

DOWNSIZING POLICY



MONITORING INFORMATION:

POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:	DOWNSIZING POLICY
DATE APPROVED:	JUNE 2024
EXPIRY DATE:	JUNE 2027
OWNER:	COMMUNITIES AND COMPLIANCE MANAGER
APPROVAL ROUTE:	EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Downsizing Policy

Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that both Teign Housing staff members and tenants are aware of and have a clear understanding of our approach to the provision of financial assistance for tenants moving to a smaller home.

Our Allocations Policy states that we will make the best use of our housing stock. We will therefore, help tenants who are under occupying their homes but lack the financial means to move to a smaller property.

Tenants of working age are liable for the spare room subsidy. The deduction is 14% of the rent if they are under occupying by one bedroom, and 25% if they are under occupying by two bedrooms.

At this current time (June 2020) we believe we have 242 working age tenants who are under occupying their home. Of these, 160 are in receipt of Housing Benefit, 59 are in receipt of Universal Credit, and 23 are either not in receipt of benefits or they are having Housing Benefit paid directly to them. There are likely to be large number of pension age tenants who are also under occupying their home but not subject to the spare room subsidy.

Policy:

Downsizing Assistance

If tenants are living in a property that is too big for their household, we can offer practical and financial assistance to support them to downsize to a smaller property, should they wish to move. This could be in the form of practical assistance, including registering on Devon Home Choice, registering on Home Swapper (Mutual Exchanges) and giving them advice on any work that might be required on their existing home to ensure they are not re-charged.

Assistance could also be in the form of a financial contribution towards moving costs if the barriers to moving are financial.

Financial assistance may be provided when:

- a customer is willing to downsize, however cannot afford to move.

- outstanding rent arrears or other debts owed by Teign Housing need to be cleared / reduced before a move is approved.

The following are examples of assistance we might provide:-

- clearance of arrears or other debts;
- redirection of mail for 1 month;
- disconnection and reconnection of appliances such as cookers, washing machines, telephones, alarms, appliances, TV aerials and satellite dishes;
- removal, alteration, and re-fitting of curtain rails;
- removal, refitting or replacement of personal support aids;
- replacement of flooring and curtains in the new home where the old will not fit;
- curtains or blinds for the new property where the old will not fit;
- redecoration of the new home;
- removals / clearance;
- advance rent for new property.

Where the tenant has an outstanding debt to Teign Housing for example rent arrears or recharges payment for the debt will be deducted from any financial contribution given.

The amount awarded will be assessed on a case-by-case basis according to the priorities identified by the tenant(s) and may be dependent on there being a demonstrated need for the size of property being moved to (i.e. that no further under occupation charges would be incurred). The amount awarded should be limited to £750.00 unless in exceptional circumstances and approved by the Director of Customers and Communities

An annual budget is set, and the aim is to maximise the number of moves facilitated and provide good value for money from the available funds. There are no automatic rights to receive the downsizing allowance. A tenant may appeal against the decision not to award financial assistance by writing to the Director of Customers and Communities before a housing move takes place. Appeals or applications will not be dealt with after moves, since the aim of the policy is to provide practical or financial assistance to facilitate a move taking place.

This assistance is available to tenants who would be improving their situation by moving to a smaller home, this might be via transfer, mutual exchange or by moving to the private sector.

Performance Standards:**Performance Monitoring**

Spending against the budget will be monitored by the Director of Customers and Communities.

The number of successful moves assisted by the scheme will be monitored on a monthly basis.

Other Related Policies

- Complaints Policy
- Allocations Policy