



Bromley Tenancy Strategy
2023 - 2028

Version 3

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 places an obligation on the London Borough of Bromley to have a tenancy strategy which is drafted in consultation with the housing providers. It sets our expectations of all social landlords operating in the borough and provides guidance on our preferred approach to tenure and affordability with specific consideration on:
- the types of tenancies they will grant
 - the circumstances under which different types of tenancies will be granted
 - when they grant fixed-term tenancies, the length of the fixed term and whether they grant a further tenancy when the fixed term expires.
- 1.2 We value the rights of households some of whom are in the direst need, to be housed in the most suitable accommodation, and to receive the right kind of support in a tenancy which is aimed at providing them with a home which will promote their health and wellbeing. We value the need to listen to our tenants when identifying the support required and the delivery of housing services and we also value the need to identify and deliver sustainable long term housing solutions.
- 1.3 The Social Housing Green Paper, published in 2018, proposed a new deal for social housing. In November 2020. The Government published its White Paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents, which affirms social rented homes as places where residents can put down roots and build communities.
- 1.4 We want those allocated social housing to see their homes as genuine places to settle, not as temporary welfare provision. Residents should have control over their lives and homes as this can help to build thriving, cohesive communities. Offering lifetime tenancies at social rent levels best supports this in most cases.

2.0 Strategic Context

- 2.1 The current tenancy strategy 2013 – 2015 is now due for renewal. Bromley has recently developed some residential properties and there are more planned. Whilst the primary aim for these units is to alleviate the pressures in temporary accommodation, the units also allow the Council to rehouse people from the housing register.
- 2.2 The corporate strategy, “making Bromley even better” sets out five ambitions to be delivered jointly with partner agencies, which dovetail with the tenancy strategy which are:
- a. For children and young people to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
 - b. For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
 - c. For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.
 - d. For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.

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- e. To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley’s residents.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Housing Strategy 2019 – 2029 is to set out what the Council plans to do over the next ten years to address housing pressures in the borough, and provide good quality housing for its residents, both now and in the future. It sits within a suite of corporate strategies which set out the Council’s aspirations and plans for Bromley over the coming years and identifies four key priorities:
- Ensure financial independence and sustainability;
 - Invest in our businesses and people;
 - Ambitious for all our children and young people;
 - Enhance our clean and green borough.
- 2.3 The Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 which is due for renewal in the next 12 months highlights the following needs:
- a. **Early identification and prevention of homelessness;** support people wherever possible before crisis and provide excellent services to those at point of crisis to prevent homelessness or assist them to secure alternative sustainable accommodation.
 - b. **Achieve positive outcomes for our young people;** preventing youth homelessness and ensuring young people are supported to make a positive transition into adulthood.
 - c. **Increase the supply of accommodation;** explore all available housing options to prevent homelessness and identify more affordable and sustainable long-term accommodation to reduce stays in temporary accommodation.
 - d. **Achieve positive outcomes by improving health and wellbeing and breaking the cycle of homelessness;** ensure services are accessible, person-centred and equip people with the skills and resilience to sustain accommodation and avoid repeat homelessness.
- 2.4 We are currently reviewing our current allocation scheme over the next 12 months to reflect the best in industry practice, to work collaboratively with social landlords and to assist Bromley residents with the best housing solution for their needs.
- 2.5 The Council’s January 2019 Local Plan sets out the planning policies, site allocations and land designations Borough-wide and is the central document in the Borough’s Development Plan. It forms part of a suite of development plan documents which comprise of the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan, and Supplementary Planning Documents; currently Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing and the London Plan (2016). The London Plan forms part of the Development Plan for each of the London local planning authorities. The Council uses these plans to set out its agenda for the development of residential housing which targets the areas identified in the plan as requiring regeneration. **The Local Plan is now being reviewed.**

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2.6 The challenge in London is how to provide decent, affordable housing. London’s housing shortage has been caused by the failure, over decades, to build the new homes the city’s growing economy needs. The effects of the housing shortage now reach into every aspect of Londoners’ lives. The London Housing Strategy sets out the Mayor’s vision and policies for London and the proposals to make it happen. The Mayor is calling on all organisations that have a part to play in addressing London’s housing crisis and the vision and priorities are:

- building homes for Londoners;
- delivering genuinely affordable homes;
- high quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods;
- a fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders;
- tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers.

2.7 In introducing this tenancy strategy we aim to:

- Work with social landlords to meet the housing needs of our residents; the provision of support in order to sustain tenancies and where needs change, offer a flexible service designed to accommodate those changes.
- To support communities to thrive through the creation of sustainable social housing offers.
- Assist affordable housing developers to understand what the council requires of social landlords who own, let and manage stock.
- Ensure that the supply of housing is genuinely affordable and built to a good standard which meets the needs of local residents, specifically those on low incomes, ensuring the supply will be linked to the aims set out in the housing strategy in response to climate concerns and net zero.
- Provide a clear development mandate across the borough, specifically with areas subjected to local plans.

3.0 Demographic profile of the Borough

3.1 Bromley is the largest London borough by area, covering 59 square miles. Over half the borough is open countryside, much of which is Metropolitan Green Belt land. Bromley has relatively low levels of deprivation – it is the 4th least deprived of the 33 London boroughs.

3.2 We are the 8th most populous London borough. There are approximately 331,000 residents living in an estimated 141,000 households.

3.3 22% of our population is aged 18 and under - some 71,000 young people. We have the largest population of older people of all London boroughs - 18% of the current population is aged 65 and over (58,700 people) and 15% of our residents are retired, which is approximately double the London average of 7%.

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- 3.4 The proportion of working age residents (18 to 65 years) will remain fairly stable over the next twenty years, at approximately 60% of the total population (200,500 people).
- 3.5 20% of Bromley's population is made up of different minority ethnic groups. 29% of the borough's current children and young people population are from minority ethnic groups. Bromley has one of the highest populations of settled travellers in the UK.
- 3.6 Bromley's employment rate of 78% is the 7th highest of the 21 Outer London Boroughs. 165,000 of our residents are economically active with 80,000 commuting outside the borough for work and 109,200 employed within the borough.
- 3.7 The average property price in Bromley postcode area is £561k, the median price is £480k. The average price increased by £10.8k (2%) over the last twelve months. The price of an established property is £568k. The price of a newly built property is £448k. Most properties were sold in the £500k-£750k and £300k-£400k price ranges. The table below compares the average price in Bromley with England and Wales; with prices in Bromley around 40% more expensive than the average price for England and Wales.

September 2021 - August 2022

<i>Price</i>	<i>Bromley postcode area</i>	<i>England and Wales</i>
<i>Average</i>	£568K	£340K
<i>Median</i>	£490K	£259K

- 3.8 The average Bromley salary is £34,601 which equates to an average weekly income of £665 per week with the South East as a region being £807 which shows that many in Bromley earn 31% lower than others in the region but when compared to the average for the UK which is also £655, they earn 1% more. Purchasing a property on these weekly averages will prove problematic for many residents in the borough.

4.0 Discharge of Homelessness Duty

- 4.1 Since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, local authorities can discharge their homelessness duties through an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. Where properties of a suitable standard can be found at the right cost, Bromley will undertake a suitability check and if successful, will make an offer of private sector accommodation in line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.

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- 4.2 We are working to understand the numbers of private sector landlords in Bromley in order to secure a supply of good quality properties. Where budgets allow, we offer incentives and grants to private sector landlords to help them improve their properties and maintain them to safe standards appropriate for letting. We seek to establish affordable rents within the private sector with capping at the Local Housing Allowance.
- 4.3 We work together in partnership with registered providers in the borough to discharge our homeless duty in both council and register provider stock. We recognise that with the vast amount of social housing belonging to registered providers that it is important to continue to raise the profile of the homeless in the borough. We also recognise that with ever increasing levels of financial hardship experienced by households, that homeless prevention has to be a primary aim, and this necessitates the strengthening of the partnership between the Council and social landlords.

5.0 Granting of Tenancies

5.1 Rights and Responsibilities

All tenants need to make informed choices about their housing options. We will work with our registered providers to make the process of offering tenancies is as clear and transparent as possible. All registered providers understand the need to explain the rights and responsibilities of a tenancy when signing up new tenants.

5.2 License to Occupy

Tenants in our temporary accommodation are signed up on non-secure tenancies, usually a licence to occupy. The home is not permanent and only available to the household whilst the Council assesses their duty under the Homelessness legislation and/or before making them a permanent offer of accommodation.

5.3 Introductory or Starter Tenancies

Starter or Introductory tenancies are usually offered to someone who has never held a social tenancy or someone who requires support during the initial period of their tenancy. The initial period is for 12 months, after which it will convert to a lifetime tenancy unless a Notice of Extension has been served extending it for a further 6 months. This may be done where the tenant would benefit from further support or intensive management.

5.4 Lifetime Tenancies

- 5.4.1 With the need to have sustainable communities and the welfare of our residents a primary aim, we prefer the offer of lifetime tenancies to tenants who have successfully completed a starter or

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introductory tenancy or a tenant transferring from another social housing tenancy. This will take the form of an assured or secure tenancy.

- 5.4.2 Social housing tenants with lifetime tenancies that were issued before 01 April 2012, and who have remained social housing tenants, have their security of tenure protected by law. The Localism Act 2011 s.154 and regulatory framework for social housing require all landlords to offer lifetime tenancies when these tenants move to another social rented home. This includes mutual exchanges, transfers, or moves as a result of major works or regeneration. Where a social housing tenant has been given a lifetime tenancy on or after 01 April 2012, and they swap their home with a social housing tenant who has a fixed term tenancy, they will lose their lifetime tenancy.
- 5.4.3 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires in cases of domestic abuse, that landlords issue new lifetime tenancies, where a tenant previously had a lifetime tenancy. We expect this to be undertaken by their own landlord. but where this is not possible or they need emergency rehousing requiring assessment under the homelessness legislation, we would expect their permanent offer to be a lifetime tenancy.
- 5.4.4 We expect lifetime tenancies to be issued to vulnerable tenants with long term support or care needs. This may include the following:
 - those with enduring mental health needs;
 - those with a learning disability;
 - some types of physical disability;
 - older people in supported accommodation;
 - older people moving into specialist, sheltered or extra care housing, particularly those giving up a larger home and a lifetime tenancy;
 - those needing specialist care.

5.5 Flexible Tenancies

- 5.5.1 We promote the use of flexible tenancies only in the following circumstances:
 - Where a flexible tenancy is attached to specific homelessness funding.
 - Where the household would benefit from a sustained period of support longer than an introductory period.
 - We support the use of fixed term tenancies in properties that have been purpose built or substantially adapted for disabled occupants. Such adaptations can be expensive, and it is important that adapted homes are made available and let to those who need them.
- 5.5.2 Where flexible tenancies are used, these should be for a minimum of 5 years, unless a funded scheme places a specific period on the tenancy. The Regulator of Social Housing expects that fixed term tenancies should be for a minimum of five years or no later than the 19th birthday of the oldest child wherever sooner.
- 5.5.3 Social landlords who issue flexible tenancies must have a policy supported by an equalities impact assessment, stating clearly under what circumstances they will be granted.

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- 5.5.4 Fixed term tenancies which are less than five years are used exceptionally in some of the following cases:
- for short term supported housing designated as move-on;
 - where it is linked to employment or educational opportunities such key worker accommodation, where the renewal of tenancies should take place at the renewal of an employment contract subject to suitability of the accommodation.

5.5.5 The renewal process must be made clear to a tenant when the tenancy commences, and they should receive notice no later than 6 months before the tenancy is due to end where the landlord is not going to renew the tenancy. The reasons should be explained clearly together with an alternative housing solution plan; one of the avenues being, a referral to the Council in line with the provision made by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

- 5.5.6 Exceptional circumstances where a tenancy is not renewed may include:
- where a tenant wishes to end their own tenancy
 - where the home has been adapted but those adaptations are no longer required, and the home would meet the needs of another household on the housing register
 - where the behaviour of the tenant is prohibitive, and the landlord has exhausted all measures to provide tenancy support.

5.6 Reviews and Appeals

5.6.1 All tenancies should be visited as part of a rolling programme in order to ensure the property is occupied by the household on the tenancy agreement, that the premises are being used lawfully and that it is being maintained in accordance with the tenancy conditions.

5.6.2 All new tenants should receive a settling in visit within the first few weeks of the tenancy.

5.6.3 Introductory tenants should have formal reviews at 3,6,9 months of their tenancies to ensure they are managing their tenancy and support provided to assist them complete the initial 12 months successfully.

5.6.4 All flexible tenancies should be reviewed at 9 months prior to the end of the tenancy.

5.6.4 All social landlords should have a clear tenancy appeals process which is explained to tenants where decisions are being made in relation to their tenancy and the landlord must invest in the resources to undertake these effectively. With introductory and flexible tenancies there is a statutory requirement to allow appeals in the following circumstances:

- Where an introductory tenancy is extended a further 6 months
- Where possession proceedings are commenced for an introductory tenancy
- Where a flexible tenancy is not going to be renewed.

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6.0 Tenancy Sustainment

- 6.1 We are committed to helping tenants to maintain their tenancy in both temporary accommodation, private rented and council accommodation. The council's tenancy management policy sets our remit in relation to tenancy sustainment, and we have the same expectation of our landlords in relation to:
- a range of targeted visits during the lifespan of a tenancy
 - rehousing where financial hardship would lead to tenancy failure
 - a support service, covering a range of advice and assistance
 - tenant orientated employment opportunities
 - tackling anti-social behaviour through a range of measures
 - making it easier for tenants to manage their own homes.
- 6.2 The aim whether delivered by the Council or one of its partner landlords, is to provide the right aid at the right time and at times this may be bespoke to a household. Tenants who have been allocated a general needs property may need supported housing and this will be assessed as one of the measures.
- 6.3 Where a tenancy is failing but has not yet met the threshold for eviction, we may consider a safe surrender agreement if rehousing is the only way to assist the tenant and the landlord has exhausted all other ways to keep them safely in their home. The agreement would be between the landlord, the homeless service and the tenant who surrenders their tenancy on a voluntarily basis thereby allowing the Council to pick them up under a prevention duty rather than an intentionally homeless.
- 6.4 Safe surrender agreements and possession of a property should be a last resort and every effort should be made to sustain the tenancy where possible. We recognise that may not be possible where the housing needs of the individual may be complex and not suited to the accommodation. We will work with registered landlords and private landlords to find a way to keep tenants in their home and where this is not possible to identify a satisfactory solution.
- 6.5 Where domestic abuse is identified, a solution that looks at the best outcome for the survivors including children will be sought. Where relocation of the perpetrator would provide the best remedy, this may be considered as an option on a case-by-case basis.

7.0 Succession

- 7.1 Legislation has a provision for statutory succession rights for secure and assured tenants. There is one right to succeed. The law does not grant a further succession right if the successor then dies.
- 7.2 Historically, there were significant differences between the succession rights of assured and secure tenants. The Localism Act 2011 introduced changes to harmonise succession between

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the two, however there remains significant differences, the Localism Act changes affect tenancies granted from April 2012 onwards, but not those granted before that date.

- 7.3 Some landlords offer more generous succession rights than the statutory legal minimum, allowing tenancy rights to be passed on a second time or to be conferred in circumstances when the tenant would not normally qualify for a statutory succession. The rights may be contractual, i.e. written into their tenancy agreement or discretionary and assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 7.4 The Tenancy Standard governed by the Regulator of Social Housing, requires social landlords to have a policy on succession.

8.0 Tenant Mobility

- 8.1 We need family sized accommodation and recognise the need for all social landlords to provide incentives and assistance to tenants who wish to move to a smaller property. They should be encouraged to join the housing register and their application will be awarded a priority that reflects the demand for larger properties.
- 8.2 Residents who claim benefits in under occupied units are subject to the Spare Room Subsidy (also known as bedroom tax), which can have a negative impact, making affordability an issue and having a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Anyone who is a permanent part of the household but not living with them at the time of the application will be taken into account before moving them to a smaller property.
- 8.3 Residents who need adaptations, where their property is unsuitable for the required works will require the landlord to consider all possible ways to meet that need. Where this is not possible, they may join the housing register and will be awarded the relevant priority. Where the Council can assist with grant to allow the tenant to remain in their home, this will be explored.
- 8.4 It is important for tenants who wish to move for employment, or for support and welfare reasons, to be able to do so easily. Applicants on the housing register wishing to transfer for these reasons will be awarded suitable priority and will be considered under our local connection rules.
- 8.5 Social landlords should enable suitable moves to support the recruitment and retention of essential key workers, health and support workers in the borough where this becomes a borough priority.

9.0 Home Ownership

- 9.1 We will make every effort to promote the opportunities for low-cost home ownership for residents in the borough. This will involve working with the registered providers who have such

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stock and where we are approached for rehousing, applicants will be signposted to these landlords as a viable housing solution.

- 9.2 Tenants who are eligible will be able to purchase their home from their landlord through the Right to Buy and Preserved Right to Buy schemes, provided the property they reside in does not hold an exemption. Social landlords are expected to keep the Council informed of any purchases through these schemes.
- 9.3 As part of our working relationship with registered providers, we ask that the following properties be exempt from purchase:
- properties in locations, where there is a shortage of properties by type and or size;
 - designated accommodation for older people; where this accommodation is in short supply;
 - specialist or supported housing;
 - disabled adapted properties secured through planning obligations;
 - shared accommodation.

10.0 Social Housing in the Borough

- 10.1 We can demonstrate through a series of ward maps the properties density for council stock, registered providers, private sector rented and owner occupier.
- 10.2 We will be inserting a heat map of current Bromley owned stock including anything near completion.
- 10.3 We will be inserting a heat map that shows RP stock in the borough.
- 10.4 We will be inserting a heat map that shows PRS stock in the borough
- 10.5 Need a heat map that shows owner occupation in the borough
- 10.6 We will work with our landlords and community-led housing developers to maximise the opportunities to deliver affordable properties including social rented properties and will seek to leverage funding through Homes England and the GLA to support this where scheme viability is an issue. The priority, driven by the severe affordability issues in areas within our borough, is to protect and increase the supply of social housing in Bromley alongside the provision of other affordable housing options.
- 10.7 We are compiling data on schemes in development by type, number and tenure mix.
- 10.8 We also recognise that our registered providers may have to dispose of stock where it is not cost effective to maintain it to the Decent Homes Standard, or it is hard to let, either because of the type of accommodation or area in which it is located. Where this becomes necessary,

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particularly where a property has been given in trust, or where Bromley or Homes England have invested in the property, the full gain (less any transaction and ancillary costs) from disposal should be reinvested back into the borough.

- 10.9 Social housing may be repurposed where disposal is not the most effective solutions, and the Council will work with the relevant landlord to obtain the best possible outcome. The partnership between the Council and landlord ensures that adequate notice is given of any proposed disposal, thereby allowing the Council to consider the variety of options available to it. To avoid property disposals as a result of poor property standards, we expect all social landlords to maintain their property portfolios to the Decent Homes Standard or equivalent or higher standard. This will also promote the benefits of better health and wellbeing.
- 10.10 There is growing evidence that by joining up planning for housing with planning for health and wellbeing, significant benefits both to individuals and communities can be seen, helping people to thrive. This is one of the Council's priorities, and our commitment together with social landlords is to:
- Deliver social homes to the Decent Homes Standard or higher.
 - Build genuinely affordable places to live where residents can settle and develop a commitment to their local community.

11.0 Affordability Statement

- 11.1 The government promotes work to reduce dependency on benefits, so it is important that rent levels in Bromley are affordable and do not deter the tenant from entering employment. The table below shows the average weekly rents by type and bedsize:

Landlord Type	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Council	Tbc	Tbc	Tbc	Tbc
Registered Provider	Tbc	Tbc	Tbc	Tbc
Private Rented	£312	£485	£577	£600

We are working on collecting data on Council and PRS rents. Then a short statement will be compiled

- 11.2 New tenants are unlikely to have sufficient savings to secure a deposit or pay rent in advance. We ask that registered providers reflect the payment of rent in advance at sign up in their policies and have a flexible payment approach to allow the tenant to build the sufficient level of credit over time.
- 11.3 Our housing strategy sets out the delivery aims for an affordable housing programme that has the right mix of social housing products and sets out the measures that we employ to achieve

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the desired outcomes. We recognise a coordinated approach with registered providers is essential to deliver those outcomes.

- 11.4 We have to consider scheme viability and the cost to the tenant overall in terms of rent and service charge when considering the rent level. However a social rent comparison will be undertaken when undertaking scheme appraisals to ensure the most affordable rent products are considered.
- 11.5 Over the next 18 months we will be working with our planning section to develop an affordability model.
- 11.6 With property prices high in the borough, first time buyers often seek a low-cost home ownership route to get on the property ladder. **We are working on collecting data on rents for shared ownership and the average % equity owned. This may disprove this statement in which case it will be altered.**

12.1 Delivery and Impact of this Strategy

- 12.1 The Council and the social landlords operating within the borough will jointly own the strategy. We will produce a delivery plan with our partners, using the aims and the actions identified within the strategy. We have a shared commitment across our key partners and stakeholders to support the delivery of this strategy, as the achievement of our vision is dependent upon their contribution. The Executive will have oversight of the implementation of the strategy and will monitor and review progress.
- 12.2 Under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Councils are required to give due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, when exercising a public function such as a landlord. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This strategy complies with the Council's Equalities Policy March 2021 which sets out our commitments to ensuring in equality in service delivery. An equalities impact assessment was undertaken, before the strategy was adopted.
- 12.3 This strategy will be reviewed every 5 years – unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and takes account of good practice developments. We aim to mitigate any risk associated with the delivery of this strategy and its implementation by landlord tenancy policies through discussion and negotiation.
- 12.4 The delivery of this strategy will be monitored as follows:
 - Discussions with residents of the borough
 - Discussions with social landlords on its effectiveness.
 - Tenancy sustainment reviews by social landlords.

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- Feedback from the private rented sector.
- Reviews by the **Executive and RR&H**.

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