

Pentland Housing Group

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Manager	Operations Manager
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Website	No
Secure Area of Website	No

Pentland Housing Association Ltd

Downsizing Policy

1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to maximise opportunities for much needed family homes by assisting tenants of Highland Housing Register landlords to move to a smaller home when they want to.

1.2 The policy aims:

- 1) To provide financial and practical assistance to tenants who already want to move to a smaller home.
- 2) In turn, to encourage other tenants to consider a move at an earlier stage than they might otherwise have done.

1.3 Reasons to consider moving to a smaller home include:

- Finding your home becoming too costly to run and difficult to manage
- The number of people in the household has reduced (eg, children have grown up and left home)
- You may want to move to a different location to be nearer family, work or carers
- Finding the stairs too difficult to manage

1.4 In these circumstances, eligible Highland Housing Register tenants who would like to move to a smaller home can be supported with financial and practical help that make moving home a more positive experience.

2 Principles

2.1 This approach to managing under-occupation supports 2 of the main aims of Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy:

- Making best use of any available social rented stock
- Helping households in housing need achieve suitable housing

3 Who Can Apply?

3.1 Any tenant of the Highland Housing Register:

- of non-working age (defined as someone who is eligible to claim pension credit)
- with a continuous tenancy of 10 or more years
- who is occupying a property of 2, 3, 4 or more bedrooms
- with 1 or more of the bedrooms spare
- who accepts an offer of a smaller house from Highland Housing Register
- where the vacated property will house an applicant with either extreme overcrowding points or high accessible housing points on their housing application

And

- in other exceptional cases approved by senior managers, such as circumstances that are not eligible for Discretionary Housing Payments.

4 Who Cannot Apply?

- The Downsizing Scheme does not cover working-age tenants.
- Tenants impacted by welfare reforms: Working-age tenants in receipt of housing benefit who are seeking to downsize as a result of the introduction of the social size criteria are entitled to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments to cover removal costs because of financial hardship following welfare reform. You can find the form here <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/counciltax/benefits-housingandcounciltax/>.
- Tenants with Rent Arrears: rent arrears may affect eligibility in accordance with Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy. This means for instance if an applicant has more than a 1/12th of a year's rent in arrears they may not be eligible to move unless they have been addressing the arrears. Tenants should speak to their housing officer about their eligibility and enquire about the possibility of using their downsizing payment to pay off their arrears.

5 What's included in the Downsizing Scheme?

- 5.1 Eligible tenants will qualify for the following financial and practical support. This is separate to any Decoration Allowance that a landlord may pay for the condition of the new home.

Financial Assistance	
£300	For accepting a home with one less bedroom
£400	For each subsequent bedroom given up
£800	For removal costs to cover <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Packing & unpacking• Van hire• Phone reconnection• Mail redirection• White goods disconnection & reconnection
Practical Assistance	
Helping with information & advice about the Downsizing Scheme	
Helping with form filling	
Helping with viewings and removal arrangements	
Helping with Housing Benefit and income maximisation	

6 How to apply for the Downsizing Scheme

- 6.1 Tenants should complete a Highland Housing Register Application Form.

- 6.2 Your landlord may not contact you automatically about being eligible for Downsizing after receiving your application. Therefore if you are interested you are best to follow up by contacting your local office to make them aware.
- 6.3 Downsizing payments are made once an offer of a smaller Highland Housing Register home is accepted. All other conditions of Highland Housing Register apply.
- 6.4 The timescale for an offer of a smaller home will vary depending on a number of factors including the prospects picture for the area a tenant wishes to be housed in, the housing need of the tenant, or the availability of any specialist housing provision.
- 6.5 Information and advice is available to all Highland Housing Register applicants about their social rented housing prospects.

Version 1 – January 2011

Version 2 – August 2014