

1. Introduction

Sovereign is committed to providing good quality affordable homes to people in need, in communities where people want to live. We will take into account needs and aspirations of existing and potential residents and offer a range of housing products to meet their requirements.

We aim to let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. We will work closely with local authorities and contribute to supporting them to meet their strategic housing needs and aspirations.

This policy sets out how we will let our social rent and Affordable Rent homes. It does not include key worker, market rent, intermediate rent, shared ownership, leasehold or garages.

2. Our approach to letting homes; we will:

- Maximise our nomination agreements to make the best use of our homes.
- Let our homes as quickly as possible to avoid loss of rent, vandalism or squatting.
- Encourage, support and prioritise our existing residents to move to smaller homes if their current one is larger than they need or can afford.
- Enable mutual exchanges and provide free subscription for all existing residents to a national home swap service. *Link Mutual Exchange Policy.*
- Offer suitable alternative accommodation if a resident has succeeded to a home larger than they need.
- Work with other organisations to offer a wide range of housing options to residents considering a move.
- Aim to match adapted homes to residents in need of the adaptations.
- Work with local authorities and other stakeholders to develop local lettings plans (LLP's) to improve access to housing and create sustainable communities.

3. Our criteria for offering a Sovereign home

Size

We have clear criteria around the size of home we will offer each type of household, for example a single person, a couple or a family. *Link Bedroom Entitlement.*

Advertising and seeking nominations for vacant homes, we will:

- Let the majority of our homes to people nominated by local authorities and other statutory agencies.
- Allocate our homes direct to applicants in line with agreements with local authority partners.
- Let our homes in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act and ensure criteria of section 106 agreements are advertised clearly.

- Offer housing for older people to those who have reached the set minimum age for a particular scheme or who have a disability or support need.
- Consider offering a home to young people aged 16-17 years. If an offer is made we will issue a Deed of Trust and require a suitable trustee until the young person reaches 18 years of age.
- Reserve the right to refuse a nomination. *Link Grounds for Refusal.*

Employees and relatives; we will:

- Only let a home to an employee or their relatives, and Board members or their relatives in accordance with Sovereign's Conflict and Declaration of Interest policy.

Existing Sovereign residents; we will:

- Support transfer requests if the rent account is up to date and no other debt is owed to us, the home meets our Empty Home Standard at the time of the move and no other tenancy conditions have been broken.
- Where we manage an internal transfer list, provide support and guidance to residents who want to apply.

In exceptional circumstances, we may agree lettings that are outside the normal lettings process. This will be at the discretion of an operational director and the reasons for the decision recorded.

4. Advice and support, we will:

- Provide applicants for our homes with advice and guidance on accessing housing, including support with the application and bidding process.
- Provide access to view advertised homes in a range of ways.
- Offer translations services to applicants who do not speak English as their first language and others who have difficulties with written English.
- Work closely with applicants and partner agencies to identify any vulnerability or support needs and ensure support packages are in place.

5. When we offer a tenancy, we will:

- Meet all applicants prior to making an offer to establish the home is suitable for them, the household meets our lettings criteria, including affordability.
- Collect applicant information and financial information to allow us to assess the needs of the whole household and check they can afford to pay the rent charged for the home.
- Carry out an accompanied viewing of the home before expecting an applicant to accept our offer.
- Ask for proof and verify the identification of all applicants, preferably photographic ID such as a passport or driving licence.

- Take and retain a photograph of new residents. This will be used to tackle tenancy fraud and ensure our homes continue to be occupied by the people named on the tenancy agreement.
- Make sure every home is let in a safe, clean condition and meets our Empty Home Standard.
- Offer fixed term tenancies with a probationary period to anyone who does not already hold an assured or secure tenancy. *Link Tenancy Policy.*
- Explain the rights and responsibilities of being a Sovereign resident.
- Require an advance payment of at least one week's rent before we let the home.

6. Appeals

Anyone who does not feel they have been dealt with fairly when applying for a Sovereign home can let us know through our complaints process.

7. Understanding and responding to residents

We will treat everyone fairly but recognise that certain groups may face discrimination or may be disadvantaged in other ways. These groups are identified in equality legislation and include people who have a disability or from different religions or faiths.

8. Equality analysis

This policy has been checked to make sure that it is fair and equally accessible to those in need of housing. A copy of this analysis is available along with any changes we have made as a result.

Linked to: Tenancy Policy
 Transfer Policy
 Mutual Exchange Policy
 Grounds for refusal guidance
 Bedroom entitlement guidance

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Owner	Heather Bowman
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