

Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS)

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Authorities covered:	Joint - Aligned
Applies to:	<p>This document applies to all staff working for Eastbourne Borough Council and, Lewes District Council.</p> <p>It applies to all tenants living in general needs and retirement accommodation managed by Homes First on behalf of Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council</p>
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Accountable: (Operational Lead)	Liz Martin, Neighbourhood Housing Lead
Consultation:	Tenants and residents of both Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council have been involved in the formulation of this policy via our website and resident groups. Consultation has involved Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council's, Neighbourhood Housing Team.
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Scope

Homes First managing homes on behalf of Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL) and Lewes District Council is offering financial support to Council tenants wishing to downsize to help free up larger family homes. It should be read in conjunction with the council's Allocation Policies, Equality and Fairness Policy and the Repairs and Asset Management Policy.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Homes First in managing homes on behalf of Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL) and Lewes District Council (LDC), who recognise that there is a limited supply of larger sized accommodation and that a number of homes are under-occupied, whilst at the same time there are families living in temporary accommodation, including Bed and Breakfast, and others living in properties which are overcrowded. Homes First also recognize that tenants may be occupying properties that have significant adaptations that they no longer require where we also have a demand. Homes First has therefore adopted a transfer incentive scheme for those under-occupying or in significantly adapted properties to free up some of these properties and maximise the use of the housing stock.
- 1.2 Under this scheme EHL and LDC tenants who give up larger accommodation or significantly adapted properties that we have a high demand for may be eligible for cash incentives and in some cases will be given a higher priority for re-housing in the allocations policy.
- 1.3 No tenant will be forced to move from their home due to under occupation alone.

2.0 Who Is It For?

- 2.1 The Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS) is for EHL and Lewes District Council tenants who have one or more bedrooms they no longer need and are interested in downsizing.
- 2.2 Tenants have the option of transferring to another social housing property.
- 2.3 Tenants who downsize as a result of a mutual exchange.
- 2.4 In exceptional circumstances tenants who express an interest in moving from a home that has significant adaptations that are no longer required, subject to Homes First agreeing a demand for the property.

3.0 Eligibility

3.1 Tenants who meet the following criteria will be eligible for the TIS:

- A tenant of EHL and Lewes District Council who has held a secure tenancy with either Eastbourne or Lewes council for a period of at least one year (this can include the introductory period).
- If your rent account is in arrears, your application to move will be considered by the Head of Homes First.
- If your transfer or exchange is approved under this scheme and your rent account is in arrears then Homes First will use all part or all of the grant if required to clear your rent arrears.
- A tenant who downsizes as part of a mutual change will qualify once their exchange has been formally approved and subject to all parties in the exchange process moving to appropriate sized accommodation with no under occupation.
- A tenant who moves to another social housing property that is smaller, payment will be calculated on the amount of bedrooms downsized, not the amount of bedrooms surrendered.
- A tenant who has a home that has been significantly adapted and no member of the current household requires the adaptations. Tenants would need to move to a property that does not need any further adaptations and that meets their household size as per the allocations policy.

4.0 Ineligibility

4.1 Tenants who meet the following criteria will not be eligible for the TIS:

- A person who is not the tenant of the property being released.
- The tenant has been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession for anti-social behaviour.
- The tenant has been served with a Demotion Notice.
- The tenant has failed to provide the required documentation for their Housing Register Application.
- The tenant holds an Introductory Tenancy or a Non-Secure Tenancy.
- The tenant has previously received a Tenant Incentive Scheme payment.
- The tenant is a successor (following the previous tenant's death) who is under occupying the property and is a family member. This excludes partners or spouses.
- The tenant may not be eligible if they are subject to a court order.
- The tenant is transferring or mutually exchanging to a property with the same number (or more) bedrooms than their current property.
- A tenant whose mutual exchange application has been refused.
- A tenant who downsizes but does not provide vacant possession, ie. leaves another person in occupation at the property.

5.0 Incentive Payments

5.1 A fixed incentive payment will be paid at the following rates to those transferring from larger accommodation to a smaller property.

Current Property Size	New Property Size	Incentive Award
4 bedrooms	Studio	£ 5,000
4 bedrooms	1 bedroom	£ 4,000
3 bedrooms	2 bedrooms	£ 1,000
3 bedrooms	1 bedroom	£ 2,000
2 bedrooms	1 bedroom	£ 1,000
2 bedrooms	Studio	£ 2,000
1 bedroom	Studio	£ 1,000
1 bedroom	1 bedroom (in retirement)	£ 1,000
1 bedroom	Studio (in retirement)	£ 2,000
1 bedroom (in retirement)	Studio (in retirement)	£ 1,000

5.2 In summary TIS will pay £1,000 per bedroom as a result of downsizing, anyone moving from a property with a bedroom to a studio will also be considered as downsizing by one room. An additional £1,000 is available for a tenant who moves to a studio in a retirement housing scheme from a general needs property or to a tenant who is downsizing from a 4 bedroom property to a 2 bedroom or below. This is because the demand for retirement studios is lower and there are more vacancies and the demand for 4 bedroom properties is high as there is a limited number within our stock.

Homes First recognise that removal costs or the costs of new floor coverings can be a consideration to making a move to a smaller property. In addition, TIS will pay or contribute to your removal costs or floor coverings, in line with the amounts below.

Homes First may be able to pay the removal company directly, if it is not possible or you prefer to hire a van and move your items yourself then Homes First will reimburse you for costs up to the amounts below, upon providing a receipt from your removal company or van hire company.

Tenant can opt for money towards replacement floor coverings at the new property instead of removal costs. Costs would be capped at the costs below.

Current Property Size	Payable Removal Expenses (Up to)	Packing Service (if eligible)	Maximum Contribution
4 bedrooms +	£ 1,250	£ 400	£ 1,650
3 bedrooms	£ 850	£ 300	£ 1,150
2 bedrooms	£ 650	£ 250	£ 900
1 bedroom	£ 500	£ 200	£ 700

If a downsizing tenant can demonstrate that they would struggle to pack for a move then costs towards a packing service will also be considered. To qualify for this tenants would need to provide evidence of their disability or need for reasonable adjustment in line with the Equalities Act 2010. This is subject to approval by Homes First.

5.3 Where major adaptations are needed at a property and the property is under occupied, Homes First may be able to offer an incentive over and above the usual Tenant Incentive Scheme allowance in order to support a move to a more suitable property as set out under the Adaptations Policy.

- 5.4 The incentive payments are subject to budget limits. If there are more requests for transfer incentive grants than funding available, Homes First has the discretion to:
- Reduce the amount of payments made through the scheme.
 - Give priority to those moving from accommodation that is more urgently needed.
 - Assist with a transfer in the next financial year.
- 5.5 Homes First will reduce the incentives by:
- The level of rent arrears owed to Homes First at the time of the transfer.
 - Any housing related debts owed to Homes First at the time of transfer; and/or
 - The cost of any work which Homes First has to undertake to the vacated premises as a result of damage or neglect on the part of the tenant, including the cost of any rubbish clearance; and/or
 - Any outstanding court costs.
 - Any removal costs paid in advance.
- 5.6 Payments will be authorised once the tenant has moved, the keys have been returned and an inspection of the vacated property has been carried out. We will aim to make the grant payment within 28 days of confirmation that the tenant is eligible for payment. If there are significant recharges due to the property condition then this schedule may take longer and delay payment, should this be the case you will be notified. Payments will be made by BACs transfer only.
- 5.7 Applicants must be registered on the scheme before a move takes place for a payment to be authorised.

6.0 Applications And Assessment

- 6.1 Applicants who are transferring need to complete a Housing Register Application.
- 6.2 Once a transfer applicant has been accepted onto the scheme they will be given an appropriate priority banding as per the allocations policy and sent details of the size of property they are eligible for as well as their login for the Homes First Lettings scheme to allow them to bid for a suitable sized property. Should an applicant need assistance with bidding for an alternative property then assisted bidding can be requested.
- 6.3 Once a transfer applicant has been successful, or a suitable mutual exchange has been found applicants will need to complete a Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS) application form available from the website or Homes First Neighbourhood Housing team.

7.0 Appeal

Any applicant who has had a request for a Transfer Incentive Payment refused may request that the decision be reviewed. The decision will be reviewed by an officer senior to that which made the original decision and this decision will then be final.

8.0 Equality And Fairness

Home First policies are developed in line with our Equality and Fairness Diversity policy.

9.0 Privacy Statement

Information about how the council uses your personal information and your rights can be found in the Neighbourhood Housing Privacy Notice supplied when you signed up, or we can supply a copy on request. It can also be found on the council's website under the 'Privacy Notices for our range of services' tab [here](#).

10.0 Complaints

Anyone is able to make a complaint about the service they have received and this is managed under our Complaints Policy, information on how to make a complaint is available on our website.

11.0 Monitoring And Accountability

The Homes First management team will oversee the consistent and fair implementation of this policy and will consult with colleagues to ensure timely and accurate updates of the policy.

12.0 Review

We will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every three years or sooner subject to legal, regulatory changes or if internal changes necessitate.