

## **Appendix A: Draft Under-Occupation Policy: Moving to a smaller home.**

### **Background**

The Council is committed to offering council tenants the security of a long-term settled home through a life-time tenancy. This can though lead to many tenants in larger family-sized homes having rooms they no longer want or need after their family members move out.

This policy sets out the support it can offer to tenants who want to move to a smaller and more manageable home - and release their existing home for a new family.

### **The Council's offer**

To support tenants who wish to move to a smaller home, the Council will.

- **Give a high priority on the housing register to social tenants who want to move to a smaller home, as set out in the Housing Allocations Policy.**

This is currently Band A (the highest priority band)

- **Provide a dedicated officer to support tenants in their move to a smaller home.**

Moving can be a stressful time and especially for those moving from a long-established family home to a smaller home.

The Council will therefore

- Provide a dedicated officer who will guide and support applicants through the process.
  - Explain the moving allowance available and how they might use this.
  - Where needed, offer practical support as they move.
  - Provide advice on moving options including both moves within Haringey and (where applicable) other schemes such as the Seaside and Country Homes scheme.
- **Annually review the moving allowances available to support tenants moving to smaller home.**

It is important that incentives and moving allowances retain their value and relevance.

The Council will therefore

- Annually review the moving allowances each April as part of the annual budget setting process to maximise the effectiveness of the payment levels.
  - Annually review the ratio and structure of the incentives to take into account the shortfall of particular property sizes.
- **Allow flexibility on how this money can be used to support individual needs.**

The Council will

- Work with applicants to tailor the services or items they need through the moving allowance to remove obstacles to their move. Within the allocated budget, these might include extra support, moving services, white goods, or additional decorations. These options will be explained, discussed, and accessed via the dedicated officer.

The officer will advise the tenant on how best to maximise this incentive to facilitate their move.

- **Where possible, maximise the time people have when deciding to move to a smaller home.**

Tenants moving to a smaller home frequently need more time to clear their existing home and often value more time to move.

The Council will, where possible,

- aim to offer early viewings of properties or showrooms as early in the process to maximise the decision time.

While this will not always be possible where it will affect void times, this is not always the case and especially with new build homes.

- **Development of a database of property features and the needs and wants of each tenant seeking to move to a smaller home. This will allow the Council to alert them to available properties meeting these criteria.**

Each tenant will have their own preferences – some may be very broad (e.g. the number of bedrooms) but others may want particular floor levels or specific streets.

The Council will

- provide a dedicated officer who will advise applicants on how often these properties might become available so they can make an informed decision on whether to wait for their ideal home or if they wish to widen their search to increase their chances of moving.

If their selected choices make the chances of a suitable home rare, it is unrealistic for applicants to look every week to see if any of the advertised properties meet these criteria.

- Create a database of their needs and alert the applicant when suitable properties are available.

- **Allow adult children with succession rights to the current tenancy to retain succession-like rights if they move to a smaller home with the tenant.**

This will only apply to an adult child who.

- currently has succession rights, and
- is moving with the tenant to a smaller home and on the new tenancy agreement, and

- where this has been confirmed by the Council at the time of the move.

The offer will not override the succession rights of partners or joint tenants who have the primary right to succession.

Any offers would be made on a discretionary basis under a “offer of tenancy” and will be subject to the same qualification criteria as would have applied to their current succession rights. The offer may be of a smaller home if the new (smaller) property is too large for them.

This would not give succession rights to children who do not have such rights in the current home. For instance, where the tenancy commenced after 31 March 2012, for joint tenancies or where the current tenancy has been subject to a succession or assignment.

- **Work with Housing Associations to support their tenants to move.**

Prior to the introduction of this policy, the Council and the Housing Associations in the borough each had their own incentive schemes.

The Council will

- Work with Housing Associations to develop a more unified approach.

- **Develop a Council-wide approach to supporting tenants to move to smaller accommodation and to ensure tenants are aware of their options.**

This would include advising tenants of the option to move when their current home becomes unsuitable, for example where adaptations to their existing property may not be the most suitable or appropriate long-term option.

- **Re-launch of the offer to tenants moving to smaller homes.**

It is important that the Council’s offer is clear to tenants and that it is promoted to ensure that residents and colleagues are aware of the options.

The Council will

- Development of our webpages
- Advertising to ensure that as many tenants are aware of the offer and support, they can get if they wish to move to a smaller home.
- Promote Seaside and Country Homes scheme which allows older tenants to move outside the Capital.

- **Promote and support Mutual Exchange.**

A Mutual Exchange is where two existing social tenants agree to swap their home. This can be a complex process.

The Council will

- Support tenants through the Mutual Exchange process.
- Pay incentives if the tenant is swapping with someone who is overcrowded.

