



Incentives policy

Downsizing and leaving your home in a good condition

1.0 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this policy is to outline the incentives we offer to qualifying tenants moving home. Offering incentives is part of our wider objectives to:

- Support tenants to sustain their tenancies
- Make the best use of our housing stock by moving to accommodation most appropriate to their needs and financial circumstances
- Let homes as quickly as possible to those in need of housing.

This policy applies to residents in our general needs and supported housing homes. It does not apply to those who live in keyworker or market rent accommodation or in temporary housing.

2.0 Definitions

Under-occupation: Living in a home deemed too large for the household occupying it.

Downsizing: Moving from an under-occupied home to a smaller one.

Adaptation: Altering of a 'disabling environment to enable independent living.' (Chartered Institute of Housing)

Notice: A requirement set out in all tenancy agreements that the tenant notify us in advance (usually four weeks) of when they intend to permanently leave home.

3.0 Tenancy sustainment

We strive to create tenancies which are sustainable for our tenants. We recognise that the welfare reforms and the size criteria adversely affect some of our tenants and may lead to financial hardship. Tenants affected by the "bedroom tax" may struggle to manage their rent account and sustain their tenancy. The additional financial burden of moving can be a reason for postponing a move or being unable to consider it.

By helping tenants on a low income to move to a more affordable home, we aim to reduce the incidence of failed tenancies and subsequent homelessness. We can signpost residents to partner support agencies to further help them with the costs of moving.

4.0 Make the best use of housing stock

In offering financial incentives to tenants whose home no longer meets their needs, we also aim to make the best use of our housing stock. The high demand for social housing requires us to be proactive and creative in facilitating transfers that will ensure as many people as possible are adequately housed.

By identifying homes that no longer meet the needs of the household that occupies it and offering them practical as well as financial support in moving, we make available a property that can either be occupied by a household who requires it or be used to maximise revenue for the development of new homes.

We are committed to having discussions with residents about how incentives can help them move into a property that meets their housing need. This also helps us make the best use of our housing stock in the most efficient way. We will promote options to move such as mutual exchange and transfer (downsizing).

5.0 Reduced time that a property stands empty

Reducing the time that a home stands empty ensures we can let properties as swiftly as possible to those waiting for social housing. Our tenancy agreements state a tenant is required to provide us with notice before permanently moving from their home. However, we do not always receive this, and this can have an impact on how quickly we can re-let a property to applicants waiting to be housed.

The end of a tenancy incentive is a mechanism to reduce the time a property stands empty.

6.0 Qualifying tenants

6.1 End of tenancy incentive

Tenants must meet all the obligations to ending their tenancy or moving home as set out in their tenancy agreement to receive the incentive.

6.2 Transfer incentive

Transfer incentives are offered to tenants completing a transfer or a mutual exchange, either internal or external.

Incentives are available to tenants whose home has more bedrooms than they need or because the property has been specially adapted, and they no longer need those adaptations.

We consider offering an incentive to tenants with arrears, if no formal action has been taken. Any arrears will be deducted from the incentive sums. Tenants who do not qualify for an incentive include those who:

- Have already received an incentive for downsizing and at that point opted to keep an extra bedroom.

- Have breached their tenancy in any other way and the issue has not yet been resolved.

Where the home is left in a state of damage or disrepair that goes beyond normal wear and tear and we have to pay for remedy works that exceed normal re-let works, the additional costs will be deducted from the incentive sums.

7.0 End of tenancy incentive

Incentives are in the form of vouchers. We pay £30 for qualifying tenants who meet all the following conditions:

- Allow access for inspections and viewings. The home has to be in a good condition for viewings.
- Return the keys, which includes gas/electricity meter keys, as well as fobs, by 12 noon the day after the agreed end date.
- Leave the home clean and free from rubbish.
- Have no debt on utility accounts.
- Where there is a garden, ensure it is cleared.

8.0 Transfer incentives

The type of incentive offered varies according to the tenant's circumstances and the type of property that they are moving from. Qualifying tenants are given priority transfer status.

8.1 Practical support

We recognise that as well as financial obstacles to moving, tenants may face practical obstacles in planning a move. Although we do not offer advice to tenants to assist them in making their decision on whether to move to another property, if a tenant decides to move, we offer them advice on what this involves and give them sufficient time to plan for the move so that they are ready to move when the time comes. Tenants releasing a home will be offered a choice of alternative accommodation.

Where the tenant has support needs, we can offer some practical assistance with moving, including making arrangements for removals, ordering a bulk waste collection and informing suppliers about the move. We also offer to fit adaptations, where the home a resident is downsizing from has been adapted. Any related costs are expected to be covered by the financial incentive.

8.2 Additional bedroom

Tenants under-occupying by more than one bedroom are given the choice of retaining one or two spare bedrooms.

8.3 Financial incentive

Tenants releasing a property will be offered:

- A financial incentive of £1,000
- An additional £500 for each bedroom that is vacated
- A further £1,500 to pay for decorations/improvements, cookers, shelving, installing wardrobes and so on

The maximum incentive offered will be £4,000.

9.0 Our approach

In writing this policy we have carried out an assessment to ensure that we are considering equality, diversity and inclusion. To request a copy of the assessment, please contact us at policy@nhg.org.uk

Document control

Author	Victoria Agyeman-Duah, Policy Officer
Approval date	03/02/2022
Effective date	25/04/2022
Approved by	Policy Group
Policy owner	Assistant Directors of Housing

Version Control

Date	Amendment	Version
25/02/2019	New NHG policy	1.0
04/06/2019	NHG to recharge when property is left in state of disrepair	1.1
11/11/2019	Clarified that transfer incentives will be offered for both transfers and mutual exchanges.	1.2
25/02/2022	Policy Review	2.0
23/09/2024	Policy Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Specified who the qualifying tenants areMakes clear transfer incentives are offered to those completing a mutual exchange, which includes external mutual exchangesChange of name so it is clear what the incentive applies to	3.0
11/03/2025	Name change to reflect change to Relocation Policy	3.1