



Transfer Incentive Scheme (Tenants) Policy

Reviewed August 2019
Revisions March 2021

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| Title | Transfer Incentive Scheme (Tenants) |
| Users of Policy | Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes Officers |
| Date Adopted | 21 May 2014 |
| Date last Reviewed | August 2019 |
| Review Frequency | Upon a relevant change of legislation, or in response to a change of relevant CBC Policy, in particular the Allocations Policy. Or every 3 years |
| Best Before Date | August 2022 (or before, see above) |
| Scheme Delegation | |
| Formation of Policy | Portfolio Holder(s) with delegated responsibility for Housing and the financial management of the Housing Revenue Account |
| Amendments | Portfolio Holder(s) with delegated responsibility for Housing and the financial management of the Housing Revenue Account |
| Monitoring | Housing Client Co-ordinator |
| Implementation | Colchester Borough Homes Housing Management |
| Approval of Policy | The Council's Representative delegated to the Director of Housing |

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to assist tenants who have a right to remain in their home but live in a property that is bigger than their housing need to move to a smaller home.
- 1.2 The policy will also contribute to the Councils objective to make 'best use of stock' by encouraging:
 - the release of high demand family size accommodation
 - tenants to move to homes that match their housing need
 - the release of larger homes for those in priority need on the Housing Register.
- 1.3 The policy also seeks to set out the assistance available and the eligibility for that assistance under the transfer incentive policy.

2. Legislation and Guidance

- 2.1 **The Housing Act 1985** gives guidance on when a Secure Tenant can be asked to leave their home. A Secure tenant can only be asked to leave their home if the Landlord obtains an Order for Possession from the court. The Order must be based on the grounds which are set out in the 1985 Housing Act.

- 2.2 **Schedule 2 Part 1V Housing Act 1985** gives guidance on offering suitable alternative accommodation.
- 2.3 The Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy –identifies the banding structure for applicants on the housing register and the priority given to tenants who want to move to a smaller home.
- 2.4 The Council's Succession Policy identifies those that are legally able to succeed to a tenancy.

3. The Policy

3.1 Tenants transferring through the housing needs register

A tenant who wishes to transfer may be eligible for an incentive payment under the Transfer Incentive Scheme if:

- They are a secure Colchester Borough Council (CBC) Tenant (excluding eligible successors) of a general needs home property with 2 or more bedrooms, and;
- They are moving into a property within the Gateway to Homechoice sub-regional area which includes Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid-Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney district Councils that has at least 1 bedroom less and matches their housing need.
- They are not moving from one Sheltered Housing property to another or from Sheltered accommodation to general needs accommodation.
- Moves from a Sheltered Housing property to extra care supported accommodation will be eligible.

3.2 Tenants transferring through a mutual exchange

A tenant who wishes to Mutually Exchange will only be eligible for an incentive payment under the Transfer Incentive Scheme if;

- They are a secure CBC Tenant of a general needs property with 2 or more bedrooms, and;
- They are moving into a property that has at least 1 bedroom less than the property they currently occupy and matches their housing need.
- They are not moving from one Sheltered Housing property to another or from Sheltered accommodation to general needs accommodation.
- They are exchanging into a property that is within the Gateway to Homechoice sub-regional area which includes Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid-Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney district Councils.
- They are exchanging with a tenant who has an assessed need for that size of property and will not be under-occupying it.
- The mutual exchange is completed according to the landlords' policies.

- 3.3 Tenants downsizing through mutual exchange will be eligible for the £1000 payment for the costs of moving, along with a payment for the reduction in bedrooms.
- 3.4 Tenants downsizing from a property with adaptations for their needs will be eligible for the scheme if they transfer into a suitable property for their needs or only minor adaptations as detailed in the Adaptions Policy are required.

4. Details of the Transfer Incentive Scheme

- 4.1 Tenants will be eligible for increased priority in line with the current Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy.
- 4.2 Tenants will also be eligible for payments which help with the costs of moving to a smaller home, along with incentive payments. These payments may total up to £2,750.
- 4.3 A fixed payment of £1000 will be made to help with the reasonable costs of moving to a smaller home. This is expected to contribute to the cost of removals, connection and disconnection of services and requirement to replace carpets and curtains and other items as appropriate.
- 4.4 Where tenants require support to assist them to move home, removals, property or garden clearance, or provision of skip can be arranged, and payment made directly from this payment on the tenant's behalf.
- 4.5 A payment of £1,000 will be available for moving to a property which has one bedroom less and matches the housing need.
- 4.6 A payment of £1,750 will be available for moving to a property which has two bedrooms less and matches the housing need.
- 4.7 Where the tenant has outstanding rent arrears, other debts to the Council or costs for rechargeable repairs, including clearing any goods or rubbish from the vacated property, the total amount will be withheld from the Transfer Incentive package. However, to ensure that there is an incentive to move, there will be a minimum payment of £1,000 even though a tenant may have rent arrears and other CBC debts which amount to more than £2,750. Under these circumstances the tenant will receive the minimum payment of £1,000 but will agree a repayment schedule for the remaining debt.

5. Discretionary payments

- 5.1 Some tenants who succeed to the tenancy of the property may be required to move to a smaller property. In these circumstances, a discretionary payment may be made to assist with the costs of moving. This will be to cover reasonable costs of moving to a maximum of £1,000 rather than providing any incentive payments.

- 5.2 Other tenants who are required to move to a smaller property, for example, those qualifying for priority under the Allocations Policy due to a relationship breakdown, or tenants who no longer need to live in fully adapted homes, may also be offered a discretionary payment to cover the costs of moving to a maximum of £1,000.
- 5.3 Tenants that are eligible for the discretionary payment above will be required to pay any outstanding arrears, other debts to the Council or costs for rechargeable repairs, including clearing any rubbish from the vacated property as described in 4.7.

6. Appeals Procedure

- 6.1 Appeals in respect of how the policy has been applied, eligibility for the payment and the award amount will be reviewed under Colchester Borough Homes' complaints procedure.

7. Service Standards

- 7.1 Payment will be made in two stages. The first payment will be a payment upon tenancy start of the £1,000 minimum as detailed in 4.7 of the policy. The balance of any payment due will be paid within 6 weeks of tenancy start.
- 7.2 Move-in visit will be made within 28 days to welcome the new tenant and gather feedback on customer satisfaction with the moving process.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 Colchester Borough Homes will monitor our performance in meeting the Service Standards set out in this policy.
- 8.2 The outcomes of the policy will be reviewed after a year by CBC and CBH. The number of tenants transferring will be reviewed to see if the objectives are being met.
- 8.3 The policy will be reviewed upon a relevant change of legislation, or in response to a change of relevant CBC Policy, in particular the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy.

9. Communicating the Policy to Staff

- 9.1 Managers and staff involved in the implementation of the policy will receive a copy of the policy.
- 9.2 Colchester Borough Homes will provide sufficient training to enable staff to understand and comply with the policy. This will happen one month of adoption of the policy and then on a regular basis particularly following policy review.

- 9.3 A copy of the policy will be available on the Council's website.
- 9.4 A copy of the policy will be available on Colchester Borough Homes' website.

10. Communicating the Policy to Customers

- 10.1 A leaflet providing details of the policy will be available to customers on the CBC and CBH website.
- 10.2 There is an active plan for advertising opportunities for tenants to downsize, for example, articles in tenant magazines. These opportunities will be carried out by Colchester Borough Homes.