



Equality Impact Assessment

1. Dorset Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031
2. This is a strategy.
3. This is external guidance for Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) (commonly known as Housing Associations which are often charitable organisations but also includes for profit registered providers) about Dorset Councils preferences for them to consider when setting their tenancy policies and aims to support tenants in the area. It does not give Dorset Council powers or duties but does describe the work it will do to monitor how RPs have considered the strategy.
4. Its aims and objectives are to meet our legal requirement to publish a tenancy strategy. The Regulator of Social Housing requires RPs to have policies relating to social housing tenure, housing management and tenant support. This strategy outlines and provides them with guidance on what the council wishes them to consider when formulating these policies including:
 - Tenure
 - Tenancy renewals, reviews and decisions
 - Tenant support provided as part of the RP's roles and responsibilities including matters relating to protected characteristics.
 - Written and in person practices and approaches relating to RP's roles and responsibilities on tenancy management and tenancy sustainment.
5. Under the Localism Act 2011 the council is required to have a tenancy strategy in respect of social housing. Dorset Council is a local authority registered provider. It owns and manages low-cost rental housing for example for rough sleepers. It will consider this strategy for any relevant council owned housing. This strategy does not cover temporary accommodation the council owns as a local authority registered provider.

Dorset Council employed an external consultant, Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants to develop the tenancy strategy and complete the consultation. Relevant council services and the portfolio holder for housing & health were included. The council is required to consult with RPs to develop the strategy. There is no method or mandated timeframe to do this. A workshop was held with RPs during the development of the strategy. The draft strategy has been shared with RPs (see section 8) and they were invited to provide feedback which has been considered. There is no legal requirement to consult tenants.

The Renters Rights Act has recently become law. The Act abolishes fixed term tenancies and replaces them with periodic assured tenancies. An enactment timetable will follow, and The Regulator of Social Housing will amend its guidance for RPs and Dorset Council will update its tenancy strategy accordingly once there are more information and guidance from the UK government.

Public data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has been used to review tenure practice from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024 and included information about:

- The name and number of RPs who hold stock in the Dorset Council area.
- The amount of stock each RP holds in the Dorset Council area.
- The types and tenures granted in the Dorset Council by these RPs over the last 5 years.
- Rent levels for stock types.
- Comparisons to England and the Southwest regions.

6. Evidence gathering and engagement

[Data from the Regulator of Social Housing](#) for social housing statistics on registered provider social housing stock and rents in England. For this strategy data was sourced on the number of registered providers that own stock in the Dorset Council area and the amount of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, by registered provider type and overall.

[CORE](#) data published by the UK government on statistics on social housing lettings in England. For this strategy data was sourced on fixed term tenancy lengths, starter/introductory tenancy, tenancy term, tenancy type overall and by registered provider type.

Dorset Council Housing Register. A link is not provided because the register includes personal data.

[Heriot Watt University 2018](#) for this strategy data was sourced on fixed term tenancies.

7. Insight from data and evidence gathering is as follows:

Data from the Regulator of Social Housing:

There are 54 RPs who own stock in the Dorset Council area of circa 24K units of accommodation.

4 RPs own 82% of the stock. 3 of these had large scale voluntary transfers of stock from predecessor district authorities.

73% of stock held is general needs social rented housing, 20% is supported housing including for older people, 7% were low-cost home ownership.

Data from the national data set CORE (Continuous Recording of Lettings in Social Housing):

RPs in the Dorset Council area consistently grant lifetime tenancies more often than any other type of tenancy.

Overall fixed term tenancies are much less likely to be granted now than 5 years ago. When fixed term tenancies are granted, it is by a small number of RPs, often for a period of 10 – 20 years, mostly at a social rent rate and has mostly been for general housing needs provision.

Statistics don't provide a reason for why there are less fixed term tenancies granted now than previously but the reduction in number is reflective of a prevailing trend.

Most stock in general needs housing provision available at the social rent rate and may explain why most fixed term tenancies are granted for this type of provision at this rent rate.

The proportion of lifetime tenancies granted has increased over the past 5 years from 50% to an average of 90%.

There has been a reduction in the number of fixed term tenancies granted over the past 5 years from 36% to 6%.

There has been a reduction in the number of licence agreements granted over the past 5 years from 5% to 2%.

There has been a reduction in the number of other types of tenancies granted over the past 5 years from 1% to zero.

19 RPs have granted 894 fixed term tenancies in the last 5 years, and 4 RPs granted 76%. Only 4 RPs have consistently granted fixed terms tenancies each year over the past 5 years.

When fixed term tenancies are granted the most common term is 5 to 9 years (80%). Fixed term tenancies with terms 10 to 20 years are the least common (just under 1%).

More fixed term tenancies have been granted to social housing let at social rent rate (65%) but this has reduced in real terms from 78% to 28%. For the same period fixed term tenancies let at the affordable rent rate has increased from 22% to 69%.

Fixed term tenancies have been granted to more general needs social housing than supported housing (83%).

Data from the housing register:

6,723 lettings have been made by RPs in this area from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024.

19/20 1,228 lettings

20/21	1,219 lettings
21/22	1,396 lettings
22/23	1,555 lettings
23/24	1,325 lettings

Heriot Wyatt University 2018 study on fixed term tenancies in social housing:

At that time, decisions against fixed term tenancies stemmed from commitment to lifetime tenancies and worries that fixed term tenancies created uncertainty for tenants and communities as well as the additional associated administrative burden.

Some landlords targeted the use of fixed term tenancies to specific properties or tenant, but others used it as their standard offer.

Many RPs had not realised anticipated benefits of using fixed term tenancies.

Many RPs using fixed term tenancies reported rare non-renewals and expected this.

The study reported that many respondents were undecided about the effectiveness of fixed term tenancies but thought they negatively affected tenants' sense of community and security especially vulnerable tenants and families with children. They also reported concerns that linking fixed term tenancies to earnings and employment was ineffective.

None of the data provided an assessment of qualitative data. The action plan details work Dorset Council will do to monitor the effectiveness of this strategy and aims to include qualitative findings.

8. As part of this assessment we engaged with:

Registered Providers

Dorset Council officers responsible for:
Social housing allocations
Homelessness and housing advice
Private sector housing standards
Spatial planning
Adult social care
Housing strategy

9. No further information needed to help inform decision making.

10. An EQIA is required.

11. Assessing the impact on different groups of people.

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

We hope this strategy will have a positive impact relating to most protected characteristic. It encourages RPs to ensure their policies and practice include holistic assessments of the whole household (not limited to tenants), communities and care provision for tenancy reviews, renewals or the ending of a tenancy or eviction. Our guidance aims to encourage RPs to ensure support is offered to households about tenancy sustainment, alternative accommodation and seeks to prevent homelessness. We want RPs to grant the most secure form of tenancy possible.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive	When a household includes children and/or older people, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Disability	Positive	When a household includes people who have additional needs because of a disability, we want RPs to consider their needs, consider vulnerability, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Positive	When a household includes a person(s) who are in the process of or has already changed their gender, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	A person's marriage or civil partnership status is not a factor

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		specifically impacted. All members of a tenant's household should be considered and a good standard of support made available. In the event of a marriage or civil partnership breakdown RPs are required to administer changes to tenancies according to legislation.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	When a household includes a person who is pregnant or on maternity, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Race and Ethnicity	Positive	When a household includes a person(s) with needs around language or cultural considerations, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Religion and belief	Positive	We hope this strategy will have a positive impact relating to religion and belief. When a household includes a person(s) with needs around religion or belief, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive	Rarely, specific properties are set aside because they require single sex. In instances where community cohesion impacts related to a person's sex exist, a property may be or become unsuitable, but we want RPs to take a holistic approach to all aspects covered by this strategy.
Sexual orientation	Positive	In instances where community cohesion and/or anti-social behaviour or harassment exists

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		relating to a person's sexual orientation, a property may be or become unsuitable. We hope this strategy encourages RPs to ensure their policies and practice include holistic approach in relation to all aspects covered by this strategy. When a household includes a person(s) has needs related to their sexual orientation, we want RPs to consider these needs in delivering their relevant roles and responsibilities.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive	When a household includes a person(s) with needs relating to their caring responsibilities we want RPs to consider these needs in delivering their roles and responsibilities.
Rural isolation	Positive	Where rural isolation is a consideration, we want RPs to have regard for households with people who have additional needs or who are vulnerable as a result.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	We want RPs to recognise how housing insecurity can affect low-income households and to consider whether households living in rural isolation have additional needs during the delivery of their tenancy related roles and responsibilities.
Single parents	Positive	We want RPs to recognise how housing insecurity can impact single parent households, and to consider whether a single parent household has additional needs or who are vulnerable as a result.
Armed forces communities	Positive	A person's previous employment history is normally not a factor that impacts on matters covered by this strategy. We recognise that people who are armed forces veterans may have vulnerabilities because of

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		that, and we want RPs to consider these.

Summary of impacts:

There are no negative impacts derived from this strategy. The Equality & Human Rights Commission can act against a registered provider of social housing if they act in a discriminatory way (directly or indirectly) in the way they provide services.

Action Plan

Summary of any actions required because of this equality impact assessment.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
4 RPs have consistently granted fixed term tenancies each year over the last 5 years.	Although the Renters Right Act abolishes fixed term tenancies, until the enactment arrangements are published and the Regulator of Social Housing updates relevant requirements, fixed term tenancies can still be granted. Granting a fixed term tenancy is appropriate if it relates to specific intentions for the unit of accommodation or the tenant. The council wishes to ensure the reasons behind the very small number of fixed term tenancies granted are appropriate and to encourage RPs to issue the most secure form of tenancy possible. The council will monitor the tenure granted and work with RPs issuing fixed term tenancies to provide assurance.	Sharon Attwater	Annually
Ensure the impact of this strategy on vulnerable groups is monitored	Include impact on vulnerable groups in annual monitoring	Sharon Attwater	Annually
RP compliance	Include a periodic review of RP policies to monitor compliance and identify areas for improvement or barriers to mitigate/support.	Sharon Attwater	Periodic on RP policies renewal/development

RP equality and inclusion knowledge and skills to be current	Explore opportunities for the council to check and support the level of skills and knowledge held by RPs on equality and inclusion.	Sharon Attwater	Periodic and in response to changes in legislation.
Renters Right Act	Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy to be amended when enactment timetable is published and when Regulator of Social Housing publishes new requirements for RPs.	Sharon Attwater	TBC

Sign Off: Andrew Billany

Officer completing this EqlA: Sharon Attwater

Officers involved in completing the EqlA: Gary Messenger

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Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreyman-Key