

Surrey Heath Tenancy Strategy 2018 - 2021



1. Introduction

The Localism Act 2011 set out a new duty for local housing authorities to develop and adopt a Tenancy Strategy.

The new duty comes against a background of a new tenancy regime that introduces 'flexible tenancies' that can be for a fixed term and a new rent regime that allows rents of up to 80% of market rents to be charged by developing Registered Providers (housing associations).

Until this change council and housing association tenancies were granted to meet an immediate housing need, such as homelessness or overcrowding, which may then change overtime resulting in under occupied homes or homes occupied by tenants who could afford to buy a home or rent privately. At the same time others with an unmet need wait on housing registers for homes to become available.

Registered Providers are now able to grant shorter tenancies of at least five years, or as short as two years in exceptional circumstances.

The Council welcomes this new flexibility as a way of meeting need and making the best use of the local housing stock.

2. Overview

The Tenancy Strategy is required to set out the Council's expectations for landlords in relation to:

- The kinds of tenancy they will grant;
- Where tenancies are for a fixed term, the length of tenancies;
- The circumstances under which they will grant tenancies of a particular type; and,
- The circumstances under which a new tenancy may or may not be granted at the end of the fixed term, either in the same property or a new property.

Surrey Heath Borough Council's Tenancy Strategy is a mixture of statutory requirement and response to an assessment of local need. It sits alongside the Joint Allocation Policy and the Homelessness Strategy with the aims, of:

- Making the best use of the local affordable housing stock;
- Meeting individual need and supporting residents; and,
- Promoting sustainable communities.

As this new duty is introduced at a time of many other changes, not least welfare reform the Tenancy Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis. The Council will seek to ensure that the Strategy meets its wider objectives and supports the aims of Homelessness Strategy.

As required, in developing a Tenancy Strategy the Council has consulted with Registered Providers in the area. Although not a requirement the Council also consulted with residents on the central issues of length of tenancies and rents.

3. Local Context

Surrey Heath is an attractive mix of urban and rural environments. It is one of the safest districts in the safest County in England. Much of the rural part of the Borough is within the green belt and it includes extensive areas of heath and woodland and habitats for endangered bird species. These sites have been identified as part of the Thames Basin Special Protection Area which means that Surrey Heath is restricted in the development of new housing.

This means that demand for properties is high and this is reflected in high property prices. While levels of home ownership are high at over 80% pressure is put on the private rented and affordable housing sector by those unable to finance access to home ownership.

Access to the private rented sector for those on low incomes has also become more difficult due to changes to housing benefit that came into effect in April 2011.

The supply of affordable rented homes is limited while demand is high and it is therefore important that the stock that is available is used to its full potential to provide homes for those in housing need at the time at which they have that need.

4. Links with the Council's Priorities

The Council's 2020 Strategy outlines its vision, aims, objectives, values and key performance targets for 2010 - 2020. This Tenancy Strategy supports the Council's objectives:

- We want to make Surrey Heath an even better place where people are happy to live.
- We will build and encourage communities where people can live happily and healthily.

In seeking to better manage the available housing stock the operation of this Strategy also supports the objectives of the Council's Homelessness Strategy, most notably:

- To prevent homelessness and increase the choices available to those who are or may become homeless.
- To ensure there is sufficient accommodation for those who are or may become homeless, including reducing the use of bed and breakfast and inappropriate temporary accommodation

5. Working with Registered Providers

As the Council has no housing stock of its own the affordable housing in the Borough is owned and managed by Registered Providers (commonly known as housing associations). Details of the Registered Providers operating in Surrey Heath, along with their stock profiles, can be found at Annex A.

The Council will encourage Registered Providers to adopt the approach set out in this Strategy when letting homes in the Borough. Where a different approach is taken the Council will expect to see that Registered Providers have Tenancy Policies that demonstrate a detailed understanding of their stock profile in the Borough, including how it relates to the wider social housing stock, and how they can meet the needs of their tenants including promoting mobility, supporting aspiration and tackling underoccupation and overcrowding.

Registered Providers looking for support for developing new homes in the Borough would be expected to adopt the tenancy regime set out in this Strategy when letting those homes.

6. Types of Tenancies to be Offered

In this section the Council sets out the types of tenancy it expects to be offered, along with the reason for this approach.

The Council supports the use of probationary tenancies and tenancy terms referred to below would start after the initial probationary period has ended.

Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation

Type of tenancy	Reason
Open to provider	The majority of schemes will be funded with an expectation that residents will move on within two years, although the defining factor for a move should be the resident's readiness to move to independent living. In recognition of the need to manage these types of housing for the benefit of residents and to ensure move on to independent living the Council will support Providers assessment of tenure requirements detailed in their Tenancy Policies.

Sheltered Housing for Older People

Type of tenancy	Reason
Assured tenancies	Older people moving to sheltered housing need to feel secure in their new homes and support is in place to respond to any care, support or housing needs that may arise.

General needs housing

General needs housing refers to the homes that are available to rent: a mixture of flats, houses and bungalows ranging from bedsits to four bedroom homes. The number and types of homes in the general needs housing stock at the time of writing this Strategy are detailed in Annex A.

Those moving into this housing come from different housing situations and with different needs. An approach has therefore been taken to look at tenancy type in terms of the type of applicant being offered a home.

Tenant	Type of tenancy	Reason
Transferring tenants	Equivalent of current tenure	Protected by law
Housing Register applicants	7 year flexible tenancy	<p>It is important for sustainable communities that new tenants see their homes as settled.</p> <p>There must also be stability for landlord and too short a period would lead to an increased administration burden and potentially increased costs through change of tenancy works, voids and legal action.</p>
Homeless households	2 year flexible tenancy	<p>The Council considers that the most exceptional housing circumstance is that of homelessness and is committed to preventing it where possible and ensuring accommodation is available if it does happen.</p> <p>Those accepted as homeless need the right support to move-on from that situation and to look at their housing needs going forward.</p> <p>The Council can discharge its housing duty by offering a suitable tenancy in the private sector that runs for at least two years.</p> <p>This Strategy brings the discharge of the housing duty into the social sector in line with the private sector provision. In both cases the Council is committed to supporting households who have experienced the upheaval of homelessness into the right housing options to move on to settled lives. See Annex B for the Homelessness Pathway.</p> <p>The Council also wishes to use this opportunity to</p>

		break the perceived link between homelessness and securing a tenancy with a tailored approach to ensure that homeless households receive the right housing and support, not automatic access to a long term solution for a presenting issue.
Young people under 25 (excluding care leavers i.e. those young people previously looked after by Social services)	2 year flexible tenancy	<p>The Council recognises the importance of encouraging young people to take responsibility for their lives in order to become active and contributing citizens. It is therefore important that they are not prevented from the opportunity to engage in employment, education and training because of their housing situation. When housing is provided the Council expects young people to maximise the chance this provides. (see Annex C for the Young Persons Housing Pathway)</p> <p>Studies repeatedly find that care leavers are over represented in rough sleeping and prison populations and will be offered 7 year tenancies in recognition that a settled environment is required to establish an independent life for these young people.</p>

7. Further tenancies

Many tenancies will continue after they have been reviewed but the Council considers that the following factors would lead to a further tenancy not being granted:

Factor	Detail	Reason
Income	Total income of the household is over £60,000 Threshold to be reviewed annually	Tenants with this level of income have the means to enter the private rented and intermediate markets, or purchase privately.
Capital	Capital of £50,000 Threshold to be reviewed annually	Tenants with this level of capital have the means to enter the private rented or intermediate markets.
Tenancy record	The tenant has failed to maintain the responsibilities of the tenancy agreement through persistent rent arrears, failure to maintain the property or anti-social behaviour.	Tenants enjoy certain rights as tenants but they also take on responsibilities. Those who fail to fulfil their responsibilities through not paying rent, not maintaining the property or causing nuisance to their neighbours are a financial and administrative burden on their landlord and have a negative impact on their communities. This at a time when others with a

		<p>housing need are waiting for a home.</p> <p>If tenants are not willing to take responsibility for the home they are provided, even when support has been provided, the Council does not believe that they should continue to enjoy the benefit of a social housing tenancy when demand is so high.</p>
Adapted housing	Where a disabled member for whom adapted housing was provided, or major adaptation carried out, is no longer part of the household and there is a need for that accommodation.	<p>To ensure that best use is made of adapted housing.</p> <p>Where a disabled family is no longer a part of the household and the family wish to move the Council and landlord will actively seek to facilitate a move with no loss of tenure.</p>
Underoccupation	Where the property is now under occupied by one bedroom or more.	<p>To ensure the best use of the housing stock.</p> <p>Where the tenancy would have continued had the underoccupation not occurred a further tenancy can be offered in a smaller property.</p>
Community impact	Where the tenant, or a member of the tenants household, is guilty of anti-social or criminal behaviour that has an adverse impact on the wider community.	If tenants are not willing to act in a reasonable way in the community the Council does not believe that they should continue to enjoy the benefit of a social housing tenancy when demand is so high.
People under 25	The tenant is a young person on a fixed two year tenancy who has not worked or undertaken training or education for a period of 6 months prior to the tenancy end date.	To maximise the benefit of the housing stock for young people when demand is high and support available to make the most of the opportunity.

The Council recognises even when the above criteria apply there could be exceptional circumstances in which it would be unreasonable to expect someone to move and a further period could be allowed. As these circumstances will be highly

individual it is not possible to produce a definitive list and each situation will be assessed on its merits and considering all supporting evidence.

8. What happens when a further tenancy is not granted?

It is not the Council's intention that this Tenancy Strategy should lead to homelessness. The Council takes a housing options approach in meeting local housing need and will work with Registered Providers to develop a tailored pathway with all tenants whose tenancies will come to an end due to one of the above factors.

The range of options will include but are not limited to:

- Assistance to moving to the private rented sector or intermediate rented scheme;
- Referral for low cost homeownership schemes; and,
- The grant of a further tenancy in a more appropriate property.

The advice tenants received about what to expect from an allocation of tenancy and the options, both short and longer term, will start at the time an application is made for housing to ensure that there is clarity about how housing need is met in Surrey Heath.

If a tenancy is being ended notice will be served at least 6 months in advance of the end date and work will start with tenants on their options. Tenants will be provided with reasons why the tenancy is being ended and will be advised of the landlord's appeals process.

It is expected that landlord will notify the Council of tenancies that are not being renewed.

The Council will work with Registered Providers and other local agencies to ensure that both tenants and those advising tenants are aware of the options and have access to the right advice and assistance to achieve a positive housing outcome.

9. Rent Levels

Affordable rent is a tenure introduced by the government. This tenure allows social landlords to charge a rent of up to 80% of local market rent on new homes built as part of the Affordable Homes programme, and on some homes converted to Affordable Rent when they are empty.

This new rent level is designed to bring increased funding for the development of new homes and can only be used by those Registered Providers who are part of the Affordable Homes programme.

The Council is concerned that rents set at 80% of market rents will be unaffordable for those on low incomes, and inhibit the ability of those with aspirations for home ownership to save for deposits. It is noted that a number of authorities and

Registered Providers, in recognising this affordability issue, are restricting affordable rents to certain size properties or capping at a percentage lower than 80%.

The Council expects Affordable Rents to be kept within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels on the initial letting. Registered Providers are also encouraged to ensure that headroom is allowed when setting the rent that takes into account the different increase mechanisms for rent and LHA i.e. the Provider should be able to demonstrate that the rent will remain within LHA levels for coming years.

Annex A – Stock position/ letting info/ etc

Annex B – Homelessness Pathway

Annex C – Young Persons Pathway

Annex A

Housing Stock at 1/12/17

Housing association rented properties by bedroom size and ward

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Sheltered	Total
Bagshot	103	110	77	3	23	316
Bisley	18	13	20	4	0	55
Chobham	60	42	69	6	10	187
Frimley	129	95	180	1	0	405
Frimley Green	16	17	46	0	47	126
Heatherside	0	14	1	0	27	42
Lightwater	44	54	20	2	0	120
Mytchett & Deepcut	28	55	51	0	47	181
Old Dean	111	220	409	21	70	831
Parkside	0	8	22	1	32	63
St Michaels	71	130	144	1	32	378
St Pauls	0	0	0	0	0	0
Town	41	47	29	3	0	120
Watchetts	69	136	138	7	17	367
West End	33	6	14	0	0	53
Windlesham	27	14	19	0	0	60
Total	750	961	1239	49	305	3304

Housing association rented properties by landlord

Landlord	No. of homes
A2dominion	110
Accent Peerless	2880
Hanover	74
London & Quadrant	7
Sentinel	132
Thames Valley (includes properties in Ash)	92
Stonham (includes shared supported housing)	5
Transform	9

Lettings information

New tenancies by property size

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
1 bed	49	43	42	32
2 bed	67	56	45	51
3 bed	33	35	19	34
4 bed	3	0	0	0
Sheltered	35			

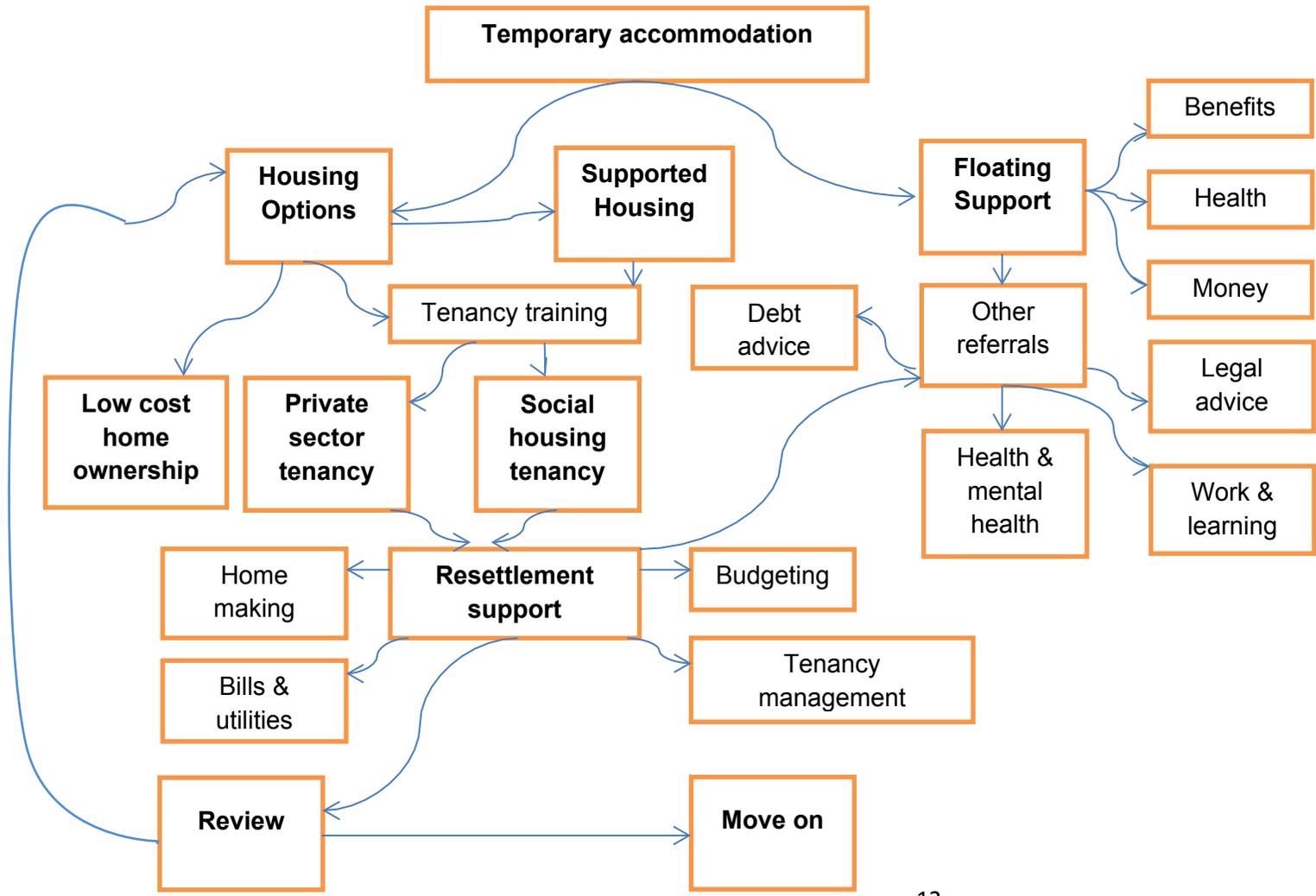
Housing register

Applicants by bedroom entitlement as at 1/12/17

	No. of applicants
1 bed	250
2 bed	144
3 bed	84
4 bed	16
5 bed	4

Annex B

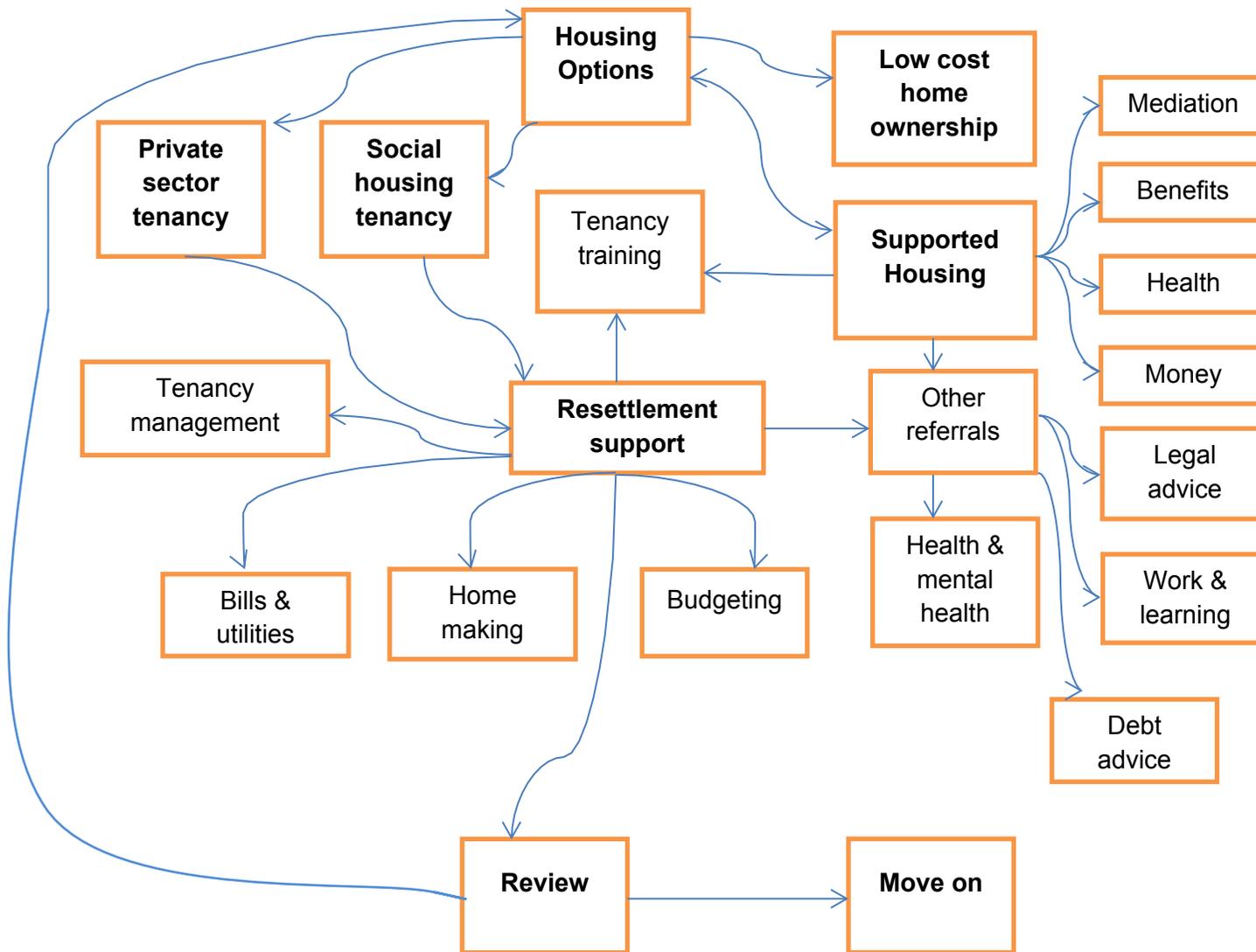
Homelessness Pathway



Providing a roof may end roofless but it takes a home to end of homelessness, and a home is more than the bricks and mortar. Families and individuals who find themselves homeless should not be expected to follow a single route but should be supported to move on from the experience to work towards meeting not just their housing needs but their other aspirations.

Homelessness ends in a settled, safe environment with residents who can access the services they need in order to achieve independent and contributing lives in our community.

Young Persons Pathway



Young people who have priority for housing have often had to deal with other issues such as family or relationship breakdown, poor mental health, worklessness or drug/alcohol problems.

Providing a roof may end the immediate housing issue but it takes a home to end of homelessness, and a home is more than the bricks and mortar. Young people who are housed should be at the start of their adult lives and should be supported to move on towards meeting not just their housing needs but their other aspirations.

Providing a settled, safe environment with the right support should be the start young people need in order to achieve independent and contributing lives in our community.

