

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Support with Moving Policy

Review due:

1. Introduction

1.1 The demand for Council housing in Runnymede outweighs the supply. It is essential to make the best use of the social housing stock. This in turn should help the wider housing agenda of reducing problems of overcrowding and homelessness.

1.2 Under occupation arises where a household lives in a property that is deemed too large for its needs. For example where tenants have been allocated a home based on their children being part of the household but as the children have grown up and left the property is then considered larger than the tenants' need.

1.3 The Government introduced the "Social Sector Size Criteria", colloquially referred to as the 'bedroom tax'. This means a reduction in housing benefits for tenants of social housing where they are classed as having any spare bedrooms. Therefore, many social housing tenants who are under occupying are required to pay for additional rooms or consider moving to another property. This measure does not apply to people of pensionable age.

2. Aim

2.1 To aim of this policy is to:

- Promote our Support for Moving Policy, and the incentives we can provide
- Ensure tenants occupy a home that suits their needs including adaptation
- Increase accessibility to the scheme
- Set out the eligibility criteria
- Make best use of housing stock by assisting as many people as possible to move
- Reduce the number of tenants who are under occupying council homes
- Identify households who are under occupying and support a move at the earliest suitable opportunity so that the downsizer can live in accommodation suitable for their needs
- Outline financial support available

3. Eligibility

3.1 To qualify for the scheme applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- Hold a secure tenancy with Runnymede Borough Council
- Under occupy their home by at least one bedroom. Tenants will not be eligible for assistance if under occupation has occurred as a result of making former household members homeless
- No housing related debt with Runnymede Council. This is current/former rent arrears, council tax arrears, use and occupation charges, overpaid housing benefit, outstanding court costs, rechargeable repairs, and repayable rent deposits. If there is a housing related debt it is the manager's discretion whether the Support with Moving payment can be used to clear this.
- Kept to the terms of tenancy agreement
- Not subject to any legal proceedings for breach of tenancy conditions
- Give vacant possession of current home
- Have maintained their home in a satisfactory condition
- Want to move to another Council or Housing Association property in Runnymede

- Where Runnymede Borough Council requires a household who require an adaptation to move to an alternative property – they can qualify for ‘downsizing’ incentive payments
- Secure tenants living in an adapted property can qualify for an incentive payment to move home.

3.2 The following tenants are excluded from the downsizing scheme:

- Tenants moving through mutual exchange
- Fixed-term tenants who are required to move to a smaller property upon renewal of their tenancy
- Tenants moving from one bedroom to a studio property
- Tenants subject to a Possession order or who have been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession for anti-social behaviour.
- Tenants subject to anti-social behaviour proceedings
- Tenants who have not maintained their garden will not receive an incentive to move to another property with a garden.

3.3 Those who do not meet the eligibility criteria for this Support with Moving scheme but are still under occupying their property may still apply for a transfer and mutual exchange.

4. Incentives

4.1 The Council recognise that the idea of moving home can be daunting, and the Council will provide support where appropriate.

4.2 The financial incentive will depend on the size of the property being vacated

Number of rooms giving up	Incentive up to a maximum of	Authorisation level
One bedroom	Ten times weekly rent	Manager
Two bedrooms	Fifteen times weekly rent	Manager
Three bedrooms	Eighteen times weekly rent	Corporate Head of Housing
Move due to adaptation required	The statutory home loss payment	Corporate Head of Housing & Head of Housing Services & Business Planning

4.3 Payments are to support the household to successfully downsize or to move out of an adapted property.

5. Payments

5.1 We aim to make payments within 28 days of the start of the new tenancy if all the necessary information is available.

5.2 Payments to tenants with a new social landlord, cannot be made without confirmation from the landlord of the number of bedrooms in their new home.

5.3 Payments will be made to the tenant. Only in exceptional circumstances, with prior written reasoning would the payment be made to anyone else.

6. Practical Support

6.1 Where a tenant does not have a support network or the capability to manage a move themselves additional support can be provided.

6.2 A multi-agency approach will be taken, working with Adult Social Care and any agencies that are already engaged with the resident to access practical support for them.

6.3 Housing staff can help to arrange removals, carpets, cooker reconnection etc for the tenant. Subject to a means test an application can be submitted by the Area Housing Manager to the Housing Discretionary Hardship Fund or charities, if necessary, for instance, if they do not have the capital for floor coverings and these cannot be relocated.

6.4 Independent Retirement Living properties are let in good decorative order so if a resident does not have the funds or ability to carry out redecoration, they will be advised to apply for an IRL property.

7. Complaints

7.1 Complaints about the quality of service, the behaviour of staff or failure to adhere to this policy should be made in line with the Housing Complaints Policy

8. Monitoring and performance management

8.1 We aim to review this policy in three years to ensure it reflects current legislation and the latest examples of best practices.

8.2 The Area Housing Manager will coordinate incentive payments and record who incentives have been given to on NEC Housing in order to monitor the effectiveness of this policy and identify whether the incentives have resulted in more moves.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1 In producing this document an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out.

9.2 An EIA is a way of assessing the impact, or likely impact, that a particular policy, procedure or decision will have on particular groups. This is used to assess whether in making the decision whether the Council has complied with its public sector equality duty under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 (as amended) to; eliminate discrimination and any other conduct that is prohibited under this act and to advance equality between those who share a protected characteristic.

9.3 The screening found that a full impact assessment was not required.

10. Related strategies/Documents

Housing Complaints Policy
Decants Policy
Tenancy Strategy
Mutual Exchange Policy
Disabled Adaptations Policy

11. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1	August 2022	First draft reformatted and updated with comments		Luisa Cantore-Norris	