



HOUSING LANDLORD SERVICES

TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME FOR UNDEROCCUPATION

Version Control

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Version History

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Derrick Singleton	VDraft 0.1	Initial draft
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Deborah Upton	VDraft 0.3	Final draft

HOUSING LANDLORD SERVICES - TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME for UNDEROCCUPATION

Tenants Incentive Scheme Policy

1. Introduction

Medway Council is committed to adopting every possible means to meet the housing needs of applicants for housing in the area. There is an especially high demand for family sized accommodation.

Under occupation of properties is a major concern not just to Medway Council but also to other Social Landlords. Local Authorities are legally enabled to transfer tenants occupying dwellings larger than their need providing that suitable alternative accommodation is available.

Medway Council has a limited supply of family sized housing

This purpose of this policy is to provide an incentive for tenants to transfer to a home more suitable to their size requirement and to offer alternative accommodation to those tenants living in a disabled adapted property that they no longer require.

2. Strategic Aims

There is a need to make more effective use of our housing stock in order to meet known demand, and in particular to reduce reliance on Bed & Breakfast and other unsuitable temporary accommodation for homeless families.

The following information outlines the current position of overcrowded and under occupying rehousing applicants taken from the Housing Register as at the end of 2008.

From the information we currently hold it is estimated that the following numbers of cases are registered as lacking bedrooms based on Medway Council's allocations policy.

Total Number of All Rehousing Applicants Registered for Rehousing and Lacking Bedrooms

Total Number of Applicants	Bedrooms Applicants are Lacking
969	1
78	2
9	3
2	4

Total Number of Council Tenants Registered for Rehousing and Lacking Bedrooms at Dec 2009

Total Number of Council Transfer Applicants	Bedrooms Applicants are Lacking
45	1
6	2

Total Number of Council Tenant Transfer Cases Registered for Rehousing and Currently Under Occupying Their Property.

Total Number of Transfer Applicants Under Occupying council stock	Bedroom Size Released	Bedroom Size Required
48	32 x 2 bed 16 x 3 bed	1
7	7 x 3 bed	2

There may also be council tenants who are not currently registered for rehousing that may express an interest in the Tenants Incentive Scheme.

3. Objectives

The aims of the Tenants Incentive Scheme are to:

- Encourage and assist tenants under-occupying general needs family accommodation to move to smaller accommodation that is suitable for their needs
- Release general needs accommodation of 2 bedrooms or more, in order to maximise occupancy.

The properties vacated by under occupying tenants would be ring fenced for allocation to overcrowded council transfer applicants in the first instance.

4. Eligibility

The Tenants Incentive Scheme is available to those tenants who meet the following criteria: -

1. who are secure joint or sole tenants of Medway Council who occupy properties with two or more bedrooms

2. who have a clear rent account or have an agreement in place to clear arrears (any arrears will be cleared from money due under the Tenants Incentive Scheme).
3. whose existing property is in good decorative clean order, (pre-inspection will be carried out prior to acceptance, and once the property has been vacated)
4. who can give vacant possession of their present home

5. Ineligibility

The Tenants Incentive Scheme will not be available to those tenants:-

1. against whom the Council has commenced legal proceedings. for breach of tenancy conditions
2. who hold an introductory tenancy
3. who are licensees
4. who owe current rent arrears and former tenant debts or a sundry debt to the council, and where reasonable repayment of the debt cannot be negotiated.

6. Incentive Payment

A 'stepped' fixed incentive payment will be paid at the following rates to those tenants that meet the criteria scheduled above: -

- A payment of £500 for each bedroom released
- An additional maximum £500 to help towards moving costs

The table below shows how the payment rules work.

Property currently occupied	Property moving to	Bedrooms released	Payment for the released bedroom(s)	Plus a maximum of £500 to help with moving costs	Total payment
2 bed	1 bed	1	£500	£500	£1000
2 bed parlour*	1 bed	1 + parlour	£1,000	£500	£1,500
3 bed	1 bed	2	£1,000	£500	£1,500
3 bed parlour*	1 bed	2 + parlour	£1,500	£500	£2,000
4 bed	1 bed	3	£1,500	£500	£2,000
4 bed parlour*	1 bed	3 + parlour	£2,000	£500	£2,500

* Please note that the decision on whether the room is a parlour will be confirmed by the officer who inspects the property during the moving process. A parlour is an extra living room in a property.

The above payments will be made subject to the budget being available, and the budgetary requirement will be reviewed each year.

Priority to those tenants moving from accommodation that is more urgently required will be given at the discretion of the Head of Housing Strategy or Head of Landlord Services, if there are more requests for incentive grants than there is funding available.

Consideration will also be given to tenants of three bedroom properties or more who may only be eligible for a one bedroom property but have requested 2 bedroom accommodation due to care needs, family circumstances.

7. What does the Tenants Incentive Scheme Payment Cover?

The Tenants Incentive payment is a fixed amount to assist with the reasonable costs of moving home, that includes; removals, connection and disconnection of services replacement carpets and curtains and decoration etc.

Tenants will be expected to submit invoices or receipts to receive the moving cost element of this payment, up to a maximum of £500.

Payments will be authorised once the tenant has moved and following an inspection of the vacated property, to ensure that is left in good decorative and clean order.

The Council reserves the right to reduce the payments set out in paragraph 6 if: -

1. there are rent arrears owed to the council at the time of offer of transfer
2. there are any rechargeable costs of any works that the council has to undertake to the vacated premises as a result of damage or neglect on the part of the tenant.

8. Financial Resources

The proposed annual budget for the scheme is £30,000. The budget will be reviewed annually and the need for any additional funding will be dealt with as part of the annual budget setting process.

9. Exceptions

Where a dwelling of a particular type is urgently required, the Head of Housing Strategy or Head of Landlord Services may offer the Tenants Incentive Scheme in relation to accommodation other than that described in paragraph 6 above.

10. Policy Implementation

The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review the policy every three years unless there is some event, consideration or legislative change, which necessitates an earlier review.

The Council reserves the right to refuse paying the Tenants Incentive Scheme subject to breaches of tenancy conditions and any other breaches deemed appropriate.