

**DRAFT TRANSFER INCENTIVE SCHEME POLICY**

**1. Introduction**

West Lancashire Borough Council has a limited supply of family sized accommodation when compared with the demand expressed by our Council House Register. The main need is for family houses of two bedrooms or more. The Council has therefore adopted an under-occupation incentive scheme in order to free up these properties.

Under this scheme, council tenants who are giving up these types of accommodation are eligible for cash and practical relocation incentives and are given the highest priority for rehousing in the allocations scheme.

**2. Eligibility**

The Transfer Incentive Scheme is available to tenants who meet the following:

- Have been a secure tenant of West Lancashire Borough Council for a minimum of three years.
- Occupy a general needs family house with two or more bedrooms
- Have a clear rent account or have an agreement in place to clear arrears and Estate Management & Tenant Participation Team agree that a move can take place.
- Agree to provide vacant possession of their present home.
- Agree to transfer to smaller accommodation that meets their bedroom requirement plus a maximum of one bedroom extra, if the tenant prefers from the following property types:
  - General needs flats
  - Sheltered flats
  - Category II accommodation.

The Rent Recovery & Money Advice Team will be consulted where tenants are in rent arrears, but are not subject to a possession order.

**3. Ineligibility**

A Transfer Incentive Scheme Grant will not be available to people who:

- Are subject to a possession order
- Have been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession for anti-social behaviour or a Notice Seeking Possession or Demotion has been served on the tenant in the last 12 months, the tenants are in rent arrears or court proceedings are ongoing, unless dispensation has been granted by Executive Manager Housing & Property Maintenance Services, in consultation with the Portfolio holder

- Hold an introductory tenancy or are licensees
- Have previously received a Tenant Incentive Scheme grant payment

#### **4. Incentive Payments**

Incentive payments will be paid at the following rates to those transferring from family-sized general needs accommodation to smaller or non-adapted property.

- £1,000 if you give up a house and move to a general needs flat
- £1,250 if you give up a house and move to a sheltered flat
- £1,750 if you give up a house and move to Category II accommodation

Plus for each bedroom that is freed up for the Council, by virtue of the move, the following scale will be applied.

- £1,000 if you give up one bedroom
- £1,250 if you give up two bedrooms
- £1,500 if you give up three or more bedrooms

Plus:

The Council will arrange and pay for:

- Furniture removal and relocation
- Disconnection and reconnection of white goods
- Redecoration costs up to a maximum of £600
- Relocation of existing carpets or their replacement if relocation is not appropriate because of room sizes and shape up to a value of £600

Plus will:

- Assist with any forms in relation to notifying housing benefit (if applicable) of your move.
- Assist, if required, in notifying your existing utility companies of your move – Gas, Electric, Phone and Water

#### **5. Budget Limits**

The above payments will be subject to budget limits. If there are more requests for transfer incentive grants than there is funding available, the council will:

- Give priority to those willing to move to sheltered or category II schemes where the move will free up two or more bedrooms.
- Give priority to applications regarded as high demand by the Voids and Allocations Team

Any applications remaining after the exhaustion of funds will be considered should funds for the Scheme be replenished

The council reserves the right to reduce the payments above by:

- The amount of rent arrears owed to the council at the time of transfer; and/or
- 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 tenant and/
- Any other reinstatement works to bring the work back to the Council lettable standard, that are not regarded as fair wear and tear and/or
- Any outstanding court costs

Payments will be authorised once the tenant has moved and following an inspection of the vacated property.

Applicants **must** be registered on the scheme **before** a move takes place for a payment to be authorised.

## **6. Property Inspections**

A pre-transfer inspection will be carried out once the Council has received your Tenant Incentive Grant application form. This will help, in part, determine if there are any likely issues that may impact on the size of any Tenant Incentive Grant payment. E.g. the need to remove non fire retardant ceiling tiles.

## **7. Financial Resources**

The budget available for the existing scheme is currently £140,000. The scheme will be kept under review and the need for any additional funding will be dealt with as part of the annual budget setting process.

## **8. Applications & Assessment**

Transfer applicants must complete a housing application form and TIS Application Form available from the Voids and Allocations Team

Once a transfer applicant has been accepted onto the scheme they will be given appropriate priority by the Voids and Allocations Team and sent a welcome pack with details of the size of property they are eligible for.

The applicant will be contacted in due course with offers of property in line with usual Council policy.

## **9. Local Connection Criteria**

In some parts of West Lancashire there are only a small number of Council homes.

We want to make sure that communities can stay together by giving reasonable preference to people who have a 'local connection' with specific areas of the borough, as well as giving people in housing need the chance to choose where they want to live.

Full details are shown in the Guide to housing allocations" available on the Council Website [www.westlancs.gov.uk](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk)

In order to be considered as having a local connection with an area for example, Burscough or Ormskirk, you must show that you meet one of the following conditions.

You must be able to demonstrate one of the following conditions.

- Have lived in that area for three out of the past five years.
- Have family who have lived in that area for at least the last two years, and you are moving to either give them support or receive support from them.
- Need to move to, or stay in, that area to receive the support of local organisations or support facilities, for example, day centres, treatment centres, and you would not be able to continue to go to these facilities if you moved away from the area.

Those transfer applicants accepted on to the Tenant Incentive Scheme will be subject to the same local connection tests in respect of the area they wish to relocate to, unless the Voids and Allocations Team are satisfied that no other applicant is on the waiting list who would ordinarily satisfy the above local connection criteria.

#### **10. Voids and Allocations Team**

The Scheme will be administered by the Voids and Allocations Team based at Sandy Lane Offices, Skelmersdale. Contact details:

Voids & Allocations Team  
Housing Services Division  
P.O. Box 16  
52 Derby Street  
Ormskirk  
L39 2DF

E-mail: [voidsandallocationsteam@westlancs.gov.uk](mailto:voidsandallocationsteam@westlancs.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01695-577177

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## Examples

Mr and Mrs Jones live in a 3 bedroom house and apply to the scheme. They only require a one bed flat and are prepared to move to a one bed Sheltered Flat. The Transfer Incentive Scheme Grant payment would be £2,500 calculated as follows:

- £1,250 for moving to a sheltered flat
- £1,250 because the Council gained two bedrooms

They would also receive additional assistance as referred to in Paragraph 4, in relation to removal and relocation, some decoration and assistance with carpeting.

Mr and Mrs Jones live in a 2 bedroom house and apply to the scheme. They only require a one bed flat but don't want to lose a bedroom. They are prepared to move to a one bed Sheltered Flat. The Transfer Incentive Scheme Grant payment would be £1,250 calculated as follows:

- £1,250 for moving to a sheltered flat
- £ NIL because the Council did not gain any bedrooms.

They would also receive additional assistance as referred to in Paragraph 4, in relation to removal and relocation, some decoration and assistance with carpeting.