

EastendHomes

UNDER-OCCUPATION AND INCENTIVE TO MOVE POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 EastendHomes recognises that demand for family-sized accommodation in Tower Hamlets, including transfer requests from our tenants is high.
- 1.2 Since the implementation of Welfare Reform in 2013, EastendHomes tenants of working age in receipt of Housing Benefit, living in property defined as being under-occupied have received a reduction in entitlement. EastendHomes continue to identify and work with affected tenants to provide alternative suitable accommodation as required.
- 1.3 EastendHomes aims to tackle these issues by:
 - Implementing the Overcrowding Reduction Initiative and the Under-Occupation and Incentive to Move Policy,
 - Developing a Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan which includes offering welfare support and promoting downsizing to affected tenants,
 - Seeking opportunities to partner with developers to acquire housing to be offered at intermediate and affordable rent through S106 agreements and exploring available funding for projects to create additional units, for example to bring communal and other estate areas into residential use or for acquisition of suitable units.
- 1.4 The objective of this approach is to create a greater proportion of homes suitable for families and to help tenants who are overcrowded or are under-occupying to transfer to accommodation suitable for their requirements.
- 1.5 To assist in this process, EastendHomes seeks to identify, encourage and assist households who are under-occupying their home to move to smaller accommodation EastendHomes will offer tenants in these circumstances financial and other incentives and support to move to smaller accommodation. Priority will be given to tenants giving up property with three bedrooms or more.
- 1.6 In addition tenants who mutually exchange to a smaller home that matches their housing requirement will be eligible for a financial incentive with the proviso that both tenants are registered for a transfer at the point of exchange.

2.0 DETAIL

- 2.1 EastendHomes will make payments to tenants in accordance with the size of the accommodation they are leaving, and that to which they are moving.
- 2.2 Tenants will be offered a financial incentive for each bedroom they give up to a maximum of £2, 000. Tenants who move from a property with a *minimum* of 2 bedrooms to a smaller property and also give up a garden will be entitled to an additional premium of at least £500.

- 2.3 Officers will identify all under-occupying tenants, whether registered or unregistered for transfer, and regularly review and liaise with the tenant regarding the transfer options available.
- 2.4 The Schedule for allowable Incentive Payments is attached at Appendix 1A.
- 2.5 In addition to the incentive payments allowed, EastendHomes will develop a bespoke housing plan for identified tenant under-occupiers who are prepared to move including reimbursement of all reasonable costs associated with the move, EastendHomes officer and handyperson support and financial support in lieu of the incentive payments up to the maximum payment (£2, 000).
- 2.6 The following areas will be considered for reimbursement and as part of a package of support:
- Removal expenses and help with the arrangements and related costs including postal redirection, charges for disconnection and reconnection of white goods and electricity and gas and providing new curtains, blinds, carpets or floor covering.
 - Waiver of rechargeable works.
 - Decoration allowance.
 - Payment of rent arrears and rent payments for new property.
 - Travel costs for viewing new property.

3.0 POLICY REVIEW

- 3.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years.