

Decisions relating to suspected or confirmed abandonment are made fairly, proportionately and with due regard to the prevention of unlawful eviction, the protection of tenant rights, and the effective use of the Council's housing stock.

10. Rents and service charges

The council's approach to rents and service charges is explained in detail in the HRA Rent Setting Policy.

11. Making best use of the council's homes

Underlying themes of this policy are support for household mobility and making the best use of the council's limited housing stock by:

- An effective Housing Allocations Scheme, which is available on the council's website at <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/strategies-and-policies/housing-plans>
- Carefully managing successions and assignments
- Encouraging and facilitating mutual exchanges <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/housing/council-tenant-services/swap-your-council-house-someone>
- Enabling transfers through the Housing Needs Register. Information on eligibility and the process is available in the council's Housing Allocation Scheme
- The Assisted Moves Scheme
- Addressing tenancy fraud to ensure council housing is available only to those that qualify and in greatest housing need. <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/housing/report-tenancy-fraud>
- A continuous programme of tenancy audits to understand the needs of tenants, including overcrowding or under occupying, as well as any tenant or landlord responsibilities outstanding

12. Use of the private rented sector

The council has a duty to provide accommodation for certain people who are homeless or about to become homeless through no fault of their own. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 the council can house homeless households in the private rented sector. This is not the council's default position but is a useful additional resource to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The council runs a successful social lettings and management agency, Canterbury Lettings <https://canterburylettings.co.uk/> which provides professional services to local landlords, enabling tenants to rent well managed and well-maintained homes. Services include:

- Basic reference and affordability check
- Accompanied viewings
- Inventory
- Tenancy training and instruction
- Tenant support
- Tenancy agreements
- Deposit or deposit guarantee
- Payment of housing benefit direct to landlord where applicable
- An arranged gas safety check
- Energy performance certificate if required
- Utilities set up
- Rent collection
- Arranged maintenance
- Day to day tenancy management
- Assistance to end tenancy

12.1 The types of tenancy Canterbury Lettings grants, the circumstances in which they are granted and the length of the terms

12.2 The types of tenancy Canterbury Lettings grants

The Social Lettings Agency grants Assured Periodic Tenancies only, with no fixed term and no end date, operating on a rolling basis (usually monthly).

Tenancy agreements are based on the government produced guidance for use in the private rented sector, adapted as necessary to reflect the requirements of the Renters' Rights Act 2025; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/model-agreement-for-a-shorthold->

assured-tenancy. Canterbury Lettings uses the documents provided by The National Landlords Residents Association (NRLA).

12.3 Monitoring of tenancies and continuation of occupation

Tenancies are monitored throughout their duration as a standard feature of the service. Any issues arising from either the tenant or landlord perspective are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

As Assured Periodic Tenancies do not come to an end unless ended by the tenant or lawfully terminated by the landlord, there is no renewal process. The tenancy continues automatically, providing tenants with long-term stability and continuity, while minimising administrative burdens for landlords and the Agency.

The Social Lettings Agency supports and sustains tenancies wherever possible, to enable tenants to establish stable homes and to provide consistency for landlords.

12.4 Circumstances in which a tenancy may be brought to an end or not supported

While the tenancy does not require renewal, the Social Lettings Agency may not support the continuation of a tenancy, and a landlord may seek possession using the appropriate legal grounds, where one or more of the following apply:

- There are significant or persistent rent arrears
- There are serious breaches of the terms of the tenancy agreement
- The property is statutorily overcrowded
- There is evidence of domestic abuse or serious safeguarding concerns affecting occupancy
- The landlord intends to sell the property or requires possession for another lawful reason under the Housing Act 1988 (as amended)

Any decision to seek possession rests with the private landlord and must be made in accordance with the lawful possession grounds and procedures in force at the time.

12.5 Appeals and complaints

If a tenant wishes to complain about Canterbury Lettings or disagrees with how their tenancy has been managed, they may use the Council's complaints procedure.

Property agents are required by law to join a government authorised consumer redress scheme. Canterbury Lettings is a member of the 'Property Redress Scheme'

<https://www.theprs.co.uk/>

Tenants are considered consumers for the purposes of this scheme. If they remain dissatisfied after exhausting Canterbury Lettings' internal complaints process, they may escalate their complaint to the Property Redress Scheme in line with its published criteria and procedures, available at:

<https://www.theprs.co.uk/Consumer>

13. Policy review

The Tenancy Policy will be reviewed bi-annually and it will be reviewed as changes in legislation, regulation or guidance may dictate.

Minor changes which do not make a significant difference to service provision will be made to the document by delegated authority to the Head of Housing & Community.

Significant changes will be taken through the council's governance process.

14. Equality and diversity

The Council is committed to ensuring that this policy is applied fairly, consistently and without discrimination. In delivering this policy, the Council will:

- Comply with the equality act 2010, including the public sector equality duty
- Consider the diverse needs of tenants, including those relating to disability, age, gender, race, religion or belief, sexuality and family status
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled tenants in accordance with its reasonable adjustments framework and vulnerability policy
- Ensure that tenancy related decisions are sensitive to issues of vulnerability, safeguarding, cultural needs and household composition
- Engage with a diverse range of tenants when reviewing policies, ensuring tenant voice influences decision-making
- Assess the impact of this policy through an equality impact assessment, to be reviewed with each substantive policy revision