

ASSISTED TRANSFER SCHEME

Introduction

The council aims to make best use of the housing stock and the Assisted Transfer Scheme is to encourage tenants who are under occupying their council homes to downsize to smaller accommodation.

The scheme is discretionary and the final decision on an assisted transfer must be made by the Neighbourhood and Enforcement Manager or the Exceptional Circumstances Panel (as appropriate). There is a limited annual budget for the scheme and therefore any possible financial assistance under the scheme will be conditional on the availability of funds in the allocated budget. This scheme is therefore discretionary on a number of factors, including budget availability.

The scheme is specifically targeted towards pensioner households who are under occupying family homes. A cash incentive may be offered to such households if they are willing to downsize to smaller accommodation. This incentive is further enhanced if a move to sheltered accommodation is accepted.

Overview – key facts

- Targeted towards pensioner households
- Incentive amount linked to property demand
- Enhanced allowance to move to sheltered accommodation
- Tenants of working age eligible for consideration of downsizing support allowance only
- Subject to budget availability and other tenancy conditions being satisfied

Downsizing Support Allowance

For non pensioner households who are under occupying their homes financial assistance will be a maximum downsizing support allowance of £500 towards the cost of removal expenses and associated costs. Tenants of working age and on housing benefit who are under occupying their homes will be included in this category. However, for all households affected by the under occupation penalty (or bedroom tax) the maximum allowance of £500 will also apply if downsizing to smaller accommodation is the result of a mutual exchange or a transfer.

This scheme seeks to provide financial assistance to tenants affected by the under-occupation penalty (bedroom tax) and who are seeking to move to smaller accommodation and not be under occupied as defined by the housing benefit rules. The Trust will take a considered approach to sanctioning a move for tenants in arrears who are affected by the under occupation penalty but any outstanding

arrears would have to be agreed to be repaid as a former tenant debt prior to any authorization being made. This could also become a specific condition of any new tenancy agreement granted.

Eligibility

Secure tenants with a 'live' housing transfer application registered are eligible to apply for the Assisted Transfer Scheme, providing that no overcrowding would be caused by the move and no children under 16 years would be living in a flat as a result. The tenant must also be registered for a mutual exchange (except for those wishing to move into sheltered accommodation only)

An applicant would only be able to use the Assisted Transfer scheme once. It would not be permitted, for example, for a tenant to move into a series of successfully smaller properties using the scheme.

Non-secure tenants are not eligible for the Assisted Transfer Scheme.

Assistance with Moving

Normally a straight cash payment is made to the tenant but he or she may negotiate with the Housing Support Officer (Home Mover) for removal arrangements to be made on their behalf. This would include liaison with appropriate utility companies etc. and support with moving into the new home. In this situation the removal costs would be deducted from the incentive payment.

Tenants Requesting Aids and Adaptations

If a tenant requires an expensive aid or adaptation, and particularly if their property is under-occupied, Neighbourhood Housing staff should work closely with the Welfare Services team to consider jointly whether the tenant could instead benefit from an assisted transfer.

Factors Influencing Priorities

Some types of property are harder to let than others – for example sheltered units, including one bedroom flats (or even bungalows) for older people. Conversely the demand for family homes and General Needs single person accommodation is always consistently high.

To reflect this, incentive sums reflect the 'desirability' of the property against demand for the property to which the tenant would be prepared to move. (*See table below.*)

Scheme priorities may change over time and will be subject to annual review by the Head of Housing Management.

Applicants with Rent Arrears

Unless there are exceptional circumstances any outstanding arrears and/or tenancy related debts will prevent a move from being authorized.

However, if a move is sanctioned for a tenant in arrears, the financial assistance will be offset against these before any payment can be made direct to the tenant.

If arrears recovery has progressed beyond court order stage the Head of Housing Management will consider whether a move can be sanctioned or not. Unless there are exceptional circumstances any outstanding arrears and/or tenancy related debts will prevent a move from being authorized.

Properties in Poor or Unsatisfactory Condition

Unless there are exceptional circumstances any properties in poor or unsatisfactory condition, particularly as a result of unauthorized works or improvements, will prevent a move from being authorized.

However, if a move is sanctioned for a tenant whose property is in poor or unsatisfactory condition, it may be possible to offset the incentive, or part of it, against the cost of the work required.

When the keys to the property have been returned, an inspection of the property will be carried out by the Neighbourhood Housing Officer. Providing the property is in a satisfactory condition, payment would be made after this.

However, if the property is in poor condition and a decorations allowance would have to be made to the next tenant - or it would be necessary for rechargeable work to be carried out during the void period - the cost of this would be deducted from the incentive amount. A cheque for any outstanding sum would then be made payable to the former tenant.

PROPERTY TYPES AND INCENTIVE AMOUNTS

Applicants of pensionable age willing to downsize to smaller general needs accommodation		
Property Tenant currently has	Property Tenant would move to	Incentive amount
Four bed house or larger	Two bed flat	£2,500.00
Four bed house or larger	One bed flat	£3,000.00
Three bed house	Two bed flat	£2,000.00

Three bed house	One bed flat	£2,500.00
Two bed house	One bed flat	£1,500.00
Two bed flat	One bed flat	£1,000.00
Applicants of pensionable age willing to move into sheltered accommodation		
Four bed house or larger	Two bed bungalow	£2,000.00
Four bed house or larger	One bed bungalow	£3,500.00
Four bed house or larger	Two bed flat	£3,500.00
Four bed house or larger	One bed flat	£4,000.00
Three bed house	Two bed bungalow	£1,500.00
Three bed house	One bed bungalow	£2,500.00
Three bed house	Two bed flat	£3,000.00
Three bed house	One bed flat	£3,500.00
Two bed house	Two bed bungalow	£1,000.00
Two bed house	One bed bungalow	£1,500.00
Two bed house	Two bed flat	£2,500.00
Two bed house	One bed flat	£3,000.00
Two bed flat	Two bed flat	£1,000.00
Two bed flat	One bed flat	£1,500.00