

Is a Council home for life?

The Results



For over 30 years, social landlords have only been able to offer lifetime tenancies. The law has changed and social landlords can now offer new tenants fixed term tenancies of five years or longer. This statutory change does not affect people with tenancies started before April 2012, who will keep their security of tenure even if they move to another social rented home. We asked you if you think the Council should offer fixed term tenancies.

The law about who should inherit a Council tenancy after a tenant dies has also changed for new tenancies. The law now only gives partners the right to inherit a tenancy. We asked you if you think the Council should allow anyone else to inherit a Council tenancy.

Read this report to find out what people said in response to these two questions.

Overview

What we did

Between June and August 2012 we gave residents, staff and partners three opportunities to tell us whether they think the Council should offer fixed term tenancies or let people other than the law allows to inherit a Council tenancy.

1. A **survey** – the survey was open to anyone via the Council website. The survey was publicised on the Council's website and intranet, on the Home Connections website where social housing applicants place bids for social housing, in Voluntary Action Camden's newsletter, and in *Camden Network*, a monthly bulletin that goes to community organisations via libraries. Copies of the survey were also made available in the Contact Camden reception area. We also posted around 1,000 copies and sent nearly 4,000 emails to encourage people to participate. 473 people took part in the survey. 85% of respondent were residents.
2. A **conference** for residents, staff and partners – we invited 3,110 people to a conference 'Right People in the Right Homes'. 125 people attended.
3. A **web forum** on the Council's 'We are Camden' social networking site – the page signposted people to our survey, posed discussion topics, included an online poll and posted footage of our conference. 116 people visited the forum.

What you said

While there was some support for fixed term tenancies or for their use in some situations, the most common response was to tell us that you did not want the Council to introduce fixed term tenancies. In addition, more than two thirds of you supported succession rights for groups other than the law allows.

What we will do

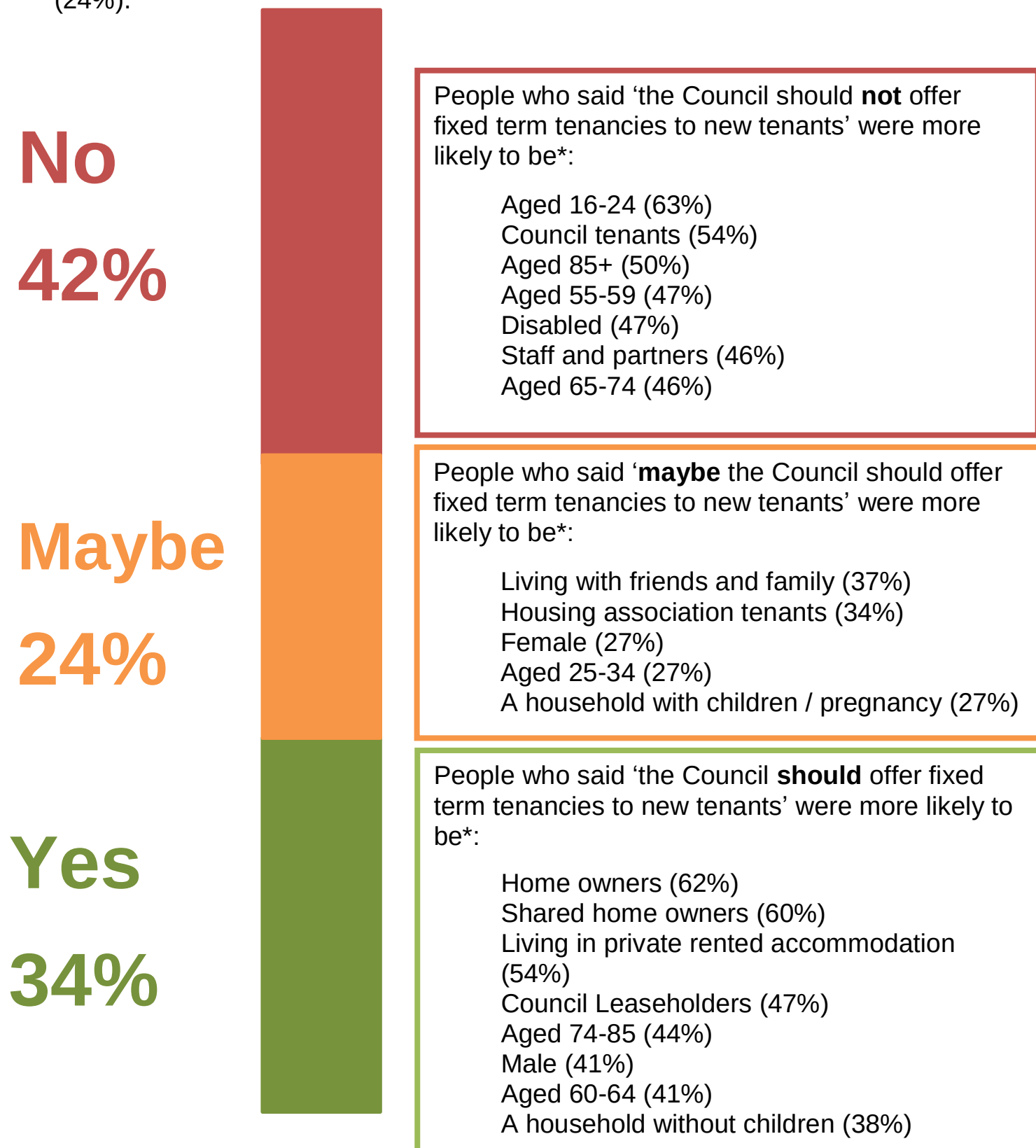
The Council will publish a Tenure Policy that will **not make use of fixed term tenancies** except in rare circumstances where a fixed term tenancy would be of benefit to the new tenant. The Council will continue to issue introductory tenancies for new tenants for a period of one year, after which time they will become secure tenancies.

The Tenure Policy **will allow certain groups of people other than spouses, civil partners and people living together as if they are a spouse or civil partner to either succeed or be allocated a tenancy**, although not necessarily the same Council home.

Survey Results

Q1 Do you think the Council should start to offer new tenants fixed term tenancies?**

The majority of respondents (66%) were either against the use of fixed term tenancies (42%) or said maybe the Council should offer them in some situations (24%).

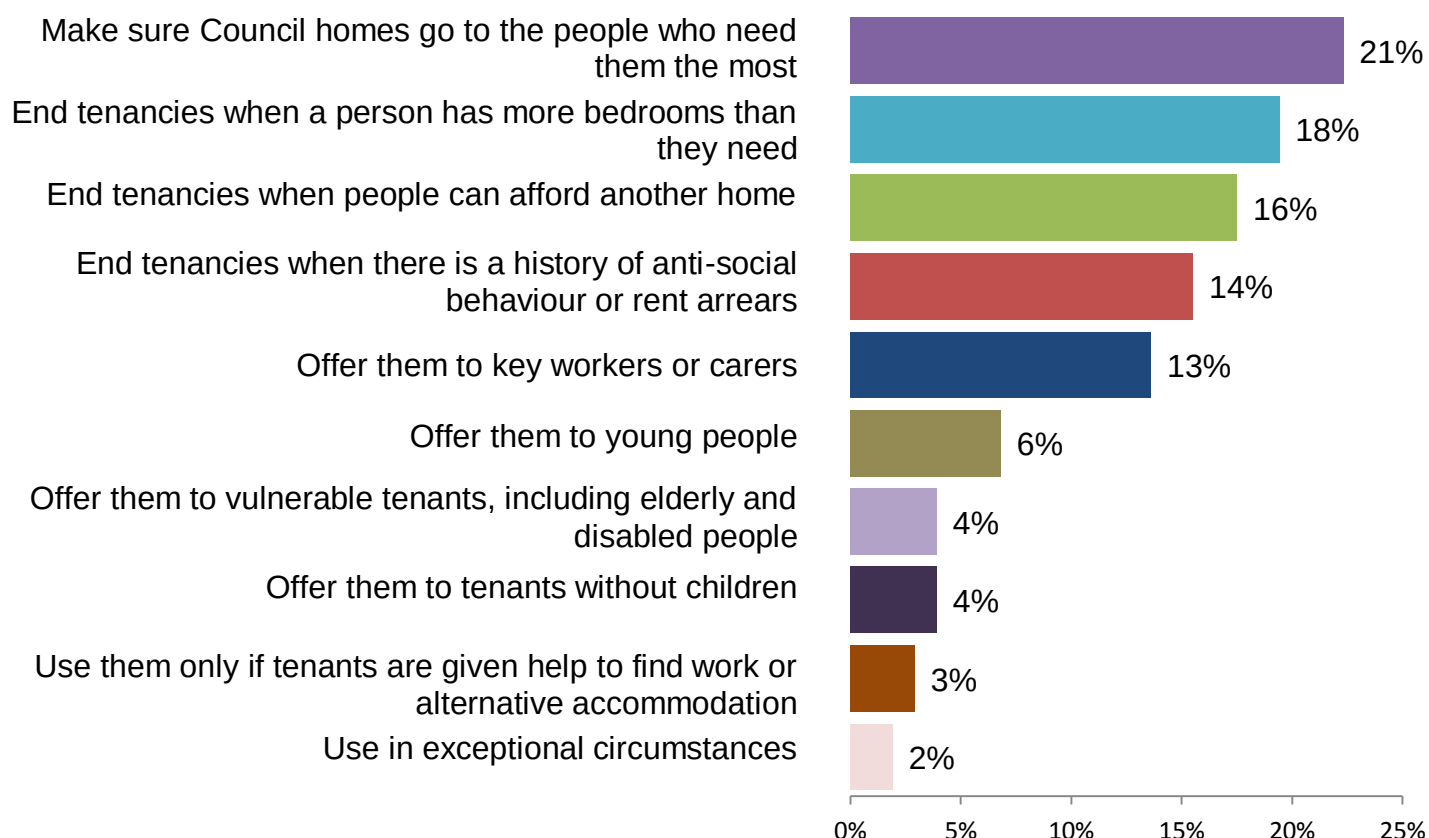


* There was very little difference between people from a White British background and people belonging to a Black or Minority Ethnic group.

** All respondents answered this question

Q2. If you said maybe, in which situations do you think the Council should offer fixed term tenancies?

Out of 116 respondents who said maybe the Council should offer fixed term tenancies, 109 made a comment when asked in which situations they thought the Council should use them. Answers included situations where fixed term tenancies could be used to end tenancies, situations when certain groups of new tenant may only need a short term tenancy and also general comments about the use of such tenancies. The range and frequency of comments are summarised in the chart below.

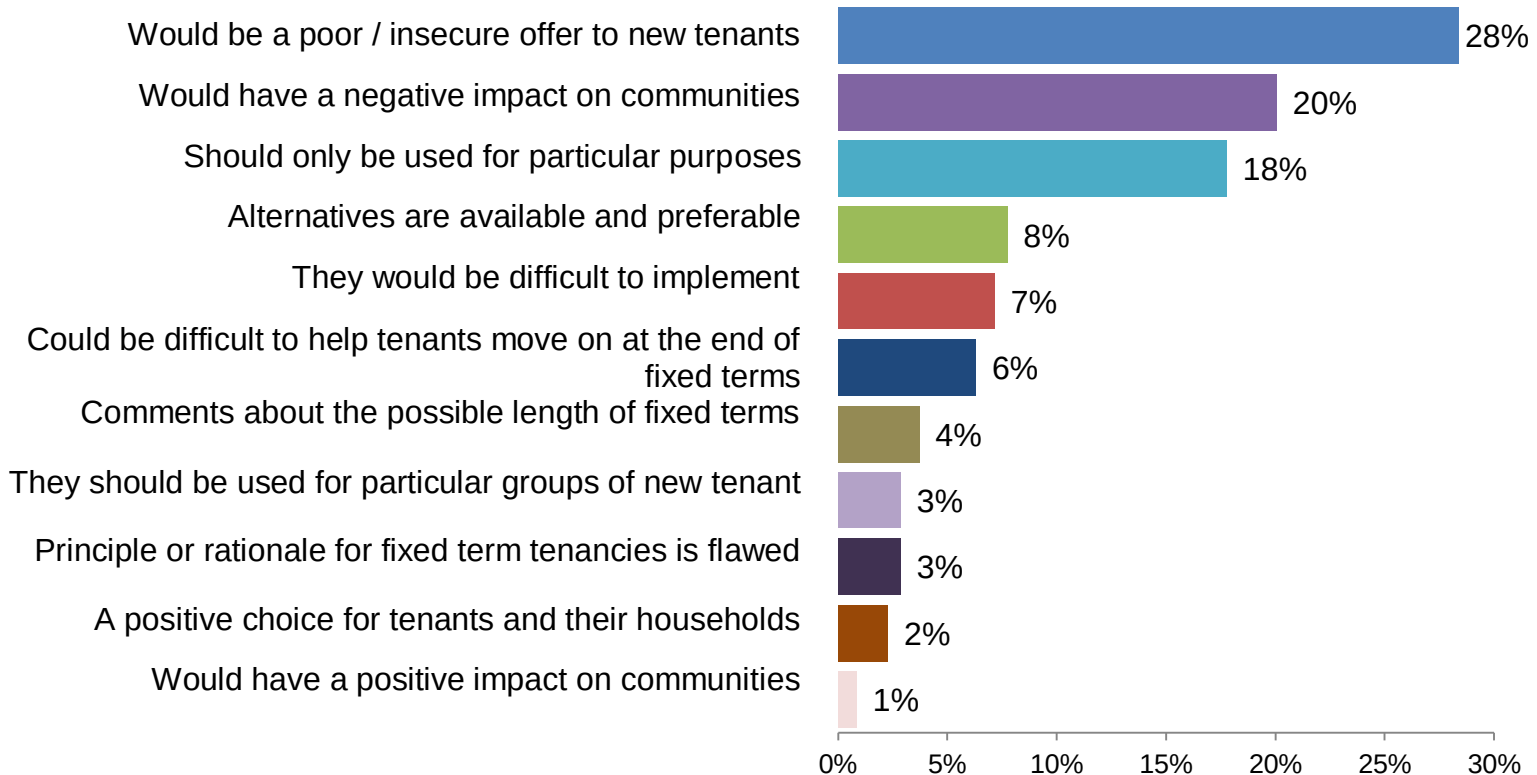


Q3. Is there anything else you would like to say about fixed term tenancies?

Out of 473 respondents, 248 made further comments about fixed term tenancies. Of the people who made comments, similar proportions of them had said no (42%), maybe (23%), or yes (35%) to fixed term tenancies compared to the proportions of all respondents. However, few of the comments supported

fixed term tenancies, except in particular situations. Only 3% of comments gave clear support to fixed term tenancies.

An analysis of all the comments identified 11 categories. The range and frequency of comments are summarised in the chart below.



Q4. Should the Council allow people other than spouses, civil partners and couples living together as if they are a spouse or civil partner to inherit a Council tenancy after the tenant dies?

All respondents answered this question. Over two thirds (69%) said the Council should allow people other than spouses, civil partners and couples living together to inherit a Council tenancy after the tenant dies.

Yes
69%

No
31%

People who said 'the Council **should** allow others to inherit a Council home' were more likely to be*:

- Aged 85+ (100%)
- Council tenants (85%)
- Housing association tenants (79%)
- Female (78%)
- Disabled (78%)
- A household with children / pregnancy (78%)
- Aged 55-59 (77%)
- Aged 45-54 (75%)

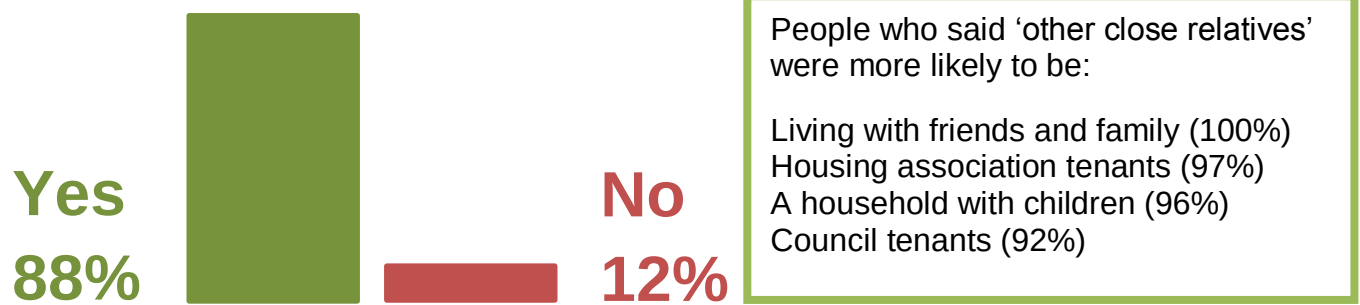
People who said 'the Council should **not** allow others to inherit a Council home' were more likely to be*:

- Home owners (67%)
- Shared home owners (60%)
- Living in private rented accommodation (53%)
- Male (44%)
- White British (43%)
- Council leaseholders (43%)
- Aged 16-24 (43%)
- Aged 60-64 (41%)
- Aged 74-85 (39%)
- A household without children (39%)

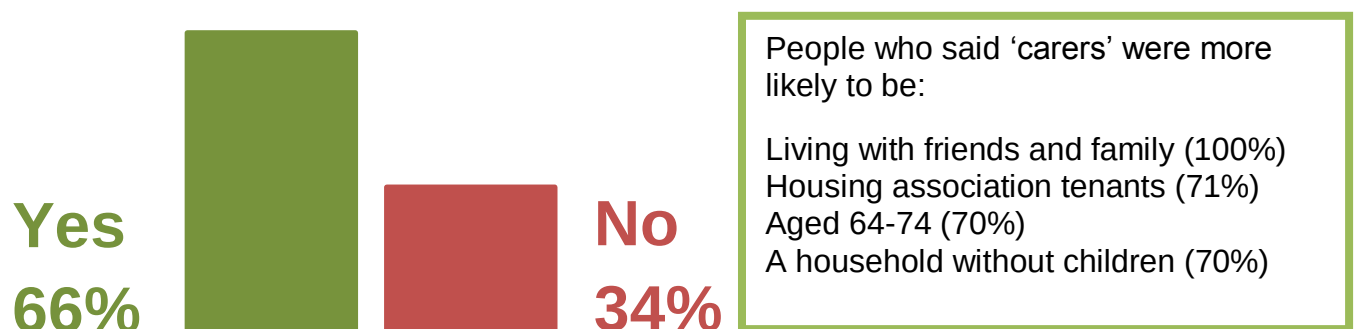
Q5. If yes, who should be able to inherit a Council tenancy?

Respondents who said the Council should allow other people to inherit a Council tenancy were asked who, from a list of four possibilities, they thought should or should not inherit a Council tenancy. There was broad support for all the possible groups, but particularly other close relatives (88%) and people who would have had a legal right to inherit had a succession not already taken place (79%). Around two thirds felt that carers (66%) and other people on the tenancy agreement (64%) should be allowed to inherit.

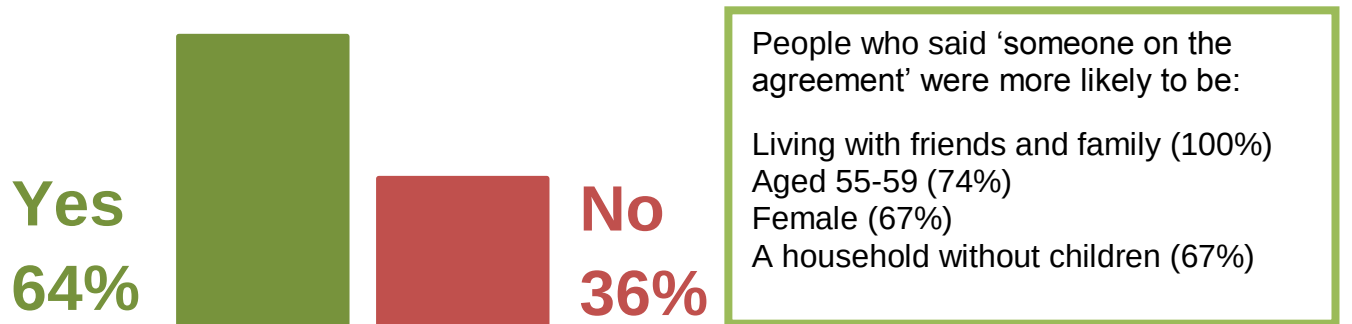
Other close relatives (317 respondents)



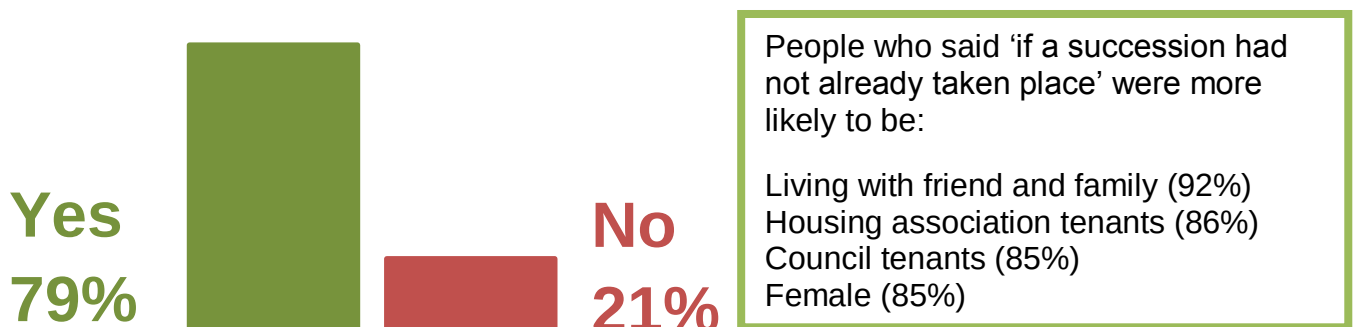
Carers (246 respondents)



Someone listed on the agreement but who is not a close family member (248 respondents)

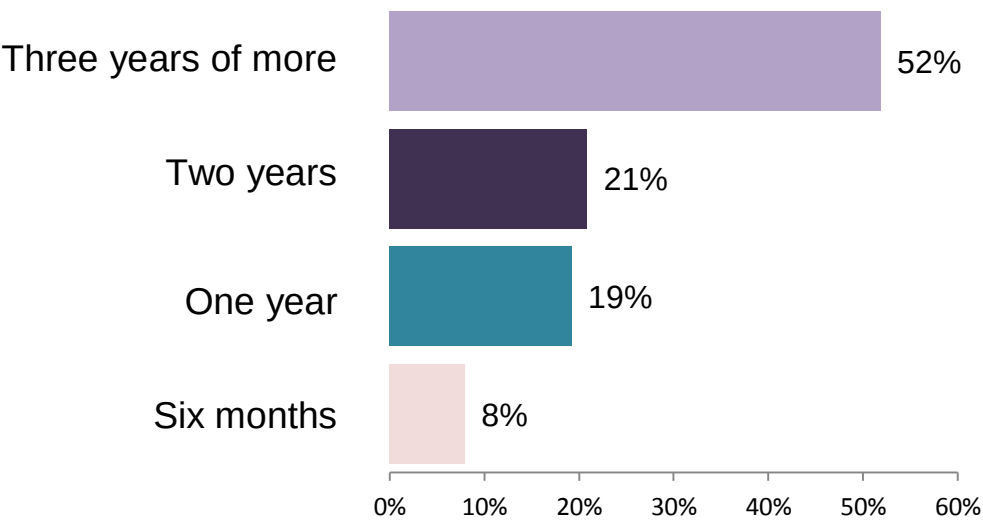


People who would have had a legal right to inherit the tenancy if a succession had not already taken place (265 respondents)



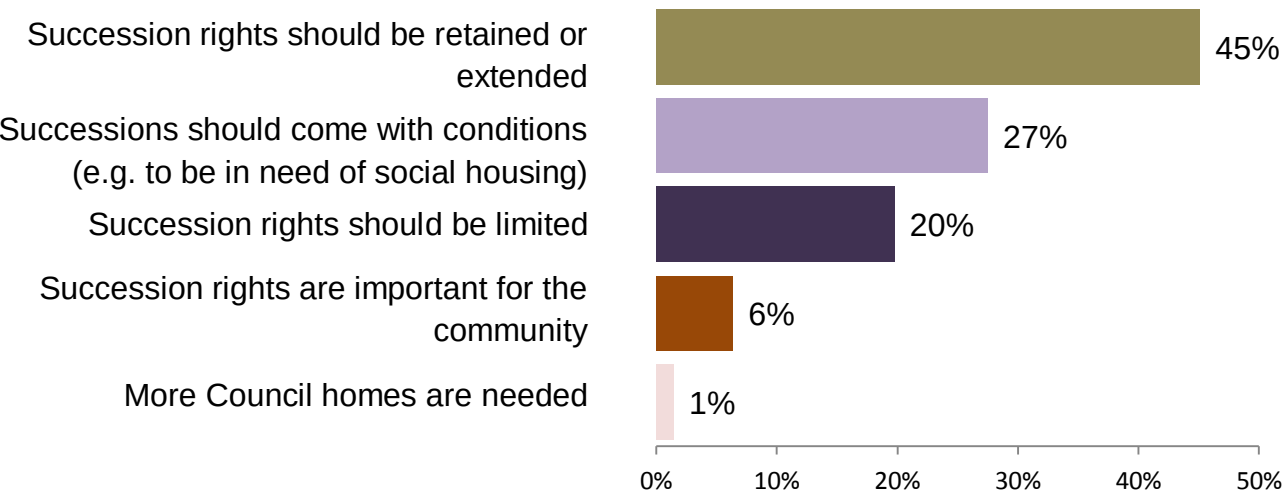
Q6. Apart from spouses, civil partners and couples living together as a spouse or civil partner, what length of time do you think people who inherit a tenancy should have lived with the tenant before their death?

More than half of respondents (52%) thought people should have lived with the tenant for three years or more before the tenant’s death to inherit a tenancy. A further fifth (21%) thought they should have lived there for two years. Only a fifth (19%) thought that one year was enough and few (8%) thought six months. Broadly speaking, all the different groups of respondents favoured longer lengths of time. However, council tenants, housing association tenants, males, and people aged 16 – 34, were more likely to sponsor shorter periods of time of up to a year.



Q7. Is there anything else you would like to say about who should inherit a Council tenancy?

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the comments were left by those that said the Council should allow people other than spouses and partners to inherit a Council tenancy. Unsurprisingly, the comments were mainly in support of retaining or extending succession rights. Those that weren’t in support mainly suggested limiting rights to make sure Council housing is lived in by those that need it.



Conference

Wearecamden.org

Other views submitted

The right people in the right homes – housing conference

We held a conference on Saturday 23 June at Arlington House in Camden Town. The theme 'Right people in the right homes' was taken from a chapter in the Council's Housing Strategy 2011-16. The conference was used to promote participation in the survey and the idea of fixed term tenancies was raised during presentations and workshops. 98% of participants said they enjoyed the conference and 88% said that had a chance to share their point of view. **There was no clear support expressed for the use of fixed term tenancies.**

Responding to presentations from three speakers, participants said:

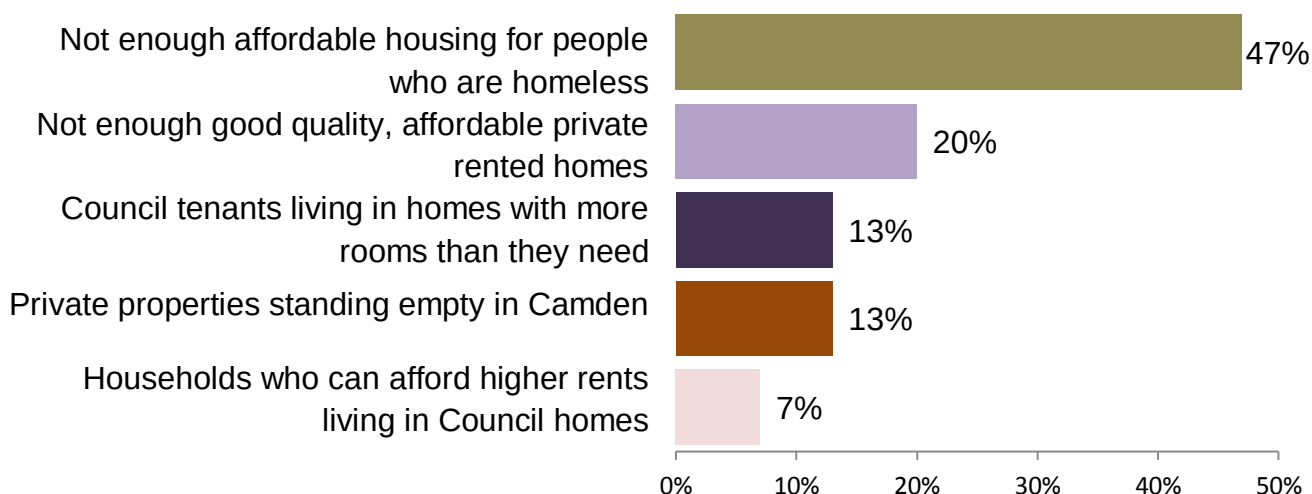
- The introduction of fixed term tenancies would represent a regrettable shift towards means testing for affordable housing
- The tenure of respondents should be taken into account in analysing responses to the 'Is a Council home for life?' survey

Suggestions from workshop participants included:

- Council tenants should be allowed to under-occupy
- Do not remove security of tenure for new tenants

The right people in the right homes – We are Camden

We hosted an online consultation forum on the Council's social networking site 'We are Camden'. The page signposted people to our survey, raised topics for discussion and posted footage of our conference. 116 individuals accessed the page between 5 July and 17 August 2012. 30 people responded to our online poll – **which of these issues do you think have the most impact on the availability of affordable homes for people who need them in Camden?**



Other views submitted during the consultation period

Views submitted by residents

Nine residents did not complete the survey but submitted comments.

On fixed term tenancies

Some acknowledged that fixed term tenancies could increase the number of Council homes available to let, but only a couple were supportive of their use, one on the grounds it was unfair for Council tenants to be guaranteed security and cheap rents while many middle income households were unable to afford housing in Camden. The need for stable communities and security for individuals were themes that recurred in comments opposing fixed term tenancies. A number of respondents recommended building more affordable housing as a preferable means of increasing its supply.

On succession

Views were fairly evenly divided in favour of and against additional rights. One opponent described the notion of inheriting a Council property as “ridiculous” and another argued that homes should always be allocated in line with need. Support for additional rights tended to be conditional upon these being extended only to children who had lived with the deceased tenant for a long period of time.

Views submitted by Ossulston TRA

One Tenant and Resident Association submitted comments on behalf of its members.

On fixed term tenancies

Ossulston TRA opposed the possibility of fixed term tenancies on the grounds that they would not benefit local communities because “Secure tenancies develop a sense of belonging and stability.” They also commented that they considered fixed term tenancies most suitable for key workers for the duration of their careers.

On succession

The TRA expressed the view that, in addition to partners, other close relatives should be allowed to inherit a Council tenancy.

Other views submitted during the consultation period

Views of the Corporate Parenting Group

The Council's Corporate Parenting Group, which considers how the Council can best fulfil its responsibilities towards children in its care, made comments at one of their regular meetings.

On fixed term tenancies

The group did not regard fixed term tenancies as an effective way of tackling unmet housing need among (prospective) foster carers, although were less opposed to their use for new foster carers than for those with a track record of caring who would care for additional children if they had a larger home. In addition to general concerns about the supply of suitable smaller accommodation if carers were asked to downsize when they ceased to foster, the group suggested that it would be unfair for fixed term tenancies to be used only for foster carers, while tenants whose natural children had left home could remain in their homes. The group were strongly supportive of the introduction, through the Council's Allocations Scheme, of a quota of larger social homes for foster carers. They also suggested that the risks attached to letting larger homes to prospective foster carers who might, in a very small number of cases, not go ahead with fostering could be better addressed through a tenancy clause that provided for termination if the tenant(s) had not gone ahead with fostering by a specific point in time – something that could be explored as part of a review of the Council's tenancy conditions.

Views submitted by Learning Disability Service Users Reference Group (SURGe)

SURGe is made up of a group of Learning Disability Service Users that meet regularly to discuss a range of issues about Council service provision.

On fixed term tenancies

75% of attendees voiced the view that the Council should not use fixed term tenancies and 25% said that they were unsure. The group made the following observations:

- If fixed term tenancies were adopted with review criteria related to income, those asked to move on might struggle to afford the much higher costs of market housing – especially over time, given that their incomes would not necessarily be secure in the current economic climate.

Other views submitted during the consultation period

- Many tenants retain responsibilities to adult children, who may need to return to their parents' home because of unemployment or problems with their accommodation arrangements. Requiring tenants to downsize after their children first left home would make fulfilling these difficult.
- Being part of a stable community is valuable and can bring particular benefits for those with learning disabilities, who may be at greater risk of bullying if their neighbours do not know them.
- Those with learning disabilities and, potentially, those who are vulnerable for other reasons, such as mental illness, may struggle to cope with the insecurity that fixed term tenancies would create or with having to move if their tenancies were terminated. So using them for such groups would be especially undesirable.

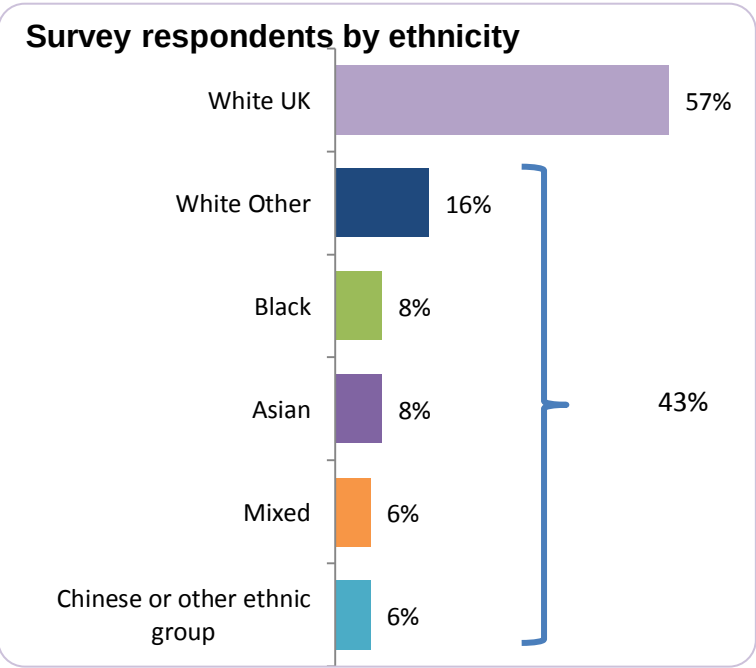
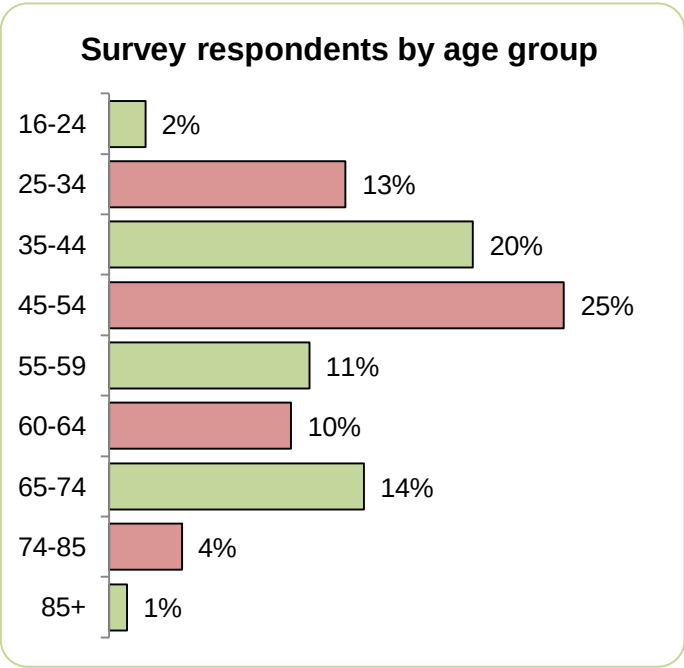
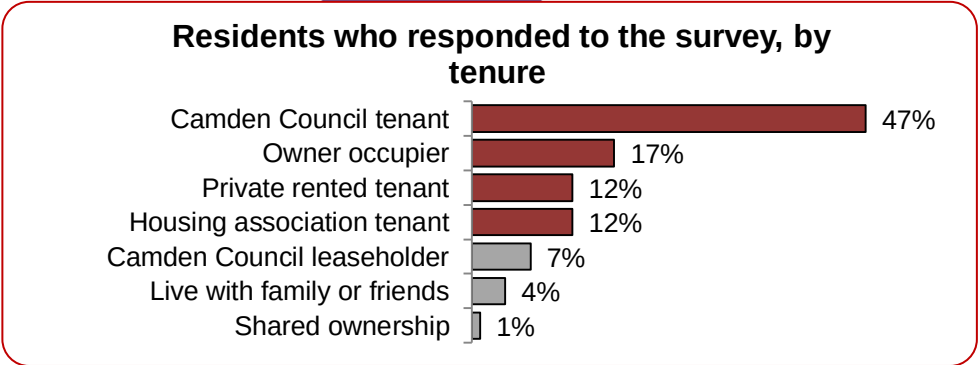
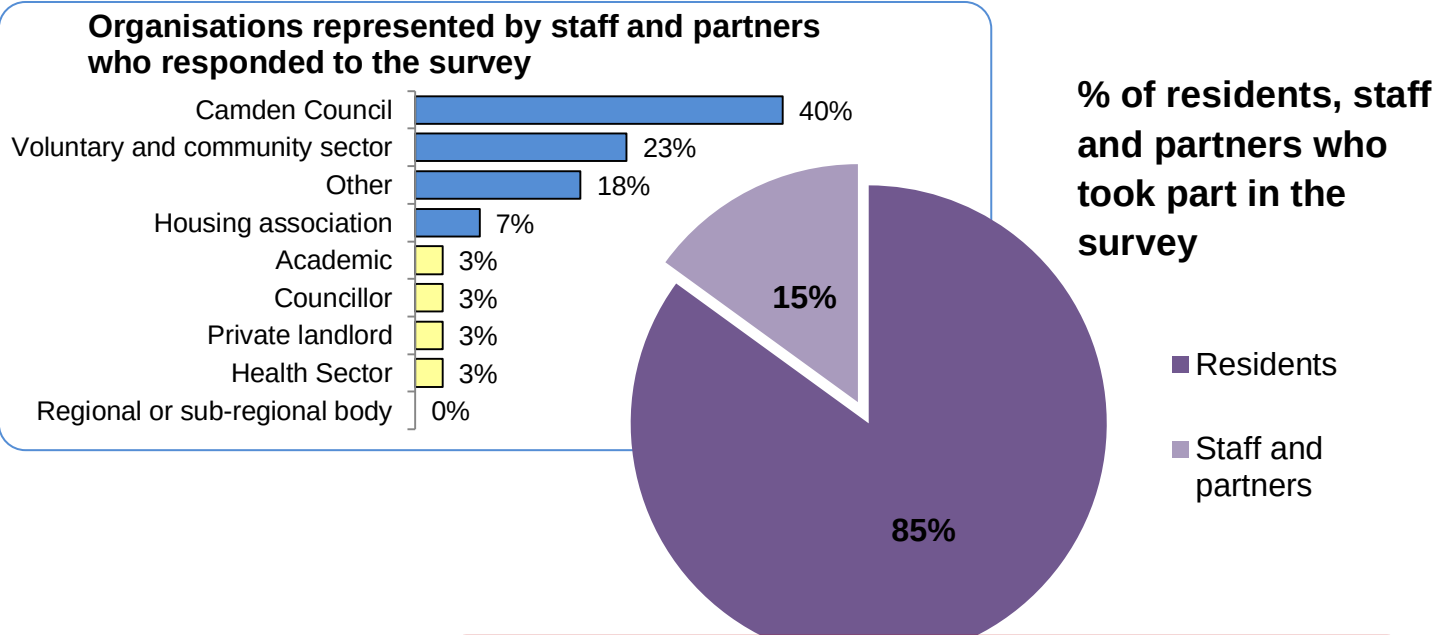
On succession

75% of attendees said that those other than partners should be able to inherit a Council tenancy, 12.5% that they should not and 12.5% that they were unsure.

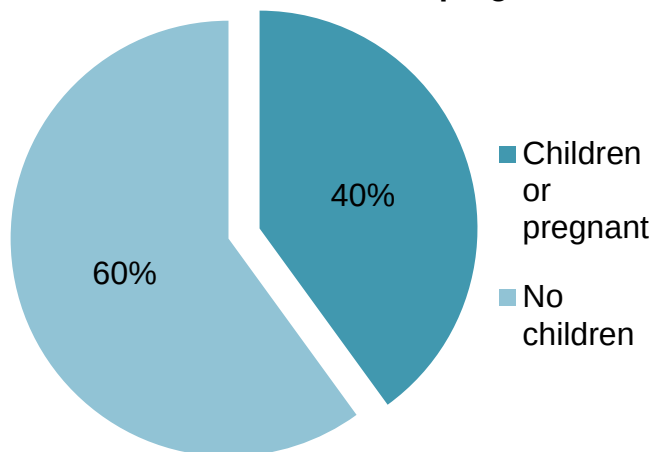
The two key considerations shaping these views were:

- a sense that allowing discretionary and grant of tenancy successions provides security for potential successors, and
- concern that alternative accommodation within Camden would be unaffordable to those who have, to date, been able to succeed.

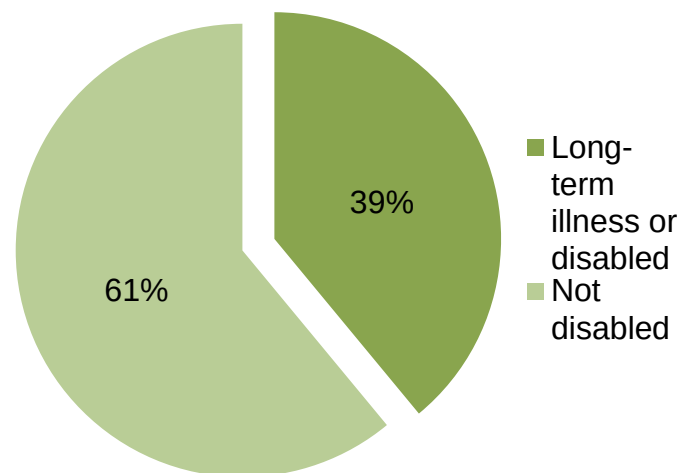
Appendix: Part one - Survey respondents



% of respondents living with children or pregnant



% of respondents disabled



NB: 204 respondents were unable to answer this question due to a fault

Appendix: Part two – Conference participants

Background		% invitees	% invitees who booked	% attendees
Council tenants from TRAs (including CASP), the Active Tenant and Resident Panel, the Housing Needs Register and Camden Talks		20.7	30.4	32.3
Housing Needs Register applicants (in addition to tenants on HNR)	general (various tenures)	8.7	3.5	2.2
	overcrowded or under-occupying (various tenures)	17.5	13.5	5.4
	homeless households in temporary accommodation	6.1	3.5	1.1
Housing Association tenants registered with 'We are Camden'		4.2	7.0	10.8
Private tenants (Private Renting Scheme tenants, Camden Federation of Private Tenants members and those registered with 'We are Camden')		18.2	17.5	16.1
Housing Benefit claimants of all tenures		9.6	0	1.1
Owner occupiers registered with 'We are Camden'		3.2	0.6	1.1
Council leaseholders from TRAs (including CASP and the Leaseholder Forum), the Active Tenant and Resident Panel and 'We are Camden'		5.6	8.2	7.5
Housing Association staff (including supported accommodation providers)		3.5	5.8	4.3
Private landlords		0.2	1.8	1.1
Councillors		1.7	1.2	2.2
Other local authorities		0.3	0	0
Voluntary and community sector and specialist housing organisations		0.4	7.0	11.8
Unknown		0	0	3.2