

Key information sheet

Your Affordable Rent tenancy



Welcome to your new home. Your tenancy is an Affordable Rent Assured tenancy.

- ‘Affordable Rent’ refers to the rent level that you will pay for your home
- The ‘Assured tenancy’ part refers to the rights and responsibilities that come with your tenancy and home.

This Key Information sheet explains some of the rights and responsibilities that come with your Affordable Rent Assured tenancy.

Affordable Rent

The Government has changed the way that they support housing associations to build new affordable homes for rent. Instead of making large grants, they have proposed that we charge higher rents to our tenants, and use this extra money to build new homes.

We have chosen to take part in this scheme because we want to help meet the desperate need for affordable housing in this country.

Most new tenants will pay rent at an Affordable Rent level. This is higher than traditional housing association rent (known as ‘social rent’) but less expensive than renting a home from a private landlord.

Rent and Service Charges

The rent set for Affordable Rent tenancies will be less than 80% of the average market rent in your local area.

This amount is made up from two elements: the amount for rent and the service charge amount, which pays for services such as cleaning of communal areas, grounds maintenance, etc. Your tenancy agreement lists what is included in your service charge.

We have set these rents after assessing affordability in all of the areas where we work. We have looked at average house prices, incomes, private sector rented prices, and housing benefit, and then set the rent based on this assessment.

In higher cost areas such as London, we have capped the rent at no more than 60% of the average market rent. In areas out of London, we have set rents at between 70% and 80% of the average, because the average rent in these areas is much lower.

There won’t be a rent increase in the first 12 months of your tenancy. However, the service charge element may increase during this period, as it is recalculated every April.

After this point, there will be an annual rent increase. This will be no more than RPI + 0.5%. RPI stands for Retail Price Index, which is a measure of how much prices are going up or down. We use the RPI figure from the previous September.

Paying Your Rent

Paying your rent on time is important. We use the money we receive in rent to build new homes, carry out repairs, and provide services.

You can pay your rent by Direct Debit, over the phone, using our website, or in person at Post Offices and other outlets with e-pay or PayPoint facilities.

If you receive Housing Benefit to help you with your rent payments, you can arrange for it to be paid directly to us. Get in touch with us if you would like any help or advice about Housing Benefit.

If you can't pay your rent on time, please get in touch with us straight away and we will do our best to help you.

If you get behind with your rent, you must get in touch with us and come to an agreement to pay off your arrears (missed rent payments). If you do not make an arrangement and keep to it, we can apply to court to evict you.

Financial Inclusion

Financial Inclusion is about helping people to access an appropriate bank account, manage their money on a day-to-day basis, and plan for the future. We offer all tenants access to support and advice around financial inclusion.

We can help you check that you are getting all of the benefits that you are entitled to, help you learn to manage money effectively, and help you maximise your income.

Assured tenancy

An assured tenancy is the standard form of tenancy used by Housing Associations. It is known as a 'lifetime' tenancy, meaning that it has no fixed end date and will not end unless you decide to leave or you break the terms of the agreement and the

tenancy is terminated (ended) in a legal manner. Most new tenants will begin their Affordable Rent Assured Tenancy with a 12-month 'starter' period. This is a trial period to monitor how you look after your home, keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement, and make sure you do not cause any nuisance to your neighbours. We use the same system for Social Rent Assured tenants. Starter tenants do not have as many rights as lifetime tenants. During your starter period you will not be able to:

- transfer to another property or arrange a house exchange/swap
- take in lodgers or sub-let any part of your home
- make improvements to your home
- acquire (or 'buy') your home.

If there are no problems, after 12 months your Affordable Rent starter tenancy will automatically convert to an Affordable Rent lifetime tenancy.

Tenancy Rights

After any applicable starter period, you will have the following rights as an Affordable Rent tenant:

Succession

This means that a 'qualifying' family member can take on your tenancy after your death. If you hold a joint tenancy or live with your married or civil partner, they will take on your existing tenancy. Other family members may 'qualify' to take on the tenancy. If they are eligible, they will be given a new Affordable Rent tenancy.

Assignment

Assignment is the transfer of a tenancy from the tenant to another person that is eligible to take it over.

You have the right to assign your tenancy to any eligible person, subject to our permission. Eligible persons are your married or civil partner, or a 'qualifying' family member that has been living with you for at least 12 months. We will grant

permission where it is reasonable to do so. Each tenancy may be assigned once only.

Mobility and mutual exchange

A mutual exchange happens when two or more tenants swap homes. It can be a good option if you want to move but do not want to spend time on a waiting list.

The process involves you assigning your tenancy to someone else, who assigns his or her tenancy to you. Exchanging tenants take on the tenancy, rights and rent level of their exchange partner.

Many Council and Housing Association tenants have the right to swap their homes this way and you can search for an exchange partner using the internet. We run House Exchange, a website for people who want to swap their homes.

www.houseexchange.org.uk

The legal rules around succession, assignment and mutual exchange are complicated, and this information does not represent our full policy and procedure.

We can help you with any questions about your tenancy rights and explain the processes in more detail. Please get in touch with us.