

**Tenancy Strategy 2022 -2027
Consultation Report**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Under Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council is required to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy. The Tenancy Strategy sets out the Council's expectations to the registered providers of social housing operating within the County regarding the types of tenancy they should offer to their tenants.
- 1.2. The Council must keep its tenancy strategy under review in the light of changing legislation and other factors and may amend it when necessary but when doing so is required to consult with the registered providers operating in the County.

2. Introduction:

- 2.1. The existing Tenancy Strategy has been in place since 2012 and required a review to take account of changes in legislation, welfare reform and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic highlighting the importance of a safe stable homes.
- 2.2. The report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet in February 2022 to approve the Tenancy Strategy

3. Consultation process:

- 3.1. The Council is required by the Localism Act 2011 to consult with all Registered Providers of Social Housing operating in the County as well as making the consultation available to the wider public.
- 3.2. The approach to the consultation was guided by the Consultations Officer Group. A questionnaire was prepared to help guide the responders to the consultation to address specific questions relating to the Tenancy Strategy as well as gathering data by the various protected characteristics.
- 3.3. A consultation web page was set up on the Council's website which contained the questionnaire as well as some background information to the Tenancy Strategy and the Council's consultation.
- 3.4. All Registered Providers were sent an email directing them to the questionnaire of the Council's website. This was followed up with a reminder to encourage feedback.
- 3.5. A press release was prepared and made available from the start of the consultation to raise awareness of the consultation.
- 3.6. The consultation process was undertaken over a four week period between the 15th November 2021 and the 13th December 2021.
 - North Star Housing Group
 - Karbon Homes
 - believe housing
 - Livin
 - Accent
 - Anchor Hanover
 - Bernicia
 - Castles & Coasts
 - Dimensions
 - Humankind
 - Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association

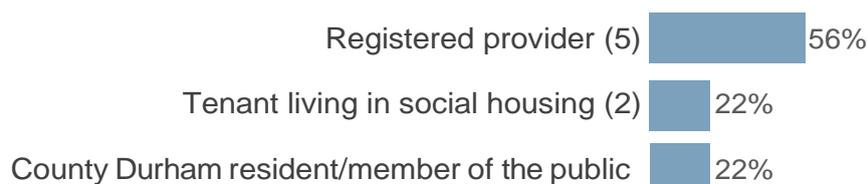
- Fairoak Housing Association
- Hellens Residential
- Home Group
- Housing & Care 21
- Jacob Wrights Almshouses
- Jane Cameron's Old Peoples Charity
- Johnnie Johnson Housing
- Places for People
- Railway Housing Association
- Riverside
- Salvation Army Housing Association
- Thirteen Group
- William Russell Bequest

3.7. Other consultees included

- Members group
- AAP coordinators group
- County Durham Partnership including the thematic groups
- Durham Works
- Durham BID
- Police community engagement team
- Better Together Forum/VSC contacts
- Foodbank network
- Town and Parish Councils
- Disability Partnership
- Durham Youth Council
- Wellbeing service contacts

4 Respondents

4.1. 9 respondents completed this questionnaire as follows:



4.2. Responses were received from Places for People, Karbon Homes, and Livin Housing Ltd

5. Consultation responses

5.1. The following responses were received. Where any specific comments were raised a response has been provided indicating where appropriate what has been done to respond to the comments made,

Do you agree or disagree with the main aims of the tenancy strategy?



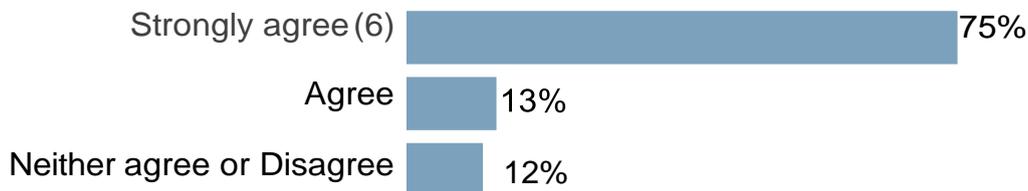
1. If you disagree any of the main aims of the tenancy strategy, which aim(s) and why?

If Yes, Please Specify:

Feedback: Livin believes that affordable housing is a positive housing choice for many of our tenants. The stated aim to “help people move on from affordable housing once they can access other suitable options that meets their needs” implies, perhaps unintentionally, that affordable housing is undesirable and that tenants should aspire to move out when they are able. Whilst unintentional we believe this aim has the potential to stigmatise affordable housing tenants and needs to be amended. This aim also appears to run contrary to the aim of enabling sustainable communities. We believe this strategic aim is more likely aimed at older and more vulnerable people who wish to access more appropriate supported housing when they are no longer able to live independently. Livin supports this aim and would suggest that the aim is amended to reflect the intended purpose.

Response: Affordable housing, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, is housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market. As the circumstances of tenants change and their need for affordable housing diminishes the intention of the stated aim was to help free up essential affordable housing for those who need it most. It is accepted that there is a need to promote sustainable communities and we have seen the role that the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire have played in helping to keep people within the community as their financial position has improved. Many affordable homes have been lost forever as a consequence. The stated aim has been amended from “*Help people move on from affordable housing once they can access other suitable options which meet their needs.*” to “*Help people access suitable housing options which meet their needs.*”

2. Do you agree or disagree that tenants should be offered the most secure form of tenancy wherever possible?



3. Do you feel there should be anything added to improve the tenancy strategy?



If yes, please specify.

Feedback: Tenants should have stricter conditions attached to what is expected of them with regards to presentation / tidiness of property / garden

Response: We have strengthened one of the aims of the Tenancy Strategy so that Registered Providers set out clearly their expectations within the tenancy agreements, provide comprehensive pre-tenancy advice and appropriate support where required to help tenants meet their tenancy obligations and prevent tenancy failure. One of the aims has been amended from *“Encourage Registered Providers to support people to avoid the loss of their home and homelessness”* to *“Provide clear tenancy agreements that set out the obligations of the landlord and the expectations the tenant in simple terms, underpinned by comprehensive pre-tenancy advice and appropriate levels of tenancy support where required to avoid tenancy failure and homelessness”*.

Feedback: We note that the strategy scope excludes non-rental forms of affordable housing. As the development grant funding regime through Homes England changes alongside the implementation of the new model for shared ownership we believe the tenancy strategy should cover DCC’s view and objectives around tenure diversification and the types of product / tenancy you believe RPs should offer.

Response: The point is accepted and will be fed into the review of our Housing Strategy which provides a comprehensive overview of the wider affordable housing provision within the County.

4. How will the tenancy strategy proposals impact you, your business or your community?

Feedback: This strategy compliments the tenancy strategy at Karbon Homes which strengthens the partnership approach.

Response: Agreed

Feedback: Hopefully provide more social housing

Response: Agreed

Feedback: Personally very little effect. However the proposed starter tenancies should have strict conditions attached which will be enforced. Many new houses in the Chester Le street area, provided by Karbon homes, have been damaged very shortly after their construction. If you cannot enforce the conditions, don’t bother putting them in.

Response: Starter, probationary or introductory tenancies are encouraged within the Tenancy Strategy. These enable Registered Providers to secure possession more easily where the tenancy agreement is not complied with. The Tenancy Strategy has been amended to encourage Registered Providers to Provide clear tenancy terms, pre-tenancy advice and support where appropriate to tenants to help prevent tenancy failure.

Feedback: More secure tenancy agreements will also help communities who sometimes suffer from problems with tenants of neighbouring properties

Response: The Tenancy Strategy encourages Registered Providers to provide a range of Tenancy Types to suit a range of needs and circumstances. Responsible tenant behaviour is encouraged with possession of the tenancy an option of last resort where other

interventions fail.

Feedback: Livin's Plan A strategy sets out the strategic challenges facing the tenants and communities we service. DCC's Tenancy Strategy aims correlate with our strategic aims to sustain tenancies, enable independence, make best use of available housing stock and enable sustainable communities. In developing our Plan. A strategy and our Tenancy Policy, we ensured our aims strategically complement County Durham Vision 2035, County Durham Housing Strategy and the SHMA. Our Livin Well tenancy support strategy delivers targeted, personalised interventions to tackle instances of tenancy instability. We promote and prioritise the use of targeted aids and adaptations to support older and more vulnerable people remaining in their homes for longer; Livin tenants can self-serve requests for minor adaptations through our app or our call centre depending on their preference. Our Sustainable Communities strategy sets out our approach to place based regeneration and our committed community focus. We are passionate about the communities we serve and are actively investing in both our homes and our communities to improve tenancy sustainment and quality of life.

Response: Agreed

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1. The responses received were insufficient to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding equality issues from the respondents. This was primarily and organisation focussed consultation with the legislation requiring the Council to consult with all Registered Providers operating in the area.
- 6.2. Registered Providers are required to have regard to the Tenancy Strategy when developing their own tenancy policies.
- 6.3. Many Registered Providers hold housing stock across more than one local authority area and are therefore impacted upon by more than one Tenancy Strategy.
- 6.4. In developing their own Tenancy Policies the Registered Provides are required to consult with their own tenants.
- 6.5. The Regulator for Social Housing oversees the activities of the Registered Providers. All Registered Providers are required to comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Framework. The Regulatory Framework sets out specific requirements with regard to equality and diversity issues.

7. Post decision

- 7.1. The report on the Tenancy Strategy and outcome of the feedback will be published on the consultations page of the Councils website to provide feedback to the respondents on what has been done in response to the feedback provided.
- 7.2. Consultees will be provided with a copy of this report and the revised strategy will be made public once approved.