

Mutual exchange

All you need to know about mutual exchange or home-swap – the exchange of properties between tenants



How do I find someone to exchange with?



Because we are committed to offering choice and opportunity to people wanting to move, we participate in HomeSwapper, the UK's largest community of social housing tenants wanting to swap homes. Once you have registered they try to match your requirements, and send you details of applicants whose criteria match yours.

To register simply log on to www.HomeSwapper.co.uk or ask us for a registration form. You will need an email address or a telephone number so that HomeSwapper can contact you.

At our Totnes, Exeter and Plymouth offices we provide internet access to register and check HomeSwapper, or you can come to one of our offices and view a printed copy of the HomeSwapper list which is updated monthly.

What do I do when I have found someone to swap with?



You must complete the mutual exchange application form. This asks for details of your household and of the tenants you wish to swap with, including their household size and landlord's contact details.

If another landlord is involved, we will exchange references with them. We will contact you to arrange a mutual exchange inspection visit. If both tenants involved in the exchange are Devon & Cornwall Housing group tenants, we will visit you within 10 working days to discuss your application. This visit will include an inspection of your current property and a discussion about the exchange process.

You must obtain our written permission before moving, and the written consent of both landlords if you are moving to another area or to a home owned by another landlord.

What will the inspection involve?



The purpose of the inspection is to:

- identify any damage that you will have to put right before you move
- identify any improvements you have made that will become the responsibility of the new tenants to repair or replace
- identify any repairs that are our responsibility, that should be reported before you vacate
- identify any features/furniture/fixtures you are leaving that the new tenants will have to take responsibility for
- reiterate the condition in which you should vacate the property
- confirm your tenancy details
- remind you that you are not able to proceed with the exchange until we confirm it to you in writing.

Before you move, access will also be required to carry out an electrical and gas safety check. It is your responsibility to ensure that all your domestic appliances are properly disconnected by a qualified engineer, if appropriate. Gas appliances should only be disconnected by an engineer registered with the Gas Safe Register. Electric cookers must also be disconnected by a qualified electrician.

What should I check?



It is important that you visit the property you want to move to more than once. Ask the tenants about it, take photos if they allow you to and inspect the property for yourself. It is important to make the right decision about the property you are moving to, so consider:

- how near are the shops, the local schools or the doctor's surgery, and is there a good public transport network?
- is the property the right size for you?
- what will the future running costs of the property be, for example the heating bills?
- will there be much decorating to do?
- is there enough parking?
- can you take your pets?



You should consider the general condition of the property. Some things to look out for:

- do the kitchen drawers open and close properly?
- is there a gas supply for the cooker?
- who supplies the water, electric and gas to the property?
- will your furniture fit?
- if there is a shower or fireplace, are these working – if not, has a repair been requested?
- are all the internal doors in place, and do they open and close properly?
- how many keys are there for the external doors, and do they lock properly?
- is the property clean?
- are the garden and any boundary fences or gates in good condition?

Why would you refuse me permission to exchange?

You must not make any arrangements to move before you receive our written permission. If an exchange takes place without our, or another landlord's permission, you could be evicted.

You must make sure that your rent account is clear before any exchange can take place.

We will give you a written decision within six weeks of your request. We can refuse a request to exchange if:

- you are on a starter or introductory tenancy
- you are subject to a court order (which can include an outright, postponed or suspended possession order), a demotion order or a current anti-social behaviour injunction
- your property is either too small or too large for the reasonable needs of the tenants you want to exchange with
- your property has been designed or adapted for a disabled person, or is part of a sheltered scheme, and the proposed exchange will not be with a disabled person or someone who requires sheltered housing.

Which of my rights and responsibilities as a tenant may be affected?

When you exchange your property, you assign your tenancy and your rights to the other tenant. This means that if the person you swap with is a secure tenant, you will become a secure tenant. If the person you swap with is an assured tenant, you will become an assured tenant.

The exchange may also have other implications. The level of rent you are charged may change. The exchange may affect a future application under the Right to Buy/Right to Acquire Scheme. The right of succession may also be affected, as the rights of secure and assured tenants differ. Assigning a tenancy by carrying out a mutual exchange is treated as one succession.

When you exchange, you will take on the other tenant's responsibility for repairs. If you are moving into another Devon & Cornwall Housing group property, we will carry out a safety check and complete any routine repairs, but any damage caused by the previous tenant will become your responsibility. Any improvements the previous tenant has made will also become your responsibility to maintain. It is important to thoroughly inspect the property before agreeing to exchange, as you will be agreeing to take over the tenancy and the property in the current state 'as seen'. We will not carry out any decoration or fix any damage caused by the previous tenant, unless you agree beforehand to be charged for the costs of the work. This includes the removal of any rubbish left by the outgoing tenant.

If you are moving to another landlord's property the same principles will apply.

What do I do once consent has been given?

We will agree a date for the exchange to take place with you, the other tenant and the other landlord (if there is one). We will meet you and the other tenant at our offices or at your address, so that you can both sign the Deed of Assignment, the legal document which formally transfers both tenancies. The move can then take place. We will not hold any keys, and it will be your responsibility to agree with the other tenant when to swap keys and actually move out. Your tenancies will officially start on the date of assignment, which is clearly shown on the Deed of Assignment. You are then ready to move in and enjoy your new home.



