



You said

We did

## Fixed Term Tenancies Consultation Feedback

Home Group’s involvement team carried out consultation with customers in April 2018 on proposed changes to Home Group Tenure policy in relation to fixed-term tenancies. Seventeen customers responded to the consultation. Thirteen from the virtual customer group and four customer assessors including one from supported services who is a potential customer.

In addition, seven members of the Home Group customer Human Library took part in a workshop in May 2018 to explore the potential impact of proposed policy changes on equality.



**We can’t always use every comment, but we will tell you why**



You said	We did
<p><b>Communication with customers about fixed-term tenancies needs to be clear so people understand what they are and can make informed choices</b></p> <p>‘Fixed term tenancies need to be explained clearly because a lot of customers won't know what they are’</p> <p>‘Complete transparency should be executed and all the pitfalls explained in plain English. Then they can make up their own minds’</p> <p>‘Provide customers with really clear information about what it means’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The customer KISS (Keep It Short and Simple) panel is used to screen information for customers about fixed term tenancies to make sure it’s clear and easy to understand</li> <li>✓ We included a step in our sign up process for new tenancies where the customer can talk directly to a housing manager and ask them questions.</li> <li>✓ Guidance has been amended to say that Housing Managers should take account of whether a tenant needs an advocate or other supporter to help explain the terms of the tenancy to them</li> </ul>
<p><b>Make sure the right accommodation is allocated in the first place</b></p> <p>‘Offer the most appropriate accommodation to customers at sign up to reduce the number of potential moves required’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Guidance and procedures sitting under our Referrals and Allocations policy already set out how Home Group makes sure that customers are offered accommodation most appropriate to their needs</li> </ul>

<b>You said</b>	<b>We did</b>
<p><b>People who have disabilities and vulnerable groups need more support and stability</b></p> <p>'People with learning difficulties or disabilities, those in relationship breakdown or mental health issues also need to be considered...People who may fall into these groups are likely to need greater support and stability rather than fixed term tenancies.'</p> <p>'Provide exemptions/ extensions for all diversity groups on a case by case basis'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Our intention is to renew tenancies for a further five years in most cases and this commitment is stated in the policy and supporting guidance</li> <li>✓ The need to take account of the needs of vulnerable customers and individual needs is built in to our guidance and procedures for reviewing tenancies and making decisions about renewing them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Customers could feel bullied into accepting changes they don't want for fear of losing their tenancy.</b></p> <p>'I feel it is open to abuse and could be detrimental to Home's own principal. Obviously there are benefits like confidence of a 5 year tenure, dependent on customer and HA. However my own experiences of being cajoled into upgrading central heating could be used to force people to do something they don't want to do. Punishment by ending a tenure could be seen and felt as a Victorian attitude to a basic right, a roof over your head.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Our guidance and procedures state clearly the circumstances under which we will not renew a tenancy.</li> <li>✓ We will renew tenancies unless these specific circumstances apply.</li> <li>✓ We tell customers clearly what these circumstances are so that customers can hold us to account.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Thinking about what will happen at the end of the fixed-term tenancy could make people anxious or feel insecure</b></p> <p>'The negatives would be insecurity and all the things that go with such feelings.'</p> <p>'Consider wording – 'fixed term' engenders fear and feelings of insecurity. Consider referring to it as a five year review on tenancies'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We reassure customers in our written and verbal communications, that we will renew tenancies at the end of each fixed term in all but a few specific circumstances.</li> <li>✓ We need to use the term 'fixed-term tenancy' as it reflects the legal position, but we emphasise the positive aspect of reviewing the tenancy every five years to make sure that the accommodation is still right for customers and their needs which might change over time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fixed-term tenancies go against Home Group's social housing purpose</b></p> <p>'The whole idea is security when you only offer someone a 5 year tenancy they have no security of having a home this is social housing where people cannot afford a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Home Group remains absolutely committed to helping people find the home that's right for them. Fixed-term tenancies will provide the opportunity for us to work with customers to</li> </ul>

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<p>mortgage and may have been homeless/sofa surfing how can only offering them 5 years help!’  ‘You are effectively going commercial which to me is not acceptable Home group is a social housing not a commercial organisation’</p>	<p>explore alternative options that may be better suited to their needs.  ✓ Tenancies will be renewed at the end of each fixed term period unless specific circumstances apply, so everyone who still needs social housing will still have it.</p>
<p><b>Fixed-term tenancies should be used to help deal with anti-social behaviour</b>  ‘For those who do not live amicably amongst their neighbours there should be the possibility to have them suitably warned and removed from the homes in the case of antisocial behaviour within the 5 year contract’</p>	<p>✓ Breaches of tenancy agreement, such as serious anti-social behaviour against which Home Group is, or would be, taking legal action are considered grounds for not renewing the tenancy at the end of the fixed-term. This is reflected in our guidance and procedures</p>
<p><b>Families with school-age children need stability</b>  ‘It could stop people applying for tenancy especially families as stability is paramount when children are of school years.’  ‘Longer term would be more beneficial especially to families with school age children’</p>	<p>✓ Our policy states that tenancies will be renewed at the end of each fixed-term period unless specific circumstances apply.  ✓ We will take account of family circumstances when reviewing tenancies, including whether there are children in the household who have not yet completed secondary education.  ✓ Where this is the case, we will offer to renew the tenancy in the same property, even if it is under occupied, provided this is consistent with the local authority tenancy strategy.</p>
<p><b>Implement a clear appeals process.</b>  ‘Customers should be able to appeal Home Group’s decision regarding their tenancy and take their appeal to the Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied with Home Group’s response. Customers should not be asked to leave while their appeal is active/ ongoing’</p>	<p>✓ Our policy allows for customer to appeal against a decision not to renew their tenancy.  ✓ Our procedures are clear that we will not request a court hearing to gain possession of a property until the appeal has been concluded and the customer informed of Home Group’s final decision.</p>
<p><b>Provide support for customers moving on at the end of the fixed term</b>  ‘Provide customers with really clear signposting to other organisations and services’</p>	<p>✓ Our Ending Tenure, Support, Services and Contracts policy include standards on supporting customers who are moving on from Home Group,</p>

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<p>'Make sure it's a two way partnership between the customer and Home Group'</p> <p>'Conduct thorough financial assessments with customers to ensure they can afford alternative accommodation (e.g. shared ownership)'</p> <p>'Consider the emotional impact moving may have on some customers'</p> <p>'Give customers at least three options for alternative accommodation and reasonable timescales for making a decision'</p>	<p>including signposting to other organisations who can help</p> <p>✓ Our Referrals and Allocations policy applies to customers who wish to apply for re-housing with Home Group. In many cases this will mean applying through the Local Authority nominations or choice based lettings schemes.</p>
<p><b>Staff training</b></p> <p>'Staff will need training and guidance'</p>	<p>✓ We have developed comprehensive guidance for staff on managing fixed-term tenancies. This is available to staff via our intranet</p>