

Lettings Policy

Who's this for?	Residents, colleagues and stakeholders
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Policy Owner	Lettings & Temporary Accommodation Manager
Other related documents	Common Housing Allocations Scheme Tenancy policy Care and complaints policy Vulnerable residents policy Affordability policy Asset management procedure Management move procedure Decant Policy and procedure Flexicare lettings policy 8x Local lettings policies (more information: Rent a home – settle (settlegroup.org.uk))

1. Policy statement

Our purpose is to give residents a firm foundation on which to build their lives. Our vision is a safe, comfortable and affordable home for every household. This policy sets out our approach to ensure homes are allocated fairly and in ways that best meet residents' needs; providing a basically brilliant lettings experience.

We work with Local Authority partners to let homes in a fair, transparent, and efficient way. Where we have empty homes, they are allocated in accordance with the nominations agreement we have in place for each area e.g. in North Hertfordshire, homes will be advertised via the Housing Partnerships Choice Based Lettings Scheme. They will then be allocated from the Common Housing Register in accordance with the Common Housing Allocations Scheme - which sets out rules for who can apply for rented accommodation available through the council.

In exceptional circumstances we may need to decline an applicant. When this happens, we will do so in a transparent way - making decisions in line with the nominations agreements we have in place with each local authority partner. We will review any allocation or letting decision that an applicant believes is unreasonable or unfair. We will not hold homes vacant pending the outcome of an appeal review.

There will be circumstances where we let homes directly to residents outside of the nomination agreements we have. The circumstances in which we would make direct lettings are outlined in the Common Housing Allocations Scheme and our management transfer procedure.

An equality impact assessment has been completed as part of this policy review.

Feedback from residents

As part of this policy review, we gained feedback from residents through our settle voice platform. Residents fed back that the policy was well written, could see the focus on tenant satisfaction and the desired outcomes were clear and understandable. Some of the points raised that have led to policy amendments are:

- more detail on our approach to under occupancy - amended in policy actions
- explanation for what the common housing allocations scheme is – added in the policy statement
- more information on how we support residents during the sign up process – further information added in key principles and policy actions

1. Current Position

- 20 days - average time a home is empty for minor voids*
- void rent loss is 0.77%

- 209 residents identified who are underoccupying (not on protected tenancy's/exempt from bedroom tax)
- 92% of residents satisfied with their overall lettings experience (based on Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys)
- 92% of residents satisfied with the lettings process (based on Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys)

**minor voids are homes which do not require major work such as components being replaced, when they become empty*

2. Key principles

- complete the work required during the void period to ensure it meets our empty home standard
- minimise the time a home is empty, to support security of tenure for those awaiting an allocation of home
- complete an affordability assessment for every resident moving to a new home set at an affordable rent rate
- identify residents with additional support needs at the start of the letting process
- support residents to help them settle in their new home and sustain their tenancies
- utilise resident feedback, including from Tenant Satisfaction Measures, to improve the lettings service
- meet all required legislation and regulation.

3. Objectives

- minimise void loss on our properties
- ensure every home meets the empty home standard ([Our-empty-home-standard.pdf \(settlegroup.org.uk\)](https://www.settlegroup.org.uk/Our-empty-home-standard.pdf))
- let homes in an efficient and effective way, utilising virtual and in person sign ups based on resident need
- maintain high levels of Tenant Satisfaction Measure performance for both the overall experience and process
- utilise our data to drive an improvement in the lettings experience
- complete pre tenancy checks where notice is given for a tenancy ending, helping to reduce void costs during the void stage
- ensure homes with adaptations are relet appropriately to residents with specific housing needs
- increase the use of automation to drive efficiencies in lettings processes

4. Policy actions

The policy actions will be included as objectives in the directorate plan until the next policy review:

- with a continued increase of residents with complex needs, work with the local authority to understand demand and maximise supply for adapted or supported living homes
- focus on identifying and working with residents who are under occupying through increased contact and home visits, advising on downsize options
- for colleagues to complete the relevant CIH qualification to meet professional standards
- give priority to those downsizing from homes that are in high demand to reduce the overall number of under occupiers
- support vulnerable residents through the application process and into their tenancies with appropriate internal or external referrals
- complete checks to ensure every void meets the empty home standard
- increase the number of pre void checks completed; ensuring we are issuing recharges consistently
- use tenant satisfaction measure feedback to improve the lettings experience
- increased number of virtual sign ups, creating more capacity for residents who need more time for a sign up in person

5. Desired Outcomes

- high levels of satisfaction reflected in our tenant satisfaction measure feedback
- reduction in the waiting time to be rehoused
- maintain low void rent loss performance
- reduction in the number of homes on the underoccupancy list and number of residents waiting for adapted homes
- residents supported to live comfortably in their homes.

6. Performance Indicators

- void rent loss 1.1% or under
- 100% of new homes meet the settle empty home standard
- Home visits completed for 100% of residents under occupying
- 10% reduction in existing under occupiers listed
- 90%+ satisfaction with overall lettings experience
- 90%+ satisfaction with lettings process
- reduction of tenants falling into arrears in the first year of their tenancy, supported by affordability checks completed

7. Key Legislation

- Regulator of Social Housing Tenancy Standard
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016

8. Review

Every two years or sooner if required by legislative or regulatory change.