

## Chapter 15: Moving home



Although we hope you are happy in your existing home and it meets your needs, we know that people sometimes may want to move.

There are a range of schemes available to help people who need to move to a new home. Some schemes, described later in this chapter, can help people who need to move outside the borough, or even outside London.

If you are an existing Haringey Council tenant and want to be considered for a transfer, you will need to fill in a transfer application form and return it to your tenancy management officer. You can get application forms from Customer Services Centres or from your tenancy management officer.

To be eligible for a transfer, you must not owe rent (unless you have kept to a formal agreement to reduce the debt for at least 12 months).

Only in exceptional circumstances can we ignore these rules.

## What happens when I apply for a transfer?

If you are approved for a transfer, the council's lettings and mobility team will assess your needs, such as the number of bedrooms you need and any medical needs.

As a result of the assessment, you will be awarded points based on your circumstances. These points place you on the housing register.

The council's lettings team will tell you about the 'choice-based' lettings scheme – Home Connections. Home Connections offers you an opportunity to choose your own home, based on the needs of your household. Other families may bid for the same home but priority is given to the family with the most points. There is more information about Home Connections later in this chapter.

Once you have chosen a property and been offered a tenancy, you will not be eligible for any further offers. So, it is important that you

choose carefully from the available properties.

If you need a specially adapted property, we will make you a direct offer so that we can match a property to your exact needs.

## What if I refuse the offer?

If the council makes you an offer under Home Connections, you are not expected to refuse it, as you have asked to be considered for the property. If you take part in the Home Connections scheme, you will be given information to make sure you understand what it involves and the need for you to take an active role in finding your property. If you ask to be considered for a property and you later discover that there is someone living locally that is a threat to you or your household, you may refuse the property within 24 hours of signing the tenancy.

Please be aware that refusing a suitable offer may lead to the council giving up its legal duty to rehouse you.

## Right to a review

If you are not happy about a decision made on a transfer application, you can ask for a review.

The housing reviews manager considers reviews for the housing register, transfer and homeless applications. The housing reviews manager is not linked to the housing staff who dealt with your application.

Reviews of medical decisions are considered by a medical advisor or medical assessor who did not assess your case originally. If you disagree with the outcome of this review, you may ask for a second review. In this case, the medical advisor may choose to refer the case to our doctor.

## Under-occupation transfer

If your home is larger than you need, we can move you to a smaller property and you will qualify for a cash payment.

People who move from properties that are larger than they need help us deal more effectively with the problems of homeless and overcrowded homes.

We will provide a cash payment for each bedroom you give up as a result of the move. For example, if you move from a property with four bedrooms to one with one bedroom, you would receive a larger payment than if you asked to move to a three-bedroomed property. (If you owe rent we will take this from the incentive payment.)

As well as the incentive payment, the scheme has other benefits, including:

- increased housing points (this will help you make successful bids through Home Connections for the home you choose);
- lower rent and heating costs; and
- help to make arrangements to move, if needed.

You can get more details of the scheme from the Customer Services Centres.

## Transfers for special medical needs

The medical assessment team may award you housing points based on any special medical needs you have. This will help you make successful bids through Home Connections for the home appropriate to your needs.

Their decision is based on how seriously your medical condition is affected by your home, rather than the medical condition alone. To apply, you must fill in a medical transfer form, which you can get from your local Customer Services Centre.

## Transfers due to violence, abuse or harassment

If you have reported domestic violence in your home to us (see chapter 14 for details), we will discuss with you all the options to make sure you are safe – including whether a transfer is appropriate

for you. We will work with the council's lettings team if a transfer is needed.

In cases of harassment or serious social problems, such as a severe dispute with a neighbour, we may agree to transfer you.

We will always try to keep you in your own home, but we will offer you a transfer to another property if there is no other realistic option. We will ask the council's lettings team to place you into emergency accommodation or a refuge immediately if you are in danger. You usually have to give up your existing tenancy to transfer to another property.

We can take legal action against people responsible for violence. We are likely to evict anyone guilty of violence if they live in a council property.

## Transfers in other extreme circumstances

If you have suffered fire or flood damage and you cannot live in your home, we will help with temporary accommodation until you can return. We will transfer you temporarily when your home needs repairs that cannot be carried out while you continue to live there.

We will also offer you temporary accommodation while your present home is being refurbished or redeveloped.

## Extreme overcrowding

Cases of extreme overcrowding may be considered for increased housing points.

## Home Connections

Home Connections is designed to give tenants some choice over the home the council offers them.

Homes are available throughout the borough. We are working with other North London boroughs to introduce moves across London in the future.

All tenants approved for a transfer can take part in Home Connections. Available permanent homes are advertised each week and you will be able to bid for them using your housing points.

The top five bidders are invited to view the property before making our decision. If more than one person bids for a property, we will usually offer it to the person with the most points if the property meets the needs of their household.

At the viewing, you will get the opportunity to say whether you want to go ahead with your bid. There will be no penalty for turning the property down at this stage of the process.

There are full details of the Home Connections scheme on the council's website at [www.haringey.gov.uk](http://www.haringey.gov.uk), or you can contact one of the Customer Services Centres.

## Other options

If none of the schemes listed above meet your needs, you might want to look at the following options.

### Mutual exchanges

Council and housing association tenants normally have the right to a mutual exchange. This means that you can swap your home with another tenant as long as both landlords agree.

Mutual exchanges are available to tenants wanting to swap homes with:

- another Haringey tenant;
- a tenant of another council anywhere in Britain; or
- a tenant of a registered social landlord.

The council and the other landlord will have to approve the exchange. It is possible for more than two tenants to exchange properties, for example, we can approve three-way or multiple exchanges.

You can look for someone who wants to swap properties with you at [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk). This website just helps you find someone to swap with, you cannot use it to exchange properties.

When we receive your application form, the council has **six weeks** from the date they receive your application to make a decision.

You should not move until:

- you have the written approval of your landlord;
- you have signed or made arrangements to sign the necessary documents; and
- we have agreed to allow the other person to move into your home.

### Can we refuse a swap?

It is likely we will refuse your request for a mutual exchange if:

- you owe rent;
- you had a notice of seeking possession served on you;
- the properties are too big or too small for the family who wants to move in; or
- one of the properties is specifically for elderly or disabled people.

If you exchange properties, you accept it in the condition the last tenant left it in, and you will be responsible for any repairs that would normally be your responsibility. See chapter 4, 'Repairs' for repairs you are responsible for.

## Moving out of London

The **Moving out of London** scheme is designed to release more homes in Haringey by helping you if you want to move away from London, especially to areas like the north of England where the demand for housing is not so high.

If you move to a smaller home outside London, you could qualify for an under-occupation incentive payment (described earlier in this chapter) or help with your removal expenses.

You can get an application form for 'Moving out of London' from Customer Services Centres or the council's website at [www.haringey.gov.uk](http://www.haringey.gov.uk).

If you have any questions about the 'Moving out of London' scheme or any other moving option, you can contact the Mobility Team on 0800 694 2108 or e-mail [movingon@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:movingon@haringey.gov.uk).

## Adapting your home

If you have a disability or medical condition that makes it difficult for you to cope in your home, you may not need to move. It may be possible to make improvements or adaptations, for example, by installing a chair lift or a downstairs toilet.

We can also provide special equipment such as mobility aids. See chapter 16 'Adaptations', phone the call centre, visit any Customer Services Centre, or visit our website, [www.homesforharingey.org](http://www.homesforharingey.org) for more details.