

Starter tenancies

Welcome to your Cottsway home, we hope you will be very happy living in it. The tenancy you have on your home is a 'starter tenancy'. These guidelines explain what this means and why we use this sort of tenancy.

What is a starter tenancy?

A starter tenancy is a type of tenancy that lasts for a year and is used for all tenants new to Cottsway, who are not transferring from another housing association or council.

At the end of that time, if there have been no problems with your tenancy it will automatically change to one of our long-term tenancies; this is called an assured tenancy.

If this is not going to happen because you have not kept to the conditions set out in your starter tenancy:

- We will let you know;
- We may end your tenancy altogether; and
- You may lose your home.

We use starter tenancies to help us work with and support customers in their new homes. They are an opportunity for you, your family and your visitors to show that you understand what it means to be a responsible and valued Cottsway tenant.

What happens during a starter tenancy?

We will do all we can to support you through the twelve months.

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer may visit you at home regularly.

The first visit will be within 4-6 weeks of your tenancy to welcome you and see you are settling in and to talk about any problems that you may have.

After that any visits will be:

- **Dependent on any concerns we may have about your tenancy**
- **About what we can both do to sort out any problems.**

At about 11 months into your tenancy we will assess how the tenancy has been conducted. This is when we will decide whether your tenancy will become a long-term one. This will happen if you are keeping to the terms of your tenancy.

Your rights and responsibilities

These are set out in your starter tenancy agreement. It is very important that you understand these, particularly your responsibilities.

Your responsibilities include paying your rent and not causing a nuisance to neighbours or other residents.

Your rights during your starter tenancy are the same as for all other tenants except you will not be able to:

- **Transfer to another home**
- **Exchange homes with another tenant**
- **Have the right to make improvements**
- **Take in a lodger**
- **Have the 'Right to Buy' or the 'Right to Acquire' your home**

Looking to the future

We want all our starter tenancies to become long-term ones. We will work with you to do all we can to make this happen.

If you are having any difficulties, such as problems with neighbours or paying your rent, please talk to your Neighbourhood Housing Officer. They will work with you to help you understand exactly what you need to do, to make realistic agreements and to get the support you need from other agencies.

If there are any problems, we may extend your tenancy by a maximum of six months. During this time, we will continue to visit and work with you to sort out the problems and put things right.

However, if you do not put things right, we may decide to end your tenancy. In very serious cases we may take action to end your tenancy before the year is up.

What will happen at the end of the year?

If you have kept to the conditions, your tenancy will simply change to a long-term agreement. We will write to you and tell you that this has happened.

If we are not going to renew your tenancy, we will write to tell you and send you a formal Section 21 Notice. This is a legal requirement if we wish to end your tenancy.

We will tell you why we have made this decision and why we think you have not kept to the terms of your agreement.

Should you receive a Section 21 Notice you should seek your own legal advice from organisations such as the Citizens Advice or a solicitor, or any support service you receive.

You should also get in touch with your Neighbourhood Housing Officer to discuss ways in which you can demonstrate the reason(s) for serving the Notice are no longer an issue, for example you have cleared your rent arrears.

We are here to help

If you have any questions about your starter tenancy, worries about keeping to your tenancy conditions, or concerns about something you have read or been told then please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer.