



CHANGES TO NEW TENANCIES LET THROUGH HERTS CHOICE HOMES

The Government is introducing some important changes which will affect the way in which vacant homes are advertised and let by Housing Associations and councils.

Length of tenancy

Traditionally, tenancies are granted for as long as a tenant wishes to stay there ('lifetime' tenancies).

In future, a new form of fixed term or 'flexible' tenancy will be offered to some tenants. The term will be decided by the landlord but this is most unlikely to be for a period less than 5 years and may be longer in some cases. Landlords are still able to grant lifetime tenancies and may continue to do so for tenants who are considered to need them.

Towards the end of the fixed term, a review of the tenants' circumstances will be carried out and a decision will be taken on whether a further fixed term tenancy of the property will be offered.

Existing tenants with a lifetime tenancy who successfully bid for a vacant home will need to check with their landlord on how their tenancy term and rent level (see below) will be affected.

The length of the tenancies will not be shown on the property adverts as this will depend on the circumstances of the successful bidder.

This change is intended to make allocations fairer by not automatically granting all new tenants a tenancy for life, but instead giving them a home only for as long as they are considered to be in need of it and where no other reasonable options exist.

Rents

The Government's changes will allow some landlords to charge rents on new lettings at up to 80% of market rent levels. These are known as 'affordable' rents but despite this term, these may be considerably higher than existing 'social' rents.

Existing tenants will continue to pay social rents for as long as they live in their current home but those seeking to transfer will need to check their position with their landlord.

Not all landlords will raise their rents in this way and those who do will not apply affordable rent levels to all their vacancies.

The effect of this will be that you will gradually see a much wider range of rents being charged with quite different levels even between properties which are of the same type and size and in the same district.

The intention of this change is to enable landlords to raise more money which can then be re-invested in the provision of more affordable housing.

Homeless people

Currently, those who have been accepted for housing having made a homelessness application are placed in band B and then allowed a specific period of time in which to make their bids.

The Government will be permitting councils to offer accepted homeless people a tenancy in the private sector so long as this is suitable to their needs and for a period not less than 12 months. This is likely to be introduced around April 2012.

The five Herts Choice Homes councils are considering how best to use this new power and more information will be provided in due course.

Further information

As these proposals become clearer over the coming months, we will continue to keep you updated through the Herts Choice Homes website.

There will be other important changes being introduced by the five councils who will be reviewing their rehousing policies in response to the changes referred to here, and others. These are being discussed with the **Herts Choice Homes User Group** and if you want to be a part of this, please see the details on the Home page of this website.

That page also shows contact details should you wish to approach your local council or landlord for more information.