

Fixed Term Tenancies

1. What is a fixed term tenancy?

A fixed term tenancy is a tenancy that lasts for a defined period of time as long as you comply with the conditions of the tenancy. It is legally known as an Assured Shorthold Fixed Term tenancy. We normally offer fixed term tenancies for 5 years. In exceptional circumstances we might offer shorter terms (no shorter than 2 years) or longer terms (up to 10 years).

2. How does it work?

There is a trial period before the fixed term tenancy begins. This normally lasts for 6 months but can be extended up to 18 months. Having one of our tenancies comes with responsibilities and we use this trial period to promote these to you and check that you can stick to them. Some of your tenancy rights are restricted during this trial period. This is explained in the tenancy agreement.

As long as you stick to the terms of the tenancy agreement, and there are no other compelling reasons not to do so, we will offer you a fixed term tenancy at the end of the trial period.

3. Why are fixed term tenancies being used?

The government wants housing providers to grant different kinds of tenancies depending on the needs of their local communities. The aim is to encourage tenants to review their options and move between properties and sectors as their circumstances change. This helps to ensure that scarce social housing is available for people with a genuine need for as long as they have that need.

4. How is the decision made to grant a fixed term tenancy in a particular case?

We normally offer what is called a periodic assured tenancy that does not have a defined end date, but we offer a fixed term tenancy in the following circumstances:

- Where the property has 4 bedrooms or more (including any room which could reasonably be used as a bedroom)
- Where the property has significant disabled adaptations such as: a ramped access to the property; level access bathroom/ wet-room; lowered kitchen units; a wheelchair lift; or a stair-lift in combination with other adaptations. This also applies if we have to adapt a property in this way for a family before they move in. (Simple additions like handrails do not count as significant adaptations.)
- Depending on the nature of the property or the household's circumstances, we may also offer a fixed term tenancy on other types of properties if this makes best use of our homes.
- In addition, there may be times when there is a particularly high demand for (or short supply of) for example 3-bedroomed homes within a local community – in which case we may offer fixed term tenancies on such properties.

5. What happens at the end of the fixed term?

At the end of the fixed period, we will consider whether to grant you a new fixed term tenancy. The decision-making process will involve a review of your circumstances and will include things like:

- Have your circumstances (or those of your household) changed? For example your financial circumstances may have improved meaning that home ownership or private renting is now an option.
- Is the property still suitable for your needs? For example if children have left home then you may no longer require a property of that size.
- Has your need for significant disabled adaptations changed? For example if you or your family no longer need the adaptations then you may be able to find more suitable accommodation.

We will discuss these issues with you in good time before making any decision. In general, if your household circumstances have not changed then a new fixed term tenancy will be offered.

If we decide not to offer a new fixed term tenancy, you can request a review of that decision. We offer advice and support on other housing options if we do not grant a new tenancy.

6. Can my tenancy be passed on if I die?

If you were to die during the fixed term, the remainder of the tenancy can pass to your partner or another family member in the circumstances set out in the tenancy agreement.

7. What if my situation changes and I need to move?

You can register with North Somerset Council's HomeChoice scheme if a change in circumstances means you need rehousing. You could also swap your home with another social housing tenant who would need it. The swap is known as a 'mutual exchange'. We can tell you more about this about this if you ask us.

8. Can I end the tenancy early?

Although the tenancy is set up for a fixed term, you can offer to end it early if you need to move out. You must give us written notice of giving up the tenancy and both tenants must sign the notice if it is a joint one. The notice must cover at least 4 full rent weeks otherwise we will charge you for the remainder of this period. You must have our agreement to end the tenancy early. We may not agree if there is rent outstanding or you have broken any of the tenancy conditions.

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10. Where can I get further advice about my tenancy?

If you have any queries at all, please feel free to contact us on 03000 120 120.

You can also get independent advice on your rights from the North Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau (www.nscab.org.uk) or Shelter Bristol (0344 515 1430). If you want advice about applying for social housing or homelessness you can contact North Somerset Council's Housing Advice Team on 01934 426330.

11. How can I appeal any decisions to extend my fixed term tenancy?

If you wish to appeal the decision to extend your fixed term tenancy you can raise this via Alliance Homes complaints process by calling our Customer Service Team on 03000 120 120.