



Tenancy Strategy

Last reviewed May 2019



Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Dacorum Borough Council's Tenancy Strategy which outlines the tenure types available to social housing tenants and details our commitment to working in partnership with Registered Providers in the borough.

This strategy demonstrates the council's ongoing efforts to deliver the provision of affordable housing to Dacorum's residents.

Councillor Margaret Griffiths

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1.0 Introduction

2.0 Our vision

1.0 Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) is committed to ensuring that local people have access to genuinely affordable homes.

This strategy applies to all homes owned and managed by the Dacorum Borough Council housing service. As a local authority, we aim to work closely with housing associations that also own and manage properties in the borough.

Details of our approach to allocating homes in Dacorum are covered in the Housing Allocations Policy.

This strategy will...

- Outline different types of tenancies used by DBC and our approach to granting and reviewing them;
- Outline the approach to social and affordable rents in Dacorum; and
- Outline our approach to working with local housing associations to make sure that all the borough's residents have access to affordable, safe housing.

2.0 Our vision

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need.

This strategy also supports the councils corporate vision of ‘...working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum’s communities to thrive and prosper’.

The Council’s corporate priorities are set out in [‘Delivering for Dacorum – Corporate Plan 2015-2020’](#)



3.0 National and local considerations

3.1 National changes

This strategy has been developed to align with all relevant current statutory legislation and best practice guidance.

Nationally with a lack of tenure security and affordable properties in the private rented sector there is an ever increasing pressure on local authorities to build and deliver more affordable homes

Central Government introduced new types of tenancies through the Localism Act 2011, with the aim of creating greater flexibility for tenants and housing providers.

Through this Tenancy Strategy, Dacorum Borough Council will outline our approach both to offering different types of tenancies and towards social and affordable rents within the borough.

3.2 Local impact

Dacorum experiences significant levels of housing need and demand is high for housing of all tenures. There are currently around 6,000 households on the Council's Housing Register.

Housing in Dacorum has an important part to play in supporting the local economy, as well as being critical in promoting well-being and achieving positive health outcomes.

It is important to maintain a mix of different sizes, types and tenures of housing to meet a wide range of housing needs.

Dacorum aims to make sure that all the borough's residents have access to affordable, safe housing.

We work to achieve these aims with our own housing stock by following our Homelessness, Housing and Older Persons strategies, but the relationship the Council has with Registered Providers in the borough is also vital, because they own a significant proportion of the social housing stock in Dacorum.



4.0 Tenancy Detail



4.1 Introductory Tenancies

In all cases, we will offer an introductory tenancy to new tenants for an initial probationary period of 12 months. Towards the end of this one-year tenancy, an introductory tenancy review will take place. Provided that there are no rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and/or any other tenancy issues, then the tenants will automatically be issued with a flexible or secure tenancy, depending on the type of property or the tenant's circumstances (see 2.2). In the case of a tenant committing anti-social behaviour during their introductory tenancy, it may be extended for an additional six months to allow tenants the opportunity to address the issues identified.

4.2 Secure & Flexible Tenancies

Some existing tenants hold secure or 'lifetime' tenancies with us. This means that they are entitled to keep their tenancy and remain in their homes indefinitely, so long as they consistently comply with all tenancy conditions as set out in their Tenancy Agreement. Dacorum Borough Council no longer offers secure tenancies to new general needs tenants. Supported housing tenants, however, will receive a secure tenancy once they have successfully completed their introductory tenancy. In addition, any tenant who had held a secure tenancy but had to leave their home due to domestic abuse, will be offered a further lifetime secure tenancy for their new home. New general needs tenants, on successfully completing their introductory tenancy, will receive a flexible tenancy.

A flexible tenancy is a tenancy that is provided on a fixed-term arrangement and is reviewed at the end of that fixed term to determine whether or not a new tenancy will be issued. The use of flexible tenancies allows us to ensure that our housing stock is being utilised in an effective way, prioritising those most in need.

At Dacorum Borough Council, we will offer flexible tenancies with a fixed-term period of five years. Towards the end of this period, we will carry out a flexible tenancy review.

4.3 Reviewing and ending Flexible Tenancies

A flexible tenancy review will begin approximately nine months before the scheduled end date of the tenancy and will be used to determine whether or not we will issue a new tenancy

A tenancy review will take into account the tenant's circumstances at that time, including:

- Any changes to household make-up or under occupation;
- Tenant(s) income, savings and assets or any other financial resource; Those earning over £60,000 as a joint income will not be offered another tenancy;
- Vulnerabilities and disabilities of any household members; those that need more suitable accommodation to meet their needs will be offered alternative accommodation

- Adherence to tenancy conditions throughout the current tenancy; any rent arrears or other breaches of tenancy that are current at the time of the review will result in our refusal to offer a further tenancy

If a household is assessed as being in the same or a similar level of housing need as when the tenancy was issued (and tenancy conditions have been adhered to consistently), then we will issue a new flexible tenancy. The household's housing need will be assessed in line with the Housing Allocations Policy. In the event that the property is no longer suitable for a household's needs (in line with the Dacorum bedroom standards), then we may offer an alternative property with a new flexible tenancy. If any breaches of tenancy or changes to circumstances take place after the review date but before the sign-up to the new tenancy, we reserve the right to change the decision made at the review.

Tenants will have a right to appeal against the outcome of their flexible tenancy review. Information on the review and appeal process will be available to tenants when they sign up to a flexible tenancy.

If we refuse to grant another tenancy we will give help and advice around finding alternative accommodation:

- We will provide advice and assistance on where to look for accommodation
- We will complete a **Personal Housing Plan (PHP)** with the tenant, which sets out what steps they could take to find accommodation within their own network of family, friends or other contacts.
- We will offer help with negotiating with a landlord once the former DBC tenant has found somewhere suitable to rent.
- We can refer to any appropriate support services to assist with the search

2.4 Demoted Tenancies

In some cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB), the Council can request a court order to demote a tenancy. A demoted tenancy allows the tenant an opportunity to address their ASB. Under a demoted tenancy, the tenant holds the same rights as with an introductory tenancy, so it is easier for the council to proceed with an eviction or to address any form of tenancy breach.

A tenancy demotion lasts for 12 months but can be extended for a further six months if required. If the ASB in question is addressed appropriately during the length of the tenancy demotion, the tenancy will be reinstated to its former status as flexible or secure.

5.0 Relationships with Registered Providers



DBC has working relationships with all Housing Associations that operate within the borough. The main providers are; Aldwyck, Affinity Sutton, Clarion, Guinness, Hightown, Paradigm and Thrive.

The overarching aim of this section of the policy is to ensure that measures are in place so that regardless of whether an applicant is a Council or Housing Association tenant, all social housing stock let to Dacorum residents is affordable and secure.

Dacorum will achieve this by a robust joint working approach with the aim of ensuring that all Registered Providers are also committed to this goal.

We will do this via individual Service Level Agreements (SLA's) or partnership agreements with each of our registered providers, based on these aims.

Whilst these agreements will be tailored to the specific Registered Provider and will reflect their requirements and property numbers in the borough, they will all be driven by and encompass these same fundamental values to ensure the needs of Dacorum residents are the focus of any agreements made.

These agreements will not only include allocation arrangements, but also regular meetings between relevant service managers to discuss analysis of figures, trends and development progress, as well as any concerns or updates on any service changes that could have an impact on service delivery from either side.

Affordable Rents

Affordability is a key focus. Through increased joint working and robust SLAs, DBC is committed to ensuring that any Housing Association properties let through the Council are let at an affordable rent and therefore that tenants are charged an absolute maximum of 80% of market rent levels.

5.0 Continued

Tenure Type

During consultations with Registered Providers, Dacorum Borough Council has sought clarification on the tenure types being offered. Typically, Registered Providers offer starter/introductory tenancies for one year that are then followed by longer term tenancies. This is a similar approach adopted by DBC.

As a council, through collaborative working with Registered Providers, we are committed to ensuring this approach continues so that a consistent level of tenure security is offered to all new social housing tenants in the borough, regardless of who their social landlord is.

Allocations

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to ensuring that there is consistency between our own Housing Allocations Policy and that of our partners.

Whilst the Council cannot dictate the policies and procedures of other Registered Providers, we expect that, in the interests of partnership working, all Registered Providers with landlord responsibilities in the borough should consider the needs of Dacorum residents and apply similar principles to our own.



6.0 Conclusion

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The introduction of new types of tenancies through the Localism Act, aimed to create greater flexibility both for tenants and housing providers.

Dacorum is committed to ensuring that through this the needs of residents are being met and ensuring that local people have access to genuinely affordable homes.

To conclude, this strategy demonstrates Dacorum Borough Council's commitment to ensuring that through enhanced joint working processes that the Council has the ability to shape the affordability and security of all properties owned, advertised and let through us to Dacorum's residents.

