Tenancy Strategy

2026-2031

Lewisham



1. Introduction

1.1. Lewisham Council is committed to ensuring that everyone in our borough has a safe, stable and genuinely affordable home where they can live an independent and prosperous life.

1.2. The Localism Act 2011 requires every Local Authority to publish a strategy setting out its direction to Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) regarding:

- the types of tenancies they should grant;
- the circumstances in which they should grant a tenancy of a particular kind;
- where they grant tenancies for a fixed term, the lengths of these terms, and;
- the circumstances in which they should grant a new tenancy after an existing tenancy ends.

1.3. When managing our own homes, we are required by the Regulator of Social Housing to detail how we will manage and sustain tenancies and prevent tenancy fraud. This approach is detailed in our **Tenancy Policy**, and is aligned with this Strategy.

1.4. In this Strategy, we set out our position that Lifetime Tenancies are the preferred approach for Lewisham's social housing residents, recognising the important role that security of tenure plays in supporting resident wellbeing, tenancy sustainment, and strong communities. However, we also recognise the need to make effective use of a limited supply of social housing and the importance of balancing long-term security for residents with the best use of housing stock to meet housing need across the borough.

1.5. This Strategy has been developed in collaboration with our Registered Housing Provider partners, and has taken regard of Lewisham's current Allocation Policy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and the London Housing Strategy.

2. Aims and objectives

Through this Tenancy Strategy, Lewisham sets out how we will support residents to access and sustain safe, secure and affordable homes, while promoting strong, inclusive and resilient communities. The objectives set out below reflect the outcomes we want this Strategy to achieve for residents and communities across the borough:

2.1. Secure Homes — Safe, secure and affordable housing is a human right. Security of tenure allows a household the stability to find work, make friends in their community, and plan their future. Lifetime tenancies free families from the health impacts and associated costs of moving, which disproportionately affect lower income households.

2.2. Strong Communities — Community cohesion is improved significantly when households are confident in their ability to remain in their home long term. The 'welfarist' model, which asserts that social housing should only be used by the poorest section of society, causes residualisation and segregates communities. Security of tenure reduces transience, allowing residents to remain in their home for as long as they wish, befriend their neighbours, and contribute to their local community.

3. Working with registered providers

3.1. Lewisham Council is committed to working in close partnership with Registered Providers (RPs) to support positive outcomes for residents and the effective delivery of housing service. We have established a Registered Providers Partnership Board, bringing together housing providers operating in the borough. Our aim is to ensure the Board delivers clear, measurable outcomes and operates as a meaningful and collaborative forum where partners can share good practice, address common challenges, and align approaches.

3.2. As part of this, we will develop and implement a Housing Compact, which will set out our shared commitments and ways of working. The Compact will articulate how we will work together to provide safe, healthy, and secure homes for Lewisham residents, support sustainable tenancies, and ensure residents can access tenancy services in a way that meets their needs, including through reasonable adjustments where required.

3.3. We will continue working with our Registered Provider partners on broader areas of tenancy management, including tackling tenancy fraud, reducing homelessness, and facilitating right-sizing and mutual exchange.

4. Tenancies

4.1. Following any introductory or starter tenancy period, Lewisham supports the use of Lifetime Tenancies as the standard approach for social housing tenants across the borough.

4.2. Introductory and Starter Tenancies may be used where a resident is new to social housing, particularly where they support homelessness prevention and help to identify and address tenancy sustainment issues at an early stage. In using these tenancies, providers should have regard to residents' individual circumstances, including any vulnerabilities or support needs, and ensure appropriate support is available to help sustain the tenancy.

4.3. Although, lifetime tenancies remain Lewisham's preferred approach for social housing tenants, Registered Providers may choose to use Fixed Term Tenancies in circumstances where they consider this appropriate and consistent with their tenancy policies. Where Fixed Term Tenancies are used, providers should have regard to the principles set out in this Strategy and carefully consider the needs and circumstances of the household, particularly where there are vulnerabilities, children, or older residents. Registered Providers should keep tenancy arrangements under review and consider opportunities to offer Lifetime Tenancies where appropriate.

4.4. Further detail on Lewisham's position on different tenancy types is set out in the sections below.

5. Lifetime Tenancies

5.1. We believe that lifetime tenancies are the best option for the wellbeing of Lewisham's social housing residents, the creation of sustainable and strong communities, and the prevention of homelessness.

5.2. In recognition of their benefits, lifetime tenancies have seen a resurgence in institutional support since the passing of the Localism Act 2011. Out of all new social housing tenancies in England in 2023/24, 78% were lifetime tenancies, and only 10% had a fixed end date[1]. Assured tenancies are now the standard in the Private Rented Sector, following the introduction of the Renters Rights Act 2025. From benchmarking exercises of tenancy policies, most social housing providers in Lewisham let properties through a Lifetime Tenancy[2].

5.3. For this reason, Lewisham Council will continue to grant lifetime 'secure' tenancies as the preferred choice for all our general needs housing.

5.4. We encourage our Registered Provider partners to consider granting lifetime tenancies to:

- All new tenants whose introductory/starter tenancies have been successfully completed
- Tenants who had a secure or assured tenancy before 1 April 2012 and who are transferring to another social rented home
- Those who are the beneficiary of a succession or assignment of a secure or assured tenancy
- Existing tenants, who are undertaking a mutual exchange, provided they have held a periodic or assured tenancy before 1 April 2012
- All sheltered housing tenancies

5.5. While we strongly support the use of lifetime tenancies, we will always work to ensure the most effective use of stock within the lifetime tenancy framework. For this reason, we will create incentives and support voluntary schemes to encourage downsizing and the release of adapted properties where they are no longer required, including through Mutual Exchange, the Trading Places scheme, the GLA's Housing Moves and the Seaside & Country Homes schemes. We will also continue our work internally and with our RP partners to identify and eliminate Tenancy Fraud, which directly impacts households waiting on our Housing Register.

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1. Social housing lettings in England, tenancies: April 2023 to March 2024 - GOV.UK
2. At time of writing, it is anticipated that Registered Providers will lose the ability to grant new Fixed Term Tenancies under the RSH's new Tenancy Standard, in line with section 147 of the Renters Rights Act. If implemented, this will leave lifetime tenancies as the only option for most RPs providing general needs housing.

6. Introductory / Starter Tenancies

6.1. To ensure good neighbourhood management and encourage residents to follow the terms of their tenancy, RPs should utilise Introductory / Starter Tenancies for tenants who are new to social housing.

6.2. For clarity, these tenancies should only be used where a tenant was not living in social housing immediately prior to the new tenancy. They should not be used for tenants transferring from a lifetime tenancy (whether provided by the same organisation or otherwise), or tenants moving via mutual exchange.

6.3. During the period of the Introductory / Starter Tenancy, RPs should work to identify issues in the tenancy (such as arrears or anti-social behaviour), taking account of the residents' individual circumstances and any vulnerabilities or support needs, including any reasonable adjustments required to enable them to engage with tenancy services, and work with the tenant to sustain the tenancy and prevent homelessness.

6.4. RPs should regularly monitor the arrears rates in these tenancies and explore options for income and debt interventions if there are high levels of arrears among new tenants.

6.5. Introductory / Starter Tenancies should normally be converted to Lifetime Tenancies at the end of the introductory period. Where there has been a serious tenancy breach, RPs may consider extending the Introductory / Starter Tenancy where this would provide further opportunity to resolve the issues and sustain the tenancy.

6.6. Where an RP believes that any such tenancy is likely to end without the offer of a Lifetime Tenancy, they should immediately refer the household to the council's Housing Needs department to prevent homelessness, in line with the RP Commitment to Refer. See **here** for details on making a referral to Housing Needs.

7. Fixed Term Tenancies

7.1. As outlined above, Lewisham's preferred approach is the use of Lifetime Tenancies because of the security and stability they provide to residents and communities. However, we recognise that some Registered Providers may continue to use Fixed Term Tenancies in accordance with their own policies and operational requirements. Where Fixed Term Tenancies are granted, providers should have regard to the expectations and safeguards set out in this Strategy.

7.2. Where Registered Providers grant Fixed Term Tenancies, Lewisham expects the tenancy term to be no less than five years, unless in exceptional circumstances, as in line with the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenancy Standard[3].

7.3. Registered Providers should give careful consideration before granting a Fixed Term Tenancy to:

- Any household considered vulnerable due to a disability or long-term ill health, or their carers;
- Anyone aged 60 or over;
- Families with at least one child aged 16 or under.

7.4. In Lewisham Council's view, households transferring from or relinquishing an existing lifetime tenancy on the grounds of under-occupation, decant, violence, or domestic abuse would generally be expected to retain an equivalent level of security of tenure wherever possible. Where a Registered Provider is rehousing a victim of domestic abuse who was previously a secure or assured tenant, they are required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (s79) to grant a secure or assured tenancy, and not a Fixed Term Tenancy.

7.5. Where an RP is offering a Fixed Term Tenancy to a family with children, the fixed term should not expire before at least the 21st birthday of the oldest child.

3. Tenancy Standard - GOV.UK

7.6. A Fixed Term Tenancy should be reviewed at least 6 months before it is due to expire[4]. The following circumstances may justify consideration of non-renewal following a tenancy review:

- A serious breach of tenancy, where the tenant has failed to reach or maintain an agreement to remedy the breach;
- Under-occupation (in which case, the landlord must have made an offer of suitable alternative accommodation at least six months before the end date);
- No further need for substantially adapted or wheelchair accessible accommodation.

7.7. Where an RP believes that any FTT is likely to end without renewal, and without acceptance from the household of any alternative accommodation, they should immediately refer the household to the Council's Housing Needs department to prevent homelessness, in line with the RP Commitment to Refer. See **here** for details on making a referral to Housing Needs. RPs should provide at least six months' notice to such tenants that their tenancy will end.

4. As required by S154 of the Localism Act 2011. RPs should consult this legislation before reviewing or seeking possession of a Fixed Term Tenancy.

8. Non-Secure Tenancies

8.1. Non secure tenancies do not require statutory grounds for eviction. They can be terminated by a Notice to Quit giving the occupier at least four weeks' notice in accordance with sections 3 and 5 of the Protection of Eviction Act 1977.

8.2. Lewisham will only use licenses to occupy where the household is only intended to remain in the property temporarily. This includes where a resident has been placed in Homeless Temporary Accommodation, and where we have moved residents into a household temporarily (for example, where repairs are being carried out — see our **Temporary Relocation policy**).

8.3. We do not use property licenses for our long-term social housing, and we advise Registered Providers that property licenses are not legal or appropriate for general needs social tenants.

9. Reviewing this strategy

9.1. The council will keep this Strategy under regular review to ensure it remains aligned with legislative requirements, regulatory standards, and local housing priorities.

New: Tenancy Strategy 2026-2031	
Date approved: 4 November 2026	**Effective date:** 17 November 2026
Approved by: Mayor and Cabinet	
Strategy owner: Executive Director of Housing	

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Registered Provider (RP) — Any organisation that operates social housing and is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing. This includes most Housing Associations, and most Local Authorities who own and manage their housing stock. The Register of RPs can be **viewed here.**

Private Registered Provider (PRP) – Any Registered Provider which is not a Local Authority.

Local Authority Registered Provider (LARP) – A Local Authority which owns and manages their housing stock *(with some exceptions). Lewisham Council is a LARP.

Mutual Exchange — A home swap between two social housing tenants. This may be done, for example, where one household's home is overcrowded, and another is underoccupied. The two tenants do not need to rent from the same landlord. Residents can get more information on mutual exchanges here.

Renters Rights Act 2025 (RRA) — A recent Act of Parliament which reformed tenure rights in the Private and Social rented sectors, increasing tenancy security. At time of writing, the reforms to the Social Rented Sector are yet to be 'commenced' by Government.

Lifetime Tenancy — A non-legal term for any tenancy which allows the resident to remain in their home for the rest of their life, provided that they don't break any rules in their tenancy agreement (such as committing Anti-Social Behaviour or going into rent arrears).

- **Secure Tenancy** – A type of lifetime tenancy primarily granted by Local Authorities.
- **Assured Tenancy** – A type of lifetime tenancy primarily granted by Housing Associations.
- **Assured Periodic Tenancy** – A type of lifetime tenancy primarily granted by Private Landlords (since the introduction of the Renters Rights Act).

Fixed Term Tenancy — A legal tenancy type for social housing introduced by the 2011 Localism Act. Fixed Term Tenancies have a set end date, after which they are reviewed by the RP and may be ended on certain grounds (such as underoccupancy or resident income).

Probationary Tenancies — A non-legal term for tenancies which are granted at the beginning of a tenure, with the expectation that the household will progress to a lifetime tenancy after a period of time, provided they have complied with their tenancy agreement. Probationary Tenancies are generally much easier for a landlord to end.

- **Starter Tenancies** — A non-legal for probationary tenancies used by Housing Associations. In most circumstances, these are legally Assured Shorthold Tenancies and will therefore be phased out by the Renters Rights Act's commencement for the Social Rented Sector.
- **Introductory Tenancies** – A legal tenancy type, used by Councils as probationary tenancies. Lewisham Council provides Introductory Tenancies for new general needs tenants.

Lewisham

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