

Starter Tenancy Policy

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Owner: Customer Experience	Next Scheduled Review: 09/10/2028

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines Flint Housing's process for conducting starter tenancy reviews during the probationary period or 'starter tenancy' and describes the circumstances under which a tenancy may be extended or terminated.
- 1.2 Starter tenancies are probationary tenancies provided to new tenants. These are assured shorthold tenancies that typically last twelve months, with the possibility of extension for an additional six months. Starter tenancies may be terminated by serving notice, after which the court is required to grant possession of the property to the landlord.
- 1.3 We use starter tenancies to make sure we support new tenants in the first year of their tenancy, as a tool for managing antisocial behaviour, rent arrears, subletting, and other serious breaches of tenancy, and as a means of creating sustainable communities.

2. Policy scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to Flint Housing General Needs (e.g. social rent and affordable) housing and any other circumstances where we issue a tenancy with a probationary period, or a starter tenancy as set out in our Tenancy Policy.
- 2.2 For the purposes of this policy, any reference to Flint Housing or "our" or "we" shall be relevant to all its associated entities and administered, if applicable, by its Management Provider(s).
- 2.3 This policy may be administered by our management provider(s), who will be responsible for managing all tenancies on our behalf including those within a starter period. Flint Housing remains the legal landlord and accountable body. Final decisions on tenancy terminations, extensions, or appeals rest with Flint Housing, even if day-to-day management is delegated.

3. Policy Aims

- 3.1 Flint Housing is committed to making sure our tenants are supported to sustain their tenancies. We will do this by:
 - Making sure staff are trained and clearly explain tenants' rights and responsibilities at sign up.
 - Monitoring the starter tenancy and identifying support needs or vulnerabilities
 - throughout the tenancy and offering support or signposting tenants to help manage the tenancy.
 - 3.2 Starter tenancy reviews are conducted to evaluate each tenant's ability to maintain their tenancy successfully. Should any issues or breaches be identified during the review process or at any stage within the starter phase, these matters will be thoroughly investigated. Where appropriate, tenants will be provided with support and a reasonable period to resolve any concerns. Reviews will normally take place at around 6 weeks, 9 or 12 months with documented outcomes shared with the tenant.
 - 3.3 The grounds on which a starter tenancy may be ended or extended include if a tenant:
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- Causes antisocial behaviour.
- Fails to pay their rent.
- Unlawfully sublets their property.
- Causes any other serious breach of tenancy.

3.4 We will consider breach(es) of tenancy to be serious in the following circumstances:

- The breach(es) is made persistently.
- The tenant has failed to respond to repeated requests to correct the breach(es).
- The tenant has not engaged in offers of support from the either us or support agencies to correct the breach(es)
- The tenant has failed to comply with previously made agreements to correct the breach(es).
- The breach(es) has a serious negative impact on other tenants or the local community.
- The breach(es) has a serious negative impact on our interests such as the property, our staff and/or agents.

3.5 This excludes subletting cases in which we will seek possession. In such cases we will normally:

- Give the tenant two months' notice to end the tenancy; or where applicable, Section 21 or Section 8 notices will be used in line with current legislation. If Section 21 is abolished, the policy will adapt accordingly.
- Serve an extension notice telling the tenant that their starter tenancy period will be extended for a maximum of a further six months.

3.6 A tenant will have the right to appeal any decision to end or extend the starter tenancy. Appeals will be heard by a Senior Manager not involved in the original decision, with a written outcome provided within 20 working days. Appeals panels will include Flint Housing representatives to ensure accountability, even where the housing management provider has recommended ending or extending the starter tenancy and in line with our procedures.

3.7 This policy has been developed in line with:

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| • Housing Act (1985) | • ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 |
| • Housing Act (1988) | • Data Protection Act 2018/ UK GDPR |
| • Localism Act (2011) | • RSH Tenancy Standard |
| • Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) | • Renters Reform Bill (forthcoming) |

4. How we will deal with breaches of tenancy

4.1 Dealing with antisocial behaviour

4.1.1 If a tenant causes antisocial behaviour during the starter tenancy period, we will carry out an investigation and take steps to address the antisocial behaviour. This may include, if possible, addressing support needs by signposting and making referrals to agencies. Where there is evidence of antisocial behaviour we may decide to end or extend the starter tenancy.

4.2 Dealing with rent arrears

4.2.1 If a tenant accrues rent arrears during the starter tenancy period, we will seek to recover the arrears in accordance with our Arrears Policy, before taking enforcement action and reviewing the starter tenancy. This includes carrying out home visits and addressing support needs by signposting and making referrals to agencies. Where there are rent arrears on a tenant's account, we may decide to end or extend the starter tenancy.

4.3 Dealing with unlawful subletting

4.3.1 If a starter tenant is reported to be unlawfully subletting their property during the starter tenancy period, we will carry out an investigation before taking enforcement action. If there is evidence of subletting, we will take action to end the starter tenancy.

4.4 Dealing with other serious breaches of tenancy

4.4.1 If a starter tenant makes any breach of tenancy during the starter tenancy period, we will review the tenancy before deciding whether the breach is serious. This may include carrying out home visits, provide support, signposting and making referrals to agencies. If there is evidence that the breach is serious, we may decide to end or extend the starter tenancy.

4.5 Where a breach is identified, our Starter Tenancy review procedure will ensure:

- All tenancy conduct to date is reviewed.
- The tenant is contacted by phone, letter and/or in person.
- Vulnerabilities and support needs are taken into account. Our Staff will consider safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014 and Children Act 1989/2004, ensuring referrals are made where risks are identified.
- Possession action is a last resort unless the breach is serious

5. Equality and diversity

5.1 Flint Housing is committed to making sure all services are accessible to all our tenants. Our staff will be trained to make sure they are communicating appropriately with our tenants, and they have the relevant information.

5.2 This policy will be applied in a way which makes sure we treat all tenants with fairness and respect. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and any other protected characteristic defined within the Equality Act 2010. We will consider and implement reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 when reviewing breaches or enforcement decisions.

5.3 On request we will provide translations of our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and formats including braille and large print, where a request in respect of each individual item is demonstrably reasonable (and not, for example, vexatious). We will share information with partner agencies where necessary, with tenant consent and in line with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Tenants will always be informed who their landlord is, who manages their tenancy day-to-day, and how to escalate complaints or appeals.

6. Delivery of Policy

6.1 This Policy should be read alongside:

- Letting and Allocation Policy
- Antisocial behaviour Policy

- Tenancy Policy

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 We will monitor our management provider's performance in delivering this policy through regular reporting, audits, and tenant feedback. Any concerns will be addressed through formal contract management processes.
- 7.2 We will review this policy once every three years in line with Legislation/regulation or industry changes, making sure that it continues to meet our aims and sector best practice. We will also use learning from complaints, appeals and tenant feedback to continuously improve our approach.