



Draft Tenancy Strategy
June 2026

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose	3
2.1 Statutory requirements	3
2.2 The council's expectations	3
3. The intended audience of the Tenancy Strategy	4
4. Links to other strategies	4
5. Statement of principles	4
6. Introductory Tenancies	5
7. Assured Tenancies	6
8. Flexible Tenancies	7
9. Reviewing Flexible Tenancies	8
10. Ending Flexible Tenancies	8
11. Survivors of Domestic Abuse	9
12. Tenancy Management	9
13. Tenancy Sustainment	9
14. Tenant Involvement	10
15. Making best use of social housing	10
16. Social Housing Fraud	10
17. Rents	10
18. Service Charges	10
19. Mutual Exchanges	10
20. Succession	11
21. Use of the private rented sector	12
22. Tenancy Policies	12
23. Review	12
24. Equality and diversity	12

1. Introduction

The council has a statutory duty to produce a Tenancy Strategy to guide registered providers of social housing (RPs) in the development of tenancy policies for their housing stock in the district.

Canterbury City Council's Tenancy Strategy was revised in April 2026, superseding the Tenancy Strategy of 7 December 2020. It needed updating because the environment in which social housing operates has changed dramatically since 2020.

It is written from the council's strategic perspective as the Local Housing Authority, rather than as a social housing landlord.

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 Strategy reflects the current legal position and will be amended in due course.

2. Purpose

2.1 Statutory requirements

This strategy meets the council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011, which requires local authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy that sets out the matters which registered providers of social housing (RPs) should have regard to when formulating their tenancy policies for their own stock, especially:

- a) The types of tenancies granted
- b) The circumstances in which a particular type of tenancy is granted
- c) Where tenancies are granted for a specified term, the lengths of the terms granted
- d) The circumstances in which a further tenancy is granted; where an existing tenancy is ending.

2.2 The council's expectations

Tenancy policies are a regulatory requirement under the [Tenancy Standard](#) rather than statutory.

The council expects RPs to publish clear and accessible tenancy policies outlining their approach to tenancy management that:

- e) Comply with the [regulatory standards](#) for landlords set by the Regulator of Social Housing using its powers under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.
- f) Cooperate with the council to address local housing needs.
- g) Ensure that tenancy policies do not adversely affect homelessness.
- h) Balance the interests of applicants for housing, tenants and landlords.
- i) Facilitate tenant mobility to make best use of the affordable housing stock.
- j) Create and maintain mixed and sustainable communities.
- k) Support vulnerable people to sustain their tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions.
- l) Ensure that tenants abide by the terms of their tenancies, backed by appropriate sanctions when necessary.
- m) Combat tenancy fraud.
- (n) Contain simple and accessible appeals and complaints processes.
- (o) Explain the advice and assistance they will give to tenants about finding alternative accommodation if another tenancy is not granted.
- (p) Set out their policy on granting discretionary succession rights, taking account of the needs of vulnerable household members.

3. The intended audience of the Tenancy Strategy

All RPs with homes in the district, including the City Council and housing associations, not-for-profit and for-profit organisations.

The Tenancy Strategy is reviewed, modified or replaced from time to time and is published on the council's website. A copy is available at the council's principal office for inspection at all reasonable hours, without charge, by members of the public, who will be provided with a copy on request.

This Tenancy Strategy is supplemented by a Tenancy Policy for the council's own homes that explains how it will put the principles of this strategy into practice.

4. Links to other strategies

The Tenancy Strategy has a particular function, and does not cover the whole range of strategic housing issues, which are addressed in other strategies with which the Tenancy Strategy is aligned:

- € [Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 | Canterbury City Council](#)
- € [Adopted Local Plan | Canterbury City Council](#)
- € [New Local Plan | Canterbury City Council](#)
- € [Housing homelessness and rough sleeping policy](#) 2018-23
- € [Draft Housing Strategy 2026 to 2030](#)
- € [HRa Buisness Plan 2019](#)
- € [Housing allocations policy](#) 2023
- € [Tenancy strategy](#) 2020
- € [Tenancy policy](#) 2020

5. Statement of principles

The council is keen to ensure that the types of tenancies granted by RPs are suitable for local housing needs, create and support sustainable communities and ensure that vulnerable tenants have the level of stability they need, while promoting mobility and ensuring that tenants live in accommodation of an appropriate size.

RPs are expected to co-operate with the council's strategic housing functions and assist the council to fulfil its duties to meet local housing need, including assistance with homelessness duties, and by meeting obligations in nominations agreements. Homes must be allocated in a fair and transparent way that meets all legislative and regulatory requirements, considering the needs of tenants and prospective tenants, preferably using Kent Homechoice.

RPs shall offer tenancies and terms of occupation that are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock. They must meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements and terms of occupation.

6. Introductory Tenancies

The council recommends that all new tenants should be granted an Introductory Tenancy, sometimes also referred to as probationary or provisional tenancies, for an initial period of 12 months, which can be extended by up to another six months.

Before the start of the Introductory Tenancy, prospective tenants should be told:

- That they do not have the same rights as Secure or Flexible tenants; for example, they cannot:
 - Apply for the Right to Buy their home or
 - Carry out a mutual exchange with other tenants.
- Whether they will be granted a Secure, Assured or Flexible Tenancy at the end of the Introductory period.
- The reasons why the landlord may refuse to grant a tenancy at the end of the Introductory Tenancy, such as:
 - The property is no longer suitable for the tenant, and an alternative affordable home is being offered that is in a location and of a type and size that will be more appropriate for the tenant in the foreseeable future.
 - The tenant's financial circumstances have improved to a level where other forms of tenure could be affordable, such as shared ownership or open market purchase.
 - The conduct of the tenant is such that they would not be accepted onto the council's Housing Needs Register, including rent arrears or other housing debts and their history of addressing these issues.
 - The tenants have breached the terms of their tenancy or have been involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour.
 - The tenancy was obtained fraudulently.
- The process for reviewing tenancies and the factors that will be considered.
- The process for appealing against a decision not to grant a further tenancy.

The council expects Registered Providers to provide appropriate tenancy support to help vulnerable people sustain their tenancies but also expects providers to take robust measures to deal with tenants who commit anti-social behaviour to protect individuals and communities.

7. Assured Tenancies

Following the introduction of the Housing Act 1985, social housing tenants were offered an Assured or Secure Tenancy, which granted them a home for life.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 creates a simpler, more secure Assured Tenancy structure and strengthens tenants' rights. [Implementing the Renters' Rights Act: Social Housing - GOV.UK](#)

From 1 May 2026, the changes will apply to:

- The private rented sector – tenancies that are not within the definition of social housing Assured Tenancies such as market rent homes.
- Assured Tenancies of social housing where the landlord is not an RP.

Until October 2027, for social housing Assured Tenancies, RPs must continue to follow the existing rules that were in place prior to 1 May 2026.

From October 2027, the Renters' Rights Act will apply to social housing Assured Tenancies provided by RPs.

The Act introduces a new tenancy system, including:

- Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) will become Assured periodic (rolling) tenancies.
- All new Assured Tenancies will be periodic from the start.
- Section 21 evictions will be abolished.
- Updated grounds for possession will apply.
- RPs will be required to provide tenants with certain information in writing at the outset of tenancies. The government will lay secondary legislation setting out what this must include.

All existing social housing Assured Tenancies provided by RPs will move to Assured periodic from October 2027.

From October 2027, new section 13A of the Housing Act 1988 will apply to rent increases for social housing Assured Tenancies held with RPs. This will allow landlords to use the section 13A process to increase rent at any point in the first 52 weeks of a tenancy, and then no more than once every 52 weeks after that, provided they give at least one month's notice. Unlike private landlords, RPs will continue to be able to use rent review clauses to increase rent, as they do now, and where a rent review clause is used there will be no requirement to serve a section 13A notice.

Annual limits on rent increases will continue to be set under the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard, not through the Renters' Rights Act.

To support the October 2027 changes, the government has published a [consultation on a new Tenure Direction to the Regulator of Social Housing](#), which explains what the Regulator must consider when setting its standards. RPs must then comply with the standards the Regulator sets and deliver the outcomes they contain.

The current Tenure Direction needs updating to reflect the Renters' Rights Act changes to the tenancy framework. The Tenure Direction will ensure the regulatory framework reflects the Renters' Rights Act and support implementation.

The consultation will run for 8 weeks, from 2 April 2026 to 28 May 2026. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the Government intends to issue the new Tenure Direction to the Regulator by October 2026. The Regulator will then consult on and publish any updates to the regulatory standards needed ahead of the October 2027 changes.

While the Renters' Rights Act will apply to landlords using the assured tenancy framework, the regulatory standards, set by the Regulator of Social Housing, apply to all social housing landlords registered with the Regulator, including Canterbury City Council.

Although the current Government guidance refers to ASTs, it is not yet clear whether this change will apply demoted tenancies and introductory tenancies.

Therefore, the Tenancy Strategy reflects the current legal position and will be amended when the revised Tenancy Standard is published.

8. Flexible Tenancies

Fixed term Flexible Tenancies were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 with the aim of helping RPs to make best use of their stock and respond to changing housing needs.

Fixed term Flexible Tenancies enable landlords at the end of a specified period to review tenants' conduct of their tenancy, their personal circumstances and to identify the most suitable housing option for them. This may include moving to another affordable rented property more suited to their needs, shared ownership or home ownership. This enables Registered Providers to ensure that best use is made of the limited housing stock in the district, whilst considering tenants' personal situation.

The council used to grant Flexible Tenancies, but in 2021 legal advice was sought on their use because of emerging case law. As a result, the council ended the use of Flexible Tenancies.

If RPs use Flexible Tenancies, the council expects the following factors to be considered:

- Flexible Tenancies should be for a minimum of five years, with consideration given for longer terms in appropriate circumstances.
- Longer Flexible Tenancies should be considered for families with young children, older households and for vulnerable tenants who would benefit from increased stability.
- Shorter tenancies of two years should be used only in exceptional circumstances, for example where accommodation is intended to be short term, or there have been significant previous tenancy breaches, or there are concerns about affordability. This should be clearly explained in their tenancy policies
- It is essential that all prospective tenants understand the type of tenancy they are being offered before they are obliged to accept it.
- All prospective tenants should be given clear information before the start of a tenancy, about the tenancy type, the reasons why that tenancy is being offered, the rights and responsibilities specific to the tenancy and the process for reviewing Flexible Tenancies.
- In most cases it is expected that a further Flexible Tenancy will be granted for the same property at the end of the fixed term.
- Decisions to end a Flexible Tenancy by accelerated legal proceedings should be proportionate and clear guidance should be given to tenants on the process, how to access independent advice, and how to secure suitable alternative accommodation.

In some circumstances a Flexible Tenancy will not be suitable, and a lifetime Assured or Secure tenancy is more appropriate, for example:

- Housing designated for older people, or
- General needs housing where the occupant will be 60+ years of age.
- Housing designated for vulnerable people such as those with learning or physical disabilities, or enduring mental health issues. The exception to this will be where the accommodation is intended as move-on to more permanent housing or where specific adaptations may not be required long term.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other circumstances where a Flexible Tenancy may not be appropriate.

9. Reviewing Flexible Tenancies

RPs should explain in their tenancy policies the process for reviewing Flexible Tenancies, detailing the frequency of review and what factors will be considered.

The council recommends that Flexible Tenancies are reviewed between six and twelve months before the end of the term. The review should be based on objective criteria to establish how the tenant has conducted their tenancy, how the tenant has managed their

property, whether the property is still suitable to their needs, and whether the tenant has the financial means to move to alternative accommodation.

If the circumstances of the household are broadly similar to those at the time of the original letting, there should be a presumption that a Flexible Tenancy will be renewed. Examples of significant changes to a tenant's circumstances include:

- The property is no longer suitable for the tenant, and an alternative affordable home is being offered that is in a location and of a type and size that will be more appropriate for the tenant in the foreseeable future.
- The tenant's financial circumstances have improved to a level where other forms of tenure could be affordable, such as shared ownership or open market purchase.
- The conduct of the tenant is such that they would not be accepted onto the council's Housing Needs Register, including rent arrears or other housing debts and their history of addressing these issues.
- The tenants have breached the terms of their tenancy or have been involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour.
- The tenancy was obtained fraudulently.

RPs should ensure that they have sufficient resources and trained staff to operate the review process efficiently and effectively.

10. Ending Flexible Tenancies

Where a tenancy is to be ended without a breach of tenancy, reasonable efforts should be made to offer suitable alternative accommodation, and consideration given to extending the tenancy until alternative suitable accommodation can be made available.

RPs should give at least 6 months' notice to a tenant where there is an intention not to renew a tenancy.

The reason for ending the tenancy should be clearly set out and information provided to the tenant on how to appeal. The appeal process should be a clearly publicised, transparent process.

When ending a tenancy, it is essential that landlords take effective steps to avoid homelessness by working with the council at the earliest opportunity, so that tenants understand their housing options and organisations act together to avoid or relieve homelessness before the tenancy comes to an end. The tenant may obtain free, independent advice by contacting housingadvice@canterbury.gov.uk

Registered Providers must ensure that tenancy agreements for Flexible Tenancies and their processes for ending tenancies fully comply with statute and case law, which can prove complex.

The council also expects that procedures for bringing tenancies to an end will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

11. Survivors of Domestic Abuse

The council expects RPs to co-operate with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.

The Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018 requires all Local Authorities and RPs, when rehousing an existing Secure Tenant who needs to move or has recently moved from their social home to escape domestic abuse, to grant a Secure Tenancy for their new home.

The council wants to ensure that survivors of domestic abuse will not fear losing security of tenure and to provide families with a stable new home. The impact of this on the turnover of

social housing stock should be minimal and should be offset by the subsequent eviction of the perpetrator from the former home, thereby releasing another affordable property.

12. Tenancy Management

The council expects RPs to provide effective Tenancy Management services, including:

- Effectively managing all conditions of the tenancy agreement.
- Ensuring that social housing tenants behave appropriately and in accordance with their responsibilities.
- Ensure that the statutory rights of tenants are respected and managed effectively.
- Managing tenancy changes, mutual exchanges and the Right to Buy process.
- Dealing effectively with the impacts on local communities of anti-social behaviour, nuisance, alcohol or drug misuse.
- Tackling tenancy fraud.
- Supporting tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence. If a tenancy or licence ends, they must offer affected tenants advice and assistance.
- Assisting in reducing the risk of homelessness.
- Supporting the development of sustainable neighbourhoods.

13. Tenancy Sustainment

It is important that Registered Providers ensure that tenants who are vulnerable or who need additional support to sustain their tenancy, can access appropriate services to enable them to remain in their home, their community and their support networks, reducing the risk of homelessness through loss of tenancy.

Tenants who are required to move must be provided with timely advice and assistance about housing options before the tenancy or licence ends.

14. Tenant Involvement

All RPs are encouraged to ensure regulatory requirements are met and to promote meaningful, inclusive tenant involvement. All policies and procedures must be based on a sound knowledge of their tenants and their views. RPs should recognise this is an opportunity to continuously improve the quality of services, improve the quality of neighbourhoods and ensure they meet the needs and aspirations of their tenants.

15. Making best use of social housing

Tenants may need to move home, and the council supports household mobility. This can be for many reasons, including poor health, to reduce overcrowding and to address under occupation.

The council would like to see RPs develop proactive tenancy policies and services that provide practical support to help people living in social housing to “rightsize”, or to explore opportunities for home ownership or other tenures, helping to free up homes to make best use of their housing stock.

16. Social Housing Fraud

Affordable housing is a limited resource, and therefore great importance should be placed on tackling social housing fraud. RPs are expected to prevent and uncover fraud, and work with the council and its partners to both address this issue and share good practice.

17. Rents

RPs must comply with the Regulator of Social Housing’s [Rent Standard and Guidance](#). It contains the outcomes RPs are required to deliver in setting and increasing rents for their

social housing in line with Government policy in the [Policy statement on rents for social housing](#).

18. Service Charges

Service charges are not part of the same legislative and regulatory framework as rent but are subject to statute and extensive case law.

It is expected that RPs will endeavour to keep service charges to a minimum and that increases are within the guideline limit of CPI plus 1% per annum.

It is essential to ensure that all service charges are eligible for Housing Benefit, otherwise the service charges can be too expensive for lower income households.

The council expects that RPs will:

- Have a reasonable and transparent method of calculating service charges that reflect the service provided to tenants.
- Ensure that services and works are of a reasonable standard.
- Supply tenants with clear information on how service charges are set.
- Identify service charges separately from the rent charge.
- Where new or extended services are introduced, and an additional charge may need to be made, the Registered Provider will consult with tenants.
- If actual expenditure is less than the current charge, the service charge will be reduced accordingly.

19. Mutual Exchanges

Mutual exchanges are a valuable way to help tenants to improve their housing situation and for landlords to make more effective use of their housing stock.

RPs are expected to offer a mutual exchange service which:

- Allows tenants who may be eligible for mutual exchange, whether by a statutory right or by a policy of the RP, to easily access details of available matches without payment of a fee.
- Publicise the availability of mutual exchange services.
- Provide support for accessing mutual exchange services to tenants who might otherwise be unable to use them.
- Ensure that tenants who are mutually exchanging are aware of the implications for their tenancy, including:
 - Changes to their Secure or Assured status.
 - Differences in rent levels between Social Rent and Affordable Rent.
 - Any gain or loss of the Right to Buy.

The introduction of Affordable Rents and Flexible Tenancies has implications for tenants who wish to exercise their right to mutual exchange. It created a new mechanism for mutual exchanges to protect certain lifetime tenants. If Assured Lifetime and Secure Lifetime tenants who were granted their tenancy before the 1 April 2012 exchange with a Flexible Tenant, then a new Tenancy is issued to each party, and the tenant is granted another Secure or Assured tenancy. The Flexible Tenant is granted a new tenancy, but there is no particular provision regarding its status. It will be a matter for the RP to decide what type of tenancy to offer.

The council encourages RPs to grant security equal to that which is being given up, even if they are not obliged to do so, to ensure that mutual exchanges remain an effective tool.

20. Succession

Under the Housing Act 1985, a range of family members were able to succeed to a tenancy on the death of a Secure Tenant, including spouses, partners, civil partners, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and adopted children.

The Localism Act 2011 amended the succession framework, whereby there can only be one succession, and when one joint tenant dies, this counts as the one succession. Under the Localism Act, Secure Tenancies that started after 1 April 2012 are limited to the succession of the spouse or civil partners as an automatic right.

RPs can make express provision in the tenancy agreement to expand the group of family members that can succeed. However, given the level of housing need in the district, the council does not support this, except in exceptional circumstances. Successions to tenancies should therefore be applied in accordance with legislation and government guidance applicable at the time of the succession application.

Following the death of a tenant, if there is someone living in the home as their principal residence, who is not entitled to succeed, the RP should:

- Provide housing advice and assistance to the person on their options.
- Consider the interests of vulnerable people and make sure that their policies offer appropriate protection.
- Where appropriate, offer alternative accommodation that meets the household's needs.

If a person succeeds to a tenancy but needs to move, reference should be made to the council's [Housing allocations policy](#) for more details on help available.

21. Use of the private rented sector

If RPs use homes in the private rented sector to provide accommodation, the council prefers:

- Rents no higher than Local Housing Allowance rates.
- If this is not possible, an affordability check to ensure that a tenancy is sustainable.
- Tenancies granted for a minimum term of two years, preferably longer.
- Provision of good quality housing management and maintenance services.
- The property to be in a good state of repair and fit for purpose.
- A process to ensure that the tenant understands their housing options when the tenancy comes to an end.
- That the use of the private rented sector does not adversely affect homelessness.

22. Tenancy Policies

All RPs shall publish clear and accessible policies that meet the requirements of the [Tenancy Standard](#) and this strategy. These policies should be available online and provided on request to any resident. The council will publish its own tenancy policy in its role as a social housing landlord.

23. Review

This Tenancy Strategy was reviewed in April 2026. It will be reviewed as changes in legislation, regulation or guidance may dictate. It is likely that this will be necessary when the Renters Rights Act affects social housing tenancies.

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 committee process.

24. Equality and diversity

The council is committed to ensure that this strategy does not impact disproportionately on different equality groups. This strategy has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). All RPs are expected to undertake and publish an EIA of their own tenancy policies.