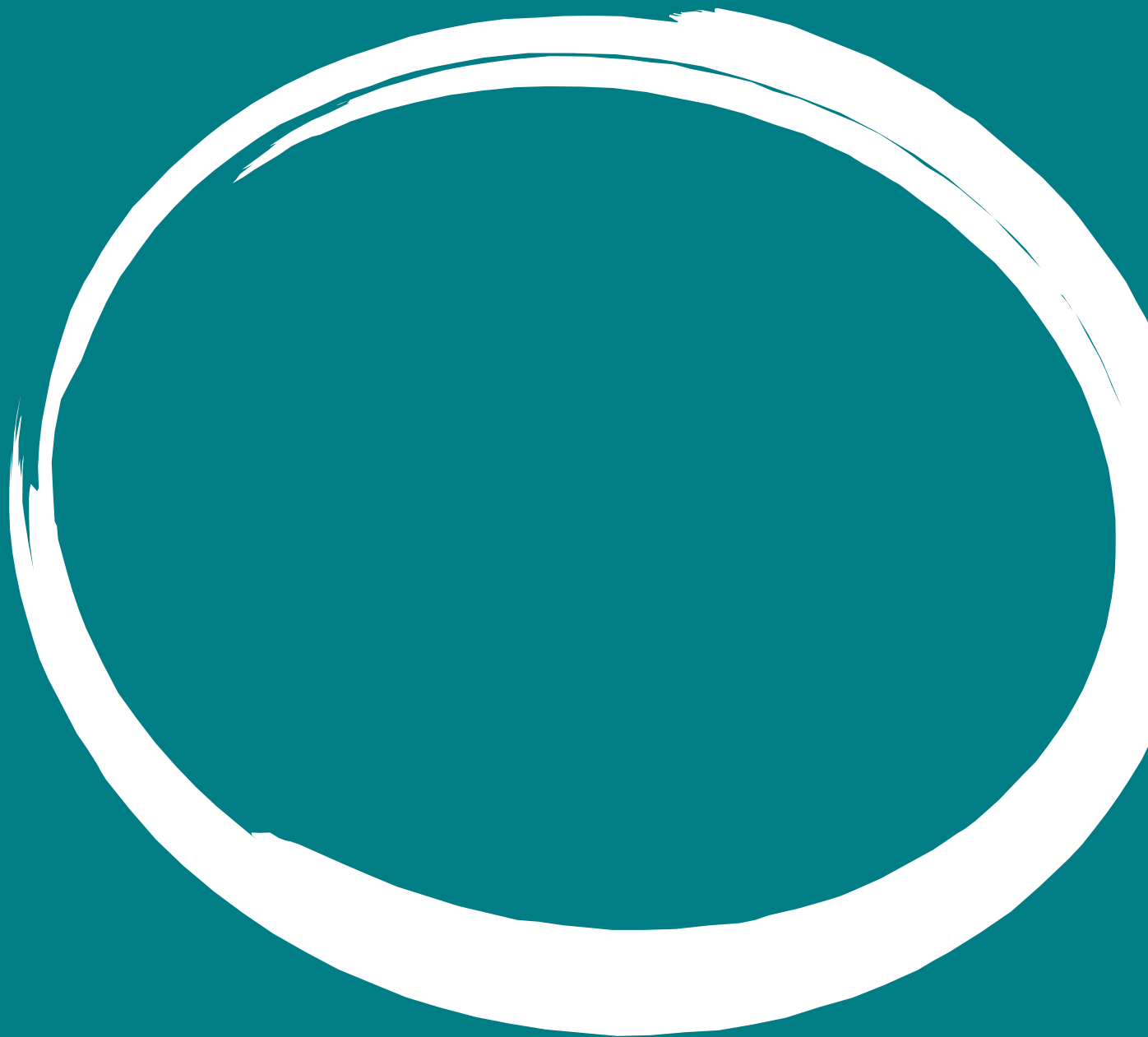


# Draft Downsizing Incentives Policy

2019



milton keynes council



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## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Milton Keynes Council recognises that there is an under supply of family homes within the borough. To increase the number of larger properties that become available each year, the Council will utilise a Downsizing Incentives Policy to support tenants seeking to downsize from family sized Council homes (2 bedrooms and above) to homes that better meet their needs.

## 2. Strategic Aims

- 2.1 There is a need to make the most effective use of Council housing stock to meet known demand on the housing register and to reduce long term reliance on temporary accommodation for homeless families. This policy should be read alongside the Allocation Policy.

### 3. Objectives

3.1 The key objectives of the policy are:

- To encourage and assist tenant's to downsize to better meet their needs
- To release family accommodation to maximise occupancy
- To make best use of existing stock
- To contribute towards the costs incurred as a result of moving
- To be sensitive to the needs of the individual tenant or household

## 4. Eligibility

4.1 Tenants who apply to transfer under the policy will be considered providing the tenant -

- Is a tenant of Milton Keynes Council or holds a tenancy with a registered social landlord, who has agreed to re-let their home to a Milton Keynes Council tenant
- Holds a secure tenancy and has done for minimum of 2 years
- Has kept to the terms of their tenancy agreement
- Is under occupying a general needs family home with 2 or more bedrooms, which is regarded to be in demand when considered against the Housing Register and willing to downsize
- Have no housing related debt with the Council (this is considered as current/former rent arrears, use and occupation charges, housing benefit, court costs, and rechargeable repairs including repayable rent deposits)\*\*
- Have no council tax arrears
- Agree to provide vacant possession of their present home

4.2 \*If tenants with housing related debt and/or council tax arrears (but not in excess of the grant limit) agree with the Council that the incentive payment can be used as payment to clear, they may be approved under the policy.

4.3 \*In exceptional circumstances, where the debt is higher than the amount of the grant but the property the tenant currently occupies has been found to be unaffordable due to the welfare benefit changes, the Council may exercise its discretion to give approval providing the tenant agrees to adhere to a payment plan following an assessment with Milton Keynes Housing Income Team (The payment plan will be based on what is affordable to repay and may not cover the full weekly shortfall).

4.4 The Council will not accept applications where --

- Any member of the household would be made homeless as a result of downsizing
- The tenant will be making themselves and their household overcrowded
- The tenant has arranged a move under the mutual exchange process
- The tenant has an introductory tenancy
- The tenant is required to downsize following a succession
- The tenant is being 'decanted' due to their current property being part of a redevelopment scheme
- The tenant is not 'a qualifying' applicant on the Housing Register
- The tenant has previously received a downsizing incentive scheme payment from Milton Keynes Council within the last two years

4.5 Those who do not meet the eligibility criteria of the policy but are still under occupying their property may still apply for a transfer in the normal way.

4.6 Offers of accommodation will be made in line with the Allocation Policy.

## 5. Downsizing Incentive Payments

5.1 A payment will be made to match the cash incentive below if a tenant moves from general needs accommodation of 2 or more bedrooms to a smaller property -

- £1000 to be paid per bedroom as a result of downsizing
- An additional £1000 if a tenant moves to a flat in a sheltered housing scheme
- Up to £500 towards relocation costs (if required we may be able to pay your removals direct to the removal company and this will be deducted from your final payment)

5.2 Downsizing from Council stock to alternative Council stock or to a Registered Provider (Housing Association) nominated by the Council.

<b>Under-Occupancy Incentive Payment Examples</b>				
<b>Current Property Size</b>	<b>New Property Size</b>	<b>Maximum Grant Payable</b>	<b>Removal Expenses</b>	<b>Total Grant</b>
4 bed house	Sheltered Flat	£4,000	£500	£4,500
4 bed house	1 bed flat	£3,000	£500	£3,500
3 bed house	2 bed house	£1,000	£500	£1500
3 bed house	1 bed flat	£2000	£500	£2500
2 bed flat	1 bed flat	£1000	£500	£1500

5.3 Removals of your belongings undertaken by the councils appointed removal company (conditions apply).

- Assistance with carpet for your new home (conditions apply)
- Help with the disposal of unwanted furniture (conditions apply and prior agreement is required)



## 6. Applications and Assessment

- 6.1 Tenants applying to the downsizing scheme must complete and return the downsizing incentive application form (available on the Council's website) [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/Housingaccess/downsizing](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/Housingaccess/downsizing)  
As well as completing the online housing register application form at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housingaccess](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housingaccess)  
The website also provides details of the documentation to be provided to support the application.
- 6.2 The applications will be assessed and notification will be sent to the tenant advising if
- They qualify to the Housing Register *and*
  - They meet the eligibility criteria of the policy *and*
  - The size property they are eligible for.
- 6.3 Applicants will be offered an alternative property that is adequate for their housing need and in line with the Council's Allocation Policy.
- 6.4 Tenants express an interest in suitable void properties by being given a choice of what properties are available (or in the future by bidding via the Council's choice based lettings scheme). Assistance with bidding can be made available under the policy if required.

## **7. Offers of Accommodation**

- 7.1 The number of offers of accommodation under the policy will be made in line with the Allocation Policy.

## **8. Post Move**

- 8.1 Tenant/s will receive the incentive payment via their bank account on completion of the move and receipt of the keys from the home they are vacating.
- 8.2 An inspection of the property will be undertaken and any rechargeable works identified, over and above normal wear and tear, will be deducted from the incentive payment. This also includes the cost of clearing excessive items left in the property or garden without prior agreement with the Council.
- 8.3 If the tenancy is a joint tenancy then the payment will be split equally between the joint tenants but can be paid into one bank account on receipt of written authority from both tenants.
- 8.4 An applicant, who has moved home and received an incentive payment, will not be expected to increase their household size and subsequently overcrowd the new property.
- 8.5 The applicant may apply for a transfer and will be assessed in the usual manner under the Allocation Policy.

## 9. Budget Limits

- 9.1 If there are more requests for incentive payments than the funding available, priority will be given to those tenants moving from accommodation that is more urgently required. Priority will be decided by the Housing Access Manager and Head of Service.
- 9.2 The Council reserves the right to reduce the incentive payment amount if-
- The amount of any current/former rent arrears, use and occupation charges, housing benefit overpayments, court costs, rechargeable repairs and repayable rent deposits owing to the Council at time of transfer
  - The amount of any council tax arrears outstanding to the council at time of transfer
  - The cost 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 outgoing tenant and/or
  - Any other reinstatement works to bring the work back to the Council lettable standard that are not regarded as fair wear and tear
- 9.3 Payments will be authorised once the tenant has moved and following an inspection of the vacated property. Applicants must be registered before a move takes place and for a payment to be authorised.

## 10. Spare Room Subsidy – Welfare Reform (assistance with removals)

- 10.1 If the property a tenant currently occupies has been found to be unaffordable due to the spare room subsidy charge, but the tenant does not meet the criteria for the policy, the Council may give consideration to giving assistance by paying the removal costs in this instance.
- 10.2 Consideration will only be given to tenants who –
- Are a tenant of Milton Keynes Council
  - Hold a secure tenancy on their current home
  - Are under-occupying by at least one bedroom and downsizing to alternative family accommodation. In accordance with the Council’s bedroom standard in the Allocation Policy
  - Their transfer application has been approved and is active
- 10.3 Tenants affected by the spare room subsidy who decide to relinquish their Council tenancy and move to the private sector may also be considered for assistance with removals.
- 10.4 Tenants, who previously had a good rent account prior to April 2013, but now have rent arrears due to the spare room subsidy, may be eligible for the removal grant providing the arrears are solely due to the spare room subsidy and they are adhering to a payment plan following an assessment with the Council’s Housing Income Team. The payment plan will be based on what is affordable to repay and may not cover the full weekly shortfall.
- 10.5 Removals of the tenant’s belongings will be undertaken by the Council’s appointed removal company (conditions apply).
- 10.6 If there are more requests for assistance with removals than the funding available, priority will be given to those tenants moving from accommodation that is more urgently required. Priority will be decided by the relevant managers.

## **11. Refusal of incentive payments**

- 11.1 All applicants who have applied to move under the policy, or under the spare room subsidy removals, assistance will be informed in writing of the decision. If you have been refused an incentive payment, you can ask for this decision to be reviewed by the Head of Service.
- 11.2 We reserve the right to refuse payments under all sections of the scheme because of breaches of conditions of tenancy and any other breaches as appropriate.
- 11.3 The incentives under this policy are only available whilst there are sufficient funds available.

## **12. Monitoring**

- 12.1 The policy will be reviewed yearly and any alteration to the level of assistance paid will be made by the Head of Service in consultation with the Director.

## **Downsizing Incentive Application Form**

**The answers that you provide on this form will be used to assess your eligibility for the Downsizing Cash Incentive Scheme. Further Information on the scheme can be found in the policy document available from the Milton Keynes Council website.**

Please complete this form in black ink using block capitals and return it to:

MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL  
HOUSING ACCESS TEAM  
CIVIC OFFICES  
1 SAXON GATE EAST  
CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES  
MK9 3EJ

**The information that you supply on this form will be held on computer and used in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. It will be used for housing purposes and may be passed to Registered Social Landlords and other Council departments.**

**By signing this form you agree that data on your current and previous tenancies or applications may be cross checked with departments within the Council or other Authorities for the purpose of fraud prevention and detection.**



**SECTION 1 – ABOUT YOU**

**Please provide the names of the main and if applicable joint tenants as well as the address of your current property.**

**Name of main tenant:**

**Name of joint tenant:**

**Current address:**


**Home telephone number:**

**Mobile telephone number:**

**Work telephone number:**

**E-mail address:**

**SECTION 2 - DETAILS OF THE PROPERTY YOU ARE MOVING FROM**

**Type of property you currently live in.** (please tick relevant box)

Bedsit	Flat	Maisonette	House	Bungalow
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**Number of bedrooms your current property has:**

0	1	2	3	4	5
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**Does your current property have any adaptations?**

Yes	No
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**If yes, please indicate what adaptations you currently have:**


**Does your current property have a garden?**

Yes	No
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**Do you have any pets?**

Yes	No
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**If yes, please indicate what pets you have:**


**Section 3 - HOUSEHOLD DETAILS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Moving with you</b>
			Tenant	

**If anyone listed above will not be living with you following your move to a smaller property, please detail their new housing situation:**

**Please note: You will not be eligible for the Downsizing Incentive Scheme if your application results in the homelessness of a householder presently living with you.**



## SECTION 5 – BANK DETAILS

Incentive payments are paid direct into your bank account.

Please provide your bank details -

### Tenant 1

<b>Name of Bank</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Sort Code</b>	
<b>Account Number</b>	
<b>Account Name</b>	

### Tenant 2

<b>Name of Bank</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Sort Code</b>	
<b>Account Number</b>	
<b>Account Name</b>	

**Please note – payment will be made payable in the names held on the tenancy. If the tenancy is a joint tenancy then the payment will be split equally between the joint tenants but can be paid into one bank account on receipt of written authority from both tenants.**

## Section 6 - Agreement

We/I have read and understand the Cash Downsizing Incentive Scheme and confirm that the information we/I have given is true to the best of our/my knowledge and that we/I will notify the housing department if any circumstances related to the application change.

We/I understand that any housing related debts (current/former rent arrears, use and occupation charges, housing benefit overpayment, court costs, rechargeable repairs and repayable rent deposits) and any Council Tax arrears will be deducted from the incentive payment and that we/I may not be eligible for the scheme if the level of arrears exceeds the amount of financial incentive we/I am entitled to.

We/I understand checks will be undertaken by the Housing Access Team with other internal departments to establish if we/I have any housing related debts and if the information provided on this application is correct. We/I acknowledge by signing this application form, we/I are giving permission for the information to be shared between departments in relation to this application.

We/I understand that if we/I am granted a tenancy because the information we/I have given is false or misleading or because we/I have withheld information from the Council then the tenancy may be terminated and the incentive payment will need to be repaid to the Council. I/we also agree not to intentionally create overcrowding in the new property.

<b>Tenant Full Name printed</b>	
<b>Tenant Full Name (Signature)</b>	

<b>Joint Tenant Full Name Printed</b>	
<b>Joint Tenant Full Name (Signature)</b>	

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