

Housing Scrutiny Panel
Registered Providers -
The role of Housing Associations in Enfield

What is a Registered Provider?

Registered Providers (RPs) are owners of affordable rented homes. There are three types of registered provider:

- Local authorities
- Private Registered Providers (often called Housing associations)
- For Profit Registered Providers (private companies providing affordable homes)

All RPs are regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing. The regulator sets out standards for the sector which RPs are expected to meet. The Neighbourhood and Community Standard sets out how RPs are expected to support local authorities:

“Registered providers, having taken account of their presence and impact within the areas where they own properties, shall:

- (a) identify and publish the roles they are able to play within the areas where they have properties
- (b) co-operate with local partnership arrangements and strategic housing functions of local authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives”

Which RPs work in Enfield?

There are 39 RPs working in Enfield with c.9931 homes. The largest landlords are:

- L&Q (2,022)
- MTV (1,974)
- Origin (974)
- Christian Action (849)

Catalyst and North London Muslim Housing are actively increasing their presence in Enfield and there are a number of RPs looking to enter the market. These include Optivo and some For Profit RPs including Grainger.

How are RP homes let?

Enfield Council runs a common housing register. This means that all social rented homes in the borough are advertised through our choice-based lettings system. RPs should ensure that 75% of their letting are made through the housing register and 100% of new build properties.

This should mean that around 230 RP properties are let each year through the housing register. In practice only around 130 properties become available.

How do we influence RPs?

The Council's Tenancy Strategy, which is being reviewed this year and subject to the statutory consultation process will be considered by Cabinet in October 2021 sets out our expectations of RPs across a range of different areas including the type and length of tenancy, lettings, and rent levels. The strategy also sets out how we expect RPs to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, and their approach to demoted tenancies and evictions.

Tenancies

RPs are expected to issue lifetime tenancies wherever possible and to have a process in place to move tenants on existing fixed-term tenancies to lifetime tenancies.

Evictions

Enfield Council expects Registered Providers to have robust support systems in place to support tenants who are at risk of eviction address concerns and sustain their tenancies. Evictions should be sought only as a last resort once all other avenues have been exhausted without success.

Domestic Abuse

All RPs are expected to have robust policies and procedures in place to assist tenants in remaining safe and secure in their homes. Management transfers may be offered if the tenant needs to move urgently including for reasons of violence, harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence likely to be carried out.

In addition, we run an RP Forum including an Operational Sub-Group. This meets monthly to discuss joint working arrangements and how RPs can help the Council to deliver our objectives.

Why should we work with RPs?

There is a limit to how much the Council can borrow to develop new homes. By working with RPs we can increase the supply of new homes in the borough as they are able to access private finance. RPs also have specialist development staff that we can use in the design and delivery of new housing.

RPs are also able to access grant funding streams. Meridian Water is a good example of this. The Council will own at least 25% of the affordable housing developed with the balance being managed by RPs.

Partnership working

We are in the process of developing our partnership arrangements with RPs as agreed by Cabinet in 2020. Two projects are underway:

Charter for Better Housing Outcomes

This will be a joint agreement between the Council and RPs. It will translate the Council's Good Growth Strategy into measured outcomes and promote Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These will seek to improve the Council's understanding of management standards and operating practices, including

nominations, allocations, tenant engagement, community development, promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion and safeguarding for residents

Framework arrangements

As previously identified the Council cannot fund and deliver all development opportunities in the Borough. A key focus of the RP Framework will be selecting affordable housing providers for development opportunities. An Affordable Housing Framework means that only those who have satisfied the Council's objectives and financial tests will be enabled to own, develop and manage homes in the Borough. .

The opportunities to put through the Framework are still under development through the following work:

1. A review of existing council housing stock and what we might classify as "obsolete" – a term coined by the GLA and against which there is to be a future funding programme
2. A review of the Joyce and Snells regeneration scheme for potential opportunities
3. A review of General Fund/public sector land holdings we might want to run through the framework
4. Development of a Regeneration Strategy which will identify broader opportunities and funding streams

The Affordable Housing Provider Framework also offers the council a panel of experts in development in the sector who can be called upon to add development capacity to the team, for policy development, design expertise and structuring multi-phased development. This market intelligence will create added value and enable new housing to be designed and appropriate for a range of needs

Housing Advisory Group Feedback

This report was presented to the Housing Advisory Group on 1 April. The HAG welcomed the intention to develop a Charter as this would enable the Council to hold RPs to account for wider service delivery.