

# Housing management

## Housing Management policy 1

Keniston Housing Association

---

Keniston's Housing Management Service strives to ensure that the Association is:

- meeting housing need when selecting tenants
- providing good quality housing and services ensuring sustainability and cohesion of communities to enhance their quality of life ensuring fairness in the provision of housing and services
- recognising the need for balance between our traditional caring and supportive role and meeting the business interests of our organisation providing opportunities for residents to be involved in the decision making
- making the best use of the Associations properties

The following is the main legislation and regulations covering Housing Management:

Housing Acts 1980, 1985, 1988, 1996, 2004	the Protection from Eviction Act 1977
Landlord and Tenant Acts (as amended)	Defective Premises Act 1972
Homelessness Act 2002	Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998
Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002	Equality Act 2010
Homes and Communities Agency regulations	Housing & Regeneration Act 2008
Anti-social behaviour crime and policing Act 2014	

The principles of Keniston's Equalities and Diversity and Resident Involvement policies are at the centre of Keniston's Housing Management Policy. These are vital in achieving the excellent service which Keniston aims to provide.

In addition to the above, the Association is keen to develop links with other local community organisations and groups in the areas in which it operates, because of its aim to improve people's access to housing, and its belief that it has a wider responsibility to the residents it serves than just providing a home.

In achieving the aim of the Housing Management Policy the following main factors are critical.

### **1 Meeting Housing Need**

We will:

- set targets for voids which will be kept to a minimum and let efficiently
- meet our obligation to the Local Authority and participate in choice based letting schemes
- review the selection and allocation policy every 3 years (this will include reviewing referral agencies that we work with to ensure housing need is being met)
- promote mobility schemes (e.g. Mutual Exchange, Transfers) and support, as far as reasonable, tenants who want to move
- make best use of existing stock by promoting mobility, prioritising under-occupiers particularly those impacted by the bedroom tax, and dealing promptly with abandoned and sublet properties when identified.
- ensure that all new tenancies will be starter tenancies to ensure that the conditions of the tenancy can be met in the first 12 months.
- extend the starter tenancy, where breached, to help with a longer review period or legal action taken to end the tenancy where the breach is serious enough.
- Ensure that successful starter tenancies will automatically convert to an assured tenancy (lifetime tenancy).
- not be issuing fixed term tenancies (flexible tenancies).
- deal with changes to the tenancy in cases of relationship breakdown

### **2 Service Delivery**

We will:

- promote and monitor standards of service;
- promote and monitor the complaints procedure;
- undertake surveys to monitor service delivery and communicate results to residents;

- maintain the principles of “Customer Care” with staff by training and support provided by the Association
- treat residents fairly, courteously and respectfully, taking into account individual needs
- provide access to information for tenants, leaseholders and others who come into contact with the Association
- offer choices for residents to access our services
- identify potential vulnerability amongst our residents and ensure sources of support as soon as possible
- consult with residents on their views and ideas for improvements
- offer all residents opportunities to influence the services received to help us with continuous improvement.
- deliver cost effective services that are wanted, needed at the level of service expected.
- ensure that all information sheets are clear and concise using plain English and offered in different languages

### **3 Tenancy Management**

We will:

- give assured tenants the same rights as secure tenants, as far as possible;
- place an emphasis on being proactive, preventative and supportive before enforcing tenancy conditions which we will carry out responsibly and reasonably (although it is acknowledged that there are certain factors which may prevent tenancy conditions being enforced in certain circumstances. e.g. where adequate evidence is not available);
- set a rent policy, conforming to government guidelines on setting rents so that rents cover costs
- set targets and tackle rent arrear problems early; take prompt action against tenants who default without good reason.
- assist tenants with budgeting or benefit advice or signpost residents for debt counselling services.
- provide a range of opportunities for residents to voice their opinions and influence decision making for co-habiting parties, where one is named as tenant: the partner of the tenant may be considered for a joint tenancy after one years evidenced as living in the premises. This evidence could include being on the electoral register as living at the tenant’s address.
- will not agree to requests for names to be added as joint tenants for situations involving different or same generations of the same family. Such family members are protected by law if the tenant dies.
- offer more than the statutory minimum to assured tenants, in the event of the death of a tenant, to equal those rights of a secure tenant in this regard.
- offer a discretionary succession in certain circumstances
- offer an assignment of tenancy to those who would qualify under succession rights
- work in partnership and share information within protocols with other public agencies at a local level.

### **4 Leasehold management**

We will:

- enforce leases responsibly and reasonably.
- keep leaseholders informed of forthcoming stock reinvestment including planned maintenance projects prior to serving statutory notices to consult on such works.

- consult with recognised Residents Associations and all residents as required under Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 as amended by Section 151 of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.
- tackle ground rent and service charge arrears early and apply the same principles for recovery of service charge arrears from Leaseholders as from tenants.
- consult with leaseholders, not only on major repairs, but also long term contracts, insurance matters, service standards and wider community issues.

## **5 Upkeep of Common Areas**

We will:

- maintain common areas to a safe, clean and tidy standard
- maintain within reasonable costs equipment, plant and furniture to ensure value for money for items included in the service charge.
- employ staff and/or contractors to maintain common areas, plant and equipment
- visit all estates and schemes at least monthly
- Carry out bi-monthly health and safety inspections inviting residents along at least twice yearly.
- arrange for the Management Team of Keniston to visit each estate/scheme on a rolling programme. Members of the Keniston board are invited to these visits and all local residents are encouraged to accompany them.
- undertake a Resident Satisfaction survey on items paid for out of service charges every two years, eg cleaning, gardening, communal lighting
- seek competitive prices after consultation with residents at least every five years to ensure standards are achieved cost effectively where contractors are employed to maintain common areas.
- raise the issue of upkeep of common areas at least annually at Residents Meetings.
- consult with residents before we make any major changes to the services affecting communal areas.

## **6 Developing Relationships with Community Organisations and Groups**

We will:

- build contacts with organisations in order to help the Association to develop more ways of meeting housing need. (e.g. Referral Agencies to provide nominations for housing).
- support and promote initiatives and services developed by other organisations which provide services to Keniston's residents (e.g Bromley Youth Service)
- support the Darrick Wood Community Group.
- build capacity and confidence among individuals and group members so that they can take opportunities when they arise.
- Support and attend any Resident Group in the areas we work.

Agreed by Board on 12 May 2016.