

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board 17th December 2012

Transfer Removal Grant Policy and Leaflet

Report of the Housing Manager Lettings – Paul Hadley

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

This report provides members of the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) with details of a proposed new Transfer Removal Grant (TRG) Policy and an updated TRG Information Leaflet that aims to assist council tenants when moving to more suitable accommodation.

The policy outlines what tenants can expect from Housing Services to assist them when moving to more suitable accommodation. The leaflet provides information all about the TRG scheme.

Board members will note that this agenda item was presented to the TSMB at its November 2012 meeting. Additional information is now available and is attached as Appendix 1. All the other information has not changed from the last board meeting but is included to help remind members of what was presented.

2.0 Background

The supply of appropriately sized good quality housing has a key role to play in positively influencing living standards, health, development and the wellbeing of households.

Demand for social housing in Taunton Deane, in particular family sized housing, is such that it can mean a long wait for applicants.

The aim of the TRG policy is to encourage existing Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) tenants who are under occupying their property, or those who are willing to vacate a purpose built disabled property, to move to another council or housing association accommodation that will be more suitable in meeting their current housing needs.

3.0 Transfer Removal Grant Policy

Full details of the policy can be found at Appendix 2 to this report.

The policy sets out:

- Which tenants are eligible;
- What support Housing Services can give to tenants who wish to move to more suitable accommodation; and
- How and what grant can they expect on completion of their move.

4.0 Transfer Removal Grant Information Leaflet

Full details of the leaflet can be found at Appendix 3 of this report.

5.0 Approximate costs

The cost of implementing this policy will be met within existing budgets.

The Housing Services current annual TRG budget is £30,000.

6.0 Consultation and Timetable

Consultation with tenants was carried out between the 1st July 2012 and 31st August 2012. Tenants who had previously accessed the existing TRG scheme were canvassed for their views and comments.

A second stage of consultation was completed with the members of the Tenants' Forum on the 21st September 2012 where the proposed new policy and leaflet were discussed and comments received.

On the 19th November 2012 the TSMB was asked to consider the proposed new policy and information leaflet and provided a response.

Both documents will then be presented to Cllr Jean Adkins - Housing Portfolio Holder for approval.

Subject to agreement/approval by all of the above the policy and information leaflet will be implemented with effect of 2nd January 2013.

7.0 Equalities Impact

An equality impact assessment has been carried out. Feedback has been obtained from tenants and members of the Tenants' Forum. A completed equality impact assessment can be found at Appendix 4.

8.0 Recommendation

TSMB members are requested to consider this report and indicate whether they support the proposed new policy and information leaflet after reviewing the additional information contained in Appendix 1

TSMB members are requested to recommend a suitable financial incentive for tenants to downsize after reviewing the additional information contained in Appendix 1.

Contact officers:

Paul Hadley, Housing Manager – Lettings
Tel: 01823 356334
Email: p.hadley@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Further Information – Transfer Removal Grant (TRG)

Thank you for the comments from November's board meeting. I have below provided you with further information and would like to seek your views on how much you think we should be offering as a TRG.

Information

In order to assist you in reaching your recommendations I would like to make you aware of some of the research we completed prior to presenting the TRG report. Having researched best practice nationally and with other providers it is no longer the case that the best schemes use the financial award as being the most effective inducement for people to downsize. People who wish to downsize are far more motivated by the desirability of the property and assistance with their move rather than a cash incentive.

TRG Survey

Following the 2011/12 financial year, Steven Clarke, Tenant Services Development Officer, conducted a survey with all TDBC TRG service users to canvass their views on the scheme in place at the time. The 16 service users were asked a series of questions about their experience, the results are as follows:

Q1 – How did you find out about the scheme?

50% heard about the scheme from TDBC officers and publications.

Q2 – How did you rate the information provided?

63% rated the information provided as good or very good.

Q3 – How would you rate the overall ease of the move?

69% rated their move as straightforward.

Q4 – How would you rate the way TDBC dealt with your application?

69% of people rated it as good.

Q5 - What encouraged you to consider this move?

(In this question the respondents were allowed to select as many options they thought were applicable)

The majority of respondents gave choice of area, type of property and designated housing officer to deal with their move.

Q6 – Please list your top 4 benefits?

The majority selected a priority move as the top benefit, having a designated housing officer was second, choice of area was third and type of property offered was fourth.

Q7 – If you refused offers what was the reason?

Only 3 responded to this question. 2 stated they had missed out as they were unable to complete at Choice Based Lettings short listing and one refused the location of the property offered.

Performance 2011/12

- 16 TRG's were awarded during the year.
- 11 tenants downsized from 3+ bed roomed properties to either one or two bed properties.
- £26,250 was paid out from the Transfer Removal Grant funding.

Performance 2012/13

To date, in this financial year we have completed 17 TRG's with a total grant award of £23,250.

- 7 of the grants were for the full grant of £2,000
- 2 were for £1,500
- 1 was for £1,000
- The remaining 7 were for £750.

I anticipate a further 3 TRGs which will be awarded by early December 2012 which will amount to an additional £3,500 (1 x £2,000 and 2 x £750). This will take the total spend up to £26,750.

With the current take up of grants and the remaining time in the year, I would expect us to have completed up to 34 TRGs by year end (target for the year was 20).

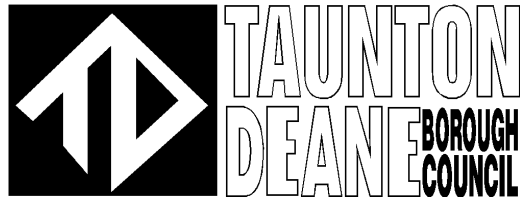
Question

Based on the information I have provided above and your comments from the last board meeting I would be grateful if you could give me your views on what you think would be a suitable financial incentive for our tenants to downsize.

Paul Hadley, Housing Manager – Lettings

Tel: 01823 356334

Email: p.hadley@tauntondeane.gov.uk



TRANSFER REMOVAL GRANT POLICY

NOVEMBER 2012

Policy Title:	Transfer Removal Grant Policy
Lead Officers:	Paul Hadley – Housing Manager Lettings
Policy drafted by:	Paul Hadley – Housing Manager Lettings
Date Agreed by Board:	
Date Equality Impact Assessment completed:	9 th November 2012
Next Review Date:	

Transfer Removal Grant Policy

The aim of the transfer removal grant (TRG) policy is to encourage existing Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) tenants who are under occupying their property, or those who are willing to vacate a purpose built disabled property, to move to another council or housing association accommodation that will be more suitable in meeting their current housing needs.

In providing the TRG scheme the housing service will:

- Offer financial support to TDBC tenants of 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom houses who are presently under occupying and wish to move to smaller sized council or housing association accommodation.
- Offer financial support and additional assistance where TDBC housing service requires a tenant who has been left in a family house or a disabled persons dwelling, to transfer to more suitable accommodation. These situations will arise where the former tenant has died or otherwise vacated the dwelling.
- Offer financial support and additional assistance to help both tenants and the housing service to avoid expensive Disabled Facilities Grant work on their existing home, by arranging a transfer to a property where such extensive works are not required.
- Offer financial support and additional assistance to any TDBC tenant regardless of age, who is willing to vacate a purpose built disabled persons property and move to more suitable smaller accommodation.

Tenants who are mutually exchanging will not be eligible for a grant.

Due to limited resources TRG financial support will be provided on a 'first come first served' basis.

- Limit the maximum amount of financial support to £2,000 per application, making deductions for any debts owed to the council prior to payment.
- Regularly promote the scheme in order to raise awareness.
- Review its TRG policy every 3 years and the budget for the scheme annually.

Transfer Removal Grant Scheme at Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services

Transfer Removal Grant Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to encourage existing Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) tenants who are under occupying their property, or those who are willing to vacate a purpose built disabled property, to move to other council or housing association accommodation that will be more suitable in meeting their current housing needs.

Who Qualifies?

Tenants of 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom houses - Grant of up to £2,000 payable

Any TDBC tenant who is presently under-occupying their property could qualify for a maximum grant of up to £2,000.

The amount payable will be dependent upon the size of the property you currently live in and the type of TDBC property you move to.

How and when is the Grant paid?

The grant will be paid by direct bank payment, cheque or a rent credit. Prior to the payment being approved any debts owed to the Council will be deducted.

For example:

Rent Arrears; Court costs; Re-charges for repair works that the tenant is responsible for; Sundry debts and; Housing Benefit overpayments.

The tenant will be notified by letter of any deductions at the time payment is approved.

In order to improve the housing service for its tenants, on completion of your move a satisfaction survey will be carried out with you.

For further information please contact:

Housing Manager Lettings
Taunton Deane Borough Council,
The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE
Tel: 01823 356334 Fax: 01823 356583
Email: lettingsteam@tauntondeane.co.uk Web:
www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

Application for a tenants Transfer Removal Grant (TRG)

Name:
Current Address:
Telephone Number:
Mobile Number:

I/We would like to be considered for a Tenants Transfer Removal Grant.

Signed:
Signed:

Date:
Date:

Details of where to send this application are given on the reverse of the tear off slip.

Should you wish to apply for a TRG please complete the application on the reverse of this leaflet and return it to:

Housing Manager Lettings
Taunton Deane Borough Council,
The Deane House,
Belvedere Road,
Taunton,
TA1 1HE.

If you would like this document translated into other languages or in Braille, large print, audio tape, or CD please telephone us on 01823 356356 or email us at: enquiries@tauntondeane.co.uk

Equality Impact Assessment – pro-forma

Responsible person	<i>P. Hadley</i>	Job Title Lettings Manager
Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)	Proposed new policy/service	Transfer Removal Grant Scheme
	Change to Policy/service	New
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	None
	Part of timetable	None
What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which, service, MTFP proposal)	Health and Housing Theme (Lettings)	
Section One – Scope of the assessment		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy/decision/service?	<i>Introduction of Policy and guidelines to support the amended TRG leaflet. To make best use of housing stock and give tenants the opportunity to move within our stock.</i>	
Which protected groups are targeted by the policy/decision/service?	<i>NO protected groups are specifically targeted by the introduction of the policy.</i>	
What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used	<i>Tenants who have used the service in 11/12 have completed a questionnaire. Also tenants who wish to downsize have been questioned. Liaison with the Tenants Forum has taken place.</i>	
The information can be found on....	<i>All the info is available on sclar\$ on 'ltostrv' u drive held by Taunton Deane</i>	

Section two – Conclusion drawn about the impact of service/policy/function/change on different groups highlighting negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities for promoting equality

No negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities identified

I have concluded that there is/should be:

No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	No Major Change to policy
Adjust the policy/decision/service	
Continue with the policy/decision/service	
Stop and remove the policy/decision/service	

Reasons and documentation to support conclusions

Section four – Implementation – timescale for implementation

TRG policy and leaflets to go before the Tenants Service Management Board in October. Then if agreed to go to the portfolio holder with a plan to introduce on the 2nd January 2013.

Section Five – Sign off

Responsible officer P Hadley

Date

Management Team Lettings Team Manager

Date

Section six – Publication and monitoring

Published on

Next review date

Date logged on Covalent

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Action Planning

The table should be completed with all actions identified to mitigate the effects concluded.

Actions table						
Service area				Date		
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions	