

MAYOR OF LONDON

Housing Moves

Welcome to the Housing Moves scheme.

We know that moving home can be daunting and that giving up a secure tenancy can be a big step. The following information is to advise you on how the Housing Moves scheme works and what you can expect.

What is Housing Moves?

Housing Moves is a London wide lettings scheme, run by the Mayor of London. The scheme helps social tenants in London who wish to move from one part of the capital to another. Priority is given to households who have more bedrooms in their current home than they need or who wish to move to be closer to employment or higher education. Priority is also given to those who are overcrowded in their current home or those who need to move to provide care to family members or friends.

The scheme is for existing social housing tenants living in London. Eligibility for the scheme, and how households are prioritised, is explained in this document. If you are eligible and wish to register you will need to complete an online registration form. This can be found at www.housingmoves.org Click on the register button on the home page and follow the instructions on screen.

Please be aware that Housing Moves cannot guarantee a move to everyone who registers for the scheme.

What do we do with your application form?

We do four things:

Firstly, we check that you are eligible to move through the Housing Moves scheme. To be eligible you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be a current tenant of a participating London borough or housing association with an assured or a secure tenancy (this can be a lifetime or fixed-term tenancy)
- You (the lead applicant) must be the person named on the tenancy agreement with your landlord
- If you are a joint tenant, or have other people living with you, the whole household must be part of your application

- You must not be subject to a Notice of Seeking Possession or a Notice to Quit, and you must have a clear rent account and no ongoing record of anti-social behaviour.

Secondly, we decide how much priority you have. Every application is placed into one of five bands. Band 1 applicants have the highest priority, and band 5 applicants have the least. The five bands are as follows:

Band 1

You must be under occupying your current home and willing to downsize. You will receive additional priority if you give up more than one bedroom.

Band 2

One or more members of your household must be either

- in employment, for at least 16 hours a week and continuously (although not necessarily in the same job) for the last six months
- in training that leads directly to employment (for example, an apprenticeship). There must be a guarantee of employment at the end of the course and evidence of this job would need to be provided.

Band 3

You must be overcrowded in your current home and living in accommodation that is too small for your needs.

Band 4

You must be providing unpaid, voluntary care to a family member or friend who is not a member of your own household and lives in a different borough.

Band 5

If none of the above bands apply to you then your application will be placed into band 5.

If you meet the criteria in more than one band, then you will receive additional priority through the Housing Moves scheme. You will always be placed into the highest possible band (for example: if you're in work but also overcrowded you will be placed into band 2 but also receive extra priority within that band because of your overcrowding)

Your landlord might contact you to ask for more information so that they can process your application. They might ask for copies of payslips or proof that you are a carer.

Thirdly, we work out how many bedrooms your household needs. This will determine which properties you can bid for through the Housing Moves scheme and whether you're under occupying your current home or are overcrowded. To work out how many bedrooms you need, we use the government's Bedroom Standard. A separate bedroom is allocated to

- each married or cohabiting couple
- any person over the age of 21
- each pair of adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex
- each pair of children under ten

Any unpaired person aged 10-20 is paired, if possible with a child under ten of the same sex. If that isn't possible, he or she is given a separate bedroom, as is any unpaired child under ten.

Finally, we'll contact you by email once your application has been activated by your landlord. We will let you know that your application has been successful and tell you your band and your bedroom entitlement. You will also be given your login details and a password for the website.

If your application is rejected or suspended for any reason you'll receive an email to advise you of this. If you wish to query the rejection or suspension you should contact your landlord.

How will you know that properties are available?

- All Housing Moves properties are advertised on the Housing Moves website (www.housingmoves.org).
- The website is easy to use, but if you need help then you can contact your landlord or the housing department of your local council. You can also ask a family member or a friend to help you.
- Properties will be advertised on the website for a minimum of four days which must include Friday and Saturday so these are the best days to check.
- If you don't have access to the internet or a computer or if you choose not to then you could visit a local library or contact the housing department of your council for help.

If I'm interested in a property, what do I do next?

- Housing Moves uses a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) website. This means that you need to express an interest on a property that you are interested in. This is called 'placing a bid'. You need to log on to the website to place bids and you can do this once your application has been activated by your landlord. Housing Moves is NOT a mutual exchange scheme. If you also wish to register for a mutual exchange, you should speak to your landlord or borough.

- There is a guide on the website that shows you how to place bids. If you need help then you can contact your landlord or the housing department of your local council. You can also ask a family member or a friend to help you. You can bid on line, SMS text message or via the Housing Moves mobile app.
- As an applicant you can have up to four bids at any one time. You can withdraw a bid or switch it to a different property at any time whilst the bidding cycle on either property is open.
- You can only place bids for properties that are the right size for your household. We will not allow you to place bids for properties that would be too large or too small for your family.
- You're not allowed to place bids for properties in your own borough, irrespective of landlord. If you want to move within your borough then you should contact your landlord or the housing department of your local council for information on the local transfer policy.
- Sometimes you will not be able to place bids for properties because there are none available for applicants who live in your borough. If this is the case then we will let you know when you log in by showing a 'bidding restricted' message. You can find more about why applications can be restricted on the Frequently Asked Questions page on the website.
- It may also be worth speaking to your landlord to see if they offer help to households who will move out of the borough. Some boroughs may offer financial support to under occupiers. Others may be able to offer assistance in other ways.

It is particularly important to check whether you're eligible for such payments if you feel that you will need financial support to enable you to move.

What happens after I have placed a bid for a property?

- It is likely that more than one person will place a bid for each property. When this happens, we will look at which band you are in to decide the level of priority for each applicant. If you are in band 1, then you will be nearer the top of the list. If you are in band 5, you are likely to be nearer the bottom of the list. If the banding is the same for a number of applicants, the system will prioritise applicants that have been registered the longest within each band
- The landlord will then contact you directly if they would like you to view the property. If you are a long way down the list, you might not be invited for a viewing at first. However, if other applicants decide not to view the property or turn it down, then you might be invited for a viewing at a later date. If you are not being invited for a viewing the landlord will record this on the list of bidders and this will free up that bid to enable you to bid for something else.

- If you accept an appointment to view a property then you must let the borough know if you cannot attend, or if you change your mind. If you do not let the borough know in advance of the viewing date, then you might be prevented from placing bids for properties in the future.

What happens when I go to view a property?

- An officer from the landlord or borough will meet you at the property. You will be expected to cover your own travel costs and will have to make your own way there.
- If you are unable to view the property or are delayed then you must inform the landlord or borough with whom you arranged the viewing as soon as possible.
- The Housing Moves team can suspend your registration for six months if you repeatedly refuse viewings, refuse offers or fail to attend a viewing without notifying the landlord.
- You might be asked to provide some personal information at the viewing. Please make sure that you carefully read any emails or letters inviting you to the viewing so that you take everything with you that the landlord needs to see. You may also be asked to complete one of their application forms. Also, the borough arranging the viewing will usually want to speak to your current landlord to check your details, your tenancy history and rent account.
- After the viewing has taken place, you may be made an offer of a tenancy for the property. Landlords or boroughs will ask you to confirm whether you want to accept the property or not within a set timescale (sometimes the same day). If you do not respond within these timescales you may lose the property and it will be offered to the next applicant.

What do I do when I accept a property?

- Once you have accepted a property you will need to follow the procedures of the borough or landlord that owns that property. Please be aware that a tenancy is a legal document and once you have signed it then you are bound by its terms and conditions. If you change your mind after signing a tenancy you are likely to be liable for at least four weeks rent. Do not sign the tenancy unless you are certain that you wish to accept the property being offered.
- You will need to notify your current landlord in writing of your intention to end your current tenancy as soon as possible. This is known as 'giving notice'. The notice period on your current property can be as long as four weeks. Some London boroughs will be flexible with this timeframe for tenants moving through the Housing Moves scheme but this cannot be guaranteed.

- If your landlord offers assistance for movers then you should contact them and notify them that you are moving as soon as possible.

Moving to your new home

- The earlier you start to plan your move the easier it will be; even if you have not been offered a property it is a good idea to make a list of things to do and be aware of the costs involved.
- You may need to book a removal company. They will need to know how many items you need to move and whether you wish for them to pack your belongings for you. If you are downsizing into a smaller home, your current landlord might be able to help you with some of the removal costs. You should contact them for more details.
- Removal companies should provide a contract highlighting the agreement between you. The agreement should also include details of the insurance cover should any of your belongings be damaged or lost during the move.

Once you have accepted a property your Housing Moves application will be cancelled and should you wish to move again, you will need to complete a new Housing Moves application.

What do I do if my circumstances change?

- You must inform your landlord of any changes to your circumstances whilst you are registered on the Housing Moves scheme. They will then be able to update your registration for you. It is particularly important to ensure that your contact details such as phone numbers and your email address are correct. If your application has already been activated you can complete a Change of Circumstances form on line at www.housingmoves.org You can find the form in the Quick Links section on the home page.
- You should be aware that some changes of circumstance may affect your banding, bedroom entitlement or eligibility. In such cases your application will be suspended temporarily whilst your landlord reassesses your application. They may ask you to provide information to confirm the details you have given
- Once a reassessment has taken place you will receive an email to inform you of the outcome. The following circumstances are likely to affect your eligibility or banding.
- You lose your job or training or you have now been continually employed for over six months.
- You are no longer caring for someone or you take on caring responsibilities
- The members of your household change through someone moving out or moving in. This could affect the size of property you're eligible for or what band you're in. Your current

landlord will usually ask to see evidence that if someone moves in, they are using your property as their main and principal home.

- If someone in your household becomes pregnant, you must inform your landlord once the baby is born – they will usually want to see the birth certificate. Your bedroom entitlement or banding may change after the birth.

If you are offered a property and it is found that you have not informed your landlord of a change in your circumstances the offer may be withdrawn and your application could be suspended from the Housing Moves scheme

Housing Moves – points to remember

1. Joining the Housing Moves scheme doesn't guarantee that you will be offered a move.
2. It is your responsibility to find out about the parts of London you wish to move to and ensure that any specific services you may require are available. These may include
 - checking that schools, colleges or places of work are close by and accessible
 - checking that there are transport links in place – www.tfl.gov.uk contains information on transport in London
 - ensuring that medical treatments are available at the local hospitals - search these at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
3. Pets are not permitted in all properties advertised through Housing Moves. If you have a pet you should make it clear on your application form and check that the landlords of the properties you want to bid for allow pets.
4. Housing Moves doesn't offer any form of support, financial or otherwise, to help tenants so it's your responsibility to cover any costs incurred by moving. Your landlord might also be able to help you.
5. If you accept a property, the tenancy you sign is a legal document. As such, if you change your mind after signing a tenancy you'll be liable for at least four weeks rent. You may also have to give the landlord four weeks' written notice if you do not intend to move into the property.
6. Advertised properties will be either social or affordable rent so you should check the rent figures and service charges carefully. Some new build properties may also be offered on a fixed term basis and this may affect your security of tenure if you currently have a lifetime tenancy.
7. If you would like to discuss your registration you should contact your landlord or the housing department of your local borough

8. For more information on the Housing Moves scheme visit our website:
www.housingmoves.org