



Home Choice

IMPORTANT NEWS AFFECTING PROPERTIES ALLOCATED THROUGH BUCKS HOME CHOICE

CHANGES TO HOW PROPERTIES WILL BE ADVERTISED

The following information is to let our customers know early about changes being made to the way in which housing is allocated. As the Government make more information available to us about the new changes, we will pass this on to you as quickly as possible.

Very soon you will notice changes to the properties advertised through Bucks Home Choice. The main differences that will affect you include:

- Rent Levels
 - Affordable Rent
 - Social Rent
- Length of Tenancy
 - Lifetime Tenancies
 - Fixed Term Tenancies



WHY THE CHANGE?

The Government are making some changes to social housing, which it is intended will make the allocation of housing fairer to all applicants. The changes also aim to ensure that the support which social housing provides is focused on those who need it most for as long as they need it.

RENT LEVELS

The Government has asked housing associations to let a proportion of their homes at an *Affordable Rent* level. This means, compared to a similar property, the rent charged will be less than the amount charged by a private landlord but will be more than a traditional housing association rent (now known as a *Social Rent*). Very soon, all properties advertised in Bucks Home Choice will say which type of rent level will apply. Each advert will be marked as either a *Social Rent* or *Affordable Rent* property.

Affordable Rent

Tenants of *Affordable Rent* properties can still apply for Housing Benefit as normal and claims will be assessed based on household circumstances. If Housing Benefit does not cover the full rent, tenants will have to pay the difference.



Social Rent

This has always been the traditional rent level for both Council and Housing Association homes. The only difference you will see is that the rent for these homes will now be called *Social Rent*.

LENGTH OF TENANCY

As well as the rent levels changing, the Government is also proposing to give councils and housing associations the freedom to grant two different types of tenancies:

- **Lifetime tenancies** – The tenant can live in their home for as long as they want (as long as they do not break the rules of their tenancy).
- **Fixed term tenancies** – A fixed term tenancy is NOT a lifetime tenancy; it is a shorter tenancy with an end date. A tenancy period may last 5, 10, 15 years or longer but cannot be less than 2 years. The individual landlord decides the length of a fixed term tenancy.

Under certain circumstances, once the successful applicant has been selected and their individual needs taken into consideration, the actual length of the tenancy may be different from that which was originally advertised.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE FIXED TERM TENANCY?

As the end of a fixed term tenancy approaches, the tenant's housing situation will be reviewed by the landlord, whose responsibility it is to decide whether or not the tenancy should be extended. Before the end of the tenancy, if the tenant needs to or wants to move on, they will be guided and advised about the full range of housing options available to them.



WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM ALREADY A TENANT AND WISH TO MOVE?

At the moment you may have a lifetime tenancy (please check with your own landlord if you are unsure). In the Bucks Home Choice scheme you will have the choice of expressing an interest in either an affordable or social rented property.

If you make a successful expression of interest in an affordable rented property you may be offered a fixed term tenancy even though you may already have an existing lifetime tenancy. If you make a successful expression of interest in a social rented property you will be allowed to keep your existing lifetime tenancy.

If you are a tenant already, please refer to your landlord for further advice and information regarding affordable rent levels if you are transferring to a different property with the *same* landlord.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE CHANGES?

If you have a specific question about your current tenancy please contact your landlord. Further contact details can be found on the Bucks Home Choice website at www.buckshomechoice.gov.uk. Further information about Social Housing Reforms is available from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) website at www.communities.gov.uk/housing/socialhousing/

REMEMBER

As the Government make more information available to us about the new changes, we will pass this on to you as quickly as possible.