

Mutual exchange

What is a mutual exchange?

A Mutual Exchange is where two (or more) tenants with secure or assured tenancies decide they want to swap homes.

Who can do a mutual exchange?

Most tenants have a right to exchange homes. There are some circumstances when an exchange will not be allowed and these are listed under 'Mutual Exchange Conditions'.

Why should I want to exchange rather than be transferred by the Association?

A Mutual Exchange may be the best option because:

- You may want to transfer to a property outside of your current area.
- You may not have many 'points' on your transfer application and face a long wait for a transfer.
- You have a wider choice of properties with a mutual exchange, as you can only transfer into a property which has become empty.

How do I find someone who wants to exchange with me?

For local exchanges, a touch computer detailing people who wish to exchange and some details of their requirements is held in the Reception of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Offices. There is also a list of people wanting to exchange which can be viewed at Sentinel's Fleet office.

Sentinel Housing Association is a member of HomeSwapper Scheme which promotes mutual exchanges across the country. You can register and check the HomeSwapper database for suitable exchanges on line at www.homeswapper.co.uk. If you don't have access to a computer, you can pop into our office and use one of ours.

You could also consider putting a card in the local shop or community centre, in the area you would like to move to.

We want to swap homes what should we do next?

Firstly you should complete the application forms and return them to us. The exchange cannot be considered until we have received an application form from all parties involved in the exchange.

It is important that you do not move until Sentinel has agreed in writing to the exchange, and you have all signed the relevant paperwork at our offices. If you swap houses without the agreement of the Association you will be required to return to your original property.

What happens next?

If the exchange is acceptable to us, we will inspect your property. Both exchange parties should be present at this inspection. You could be responsible for repairs in the property and these may have to be completed before the exchange goes ahead. If the repairs are not completed, you may be charged for the cost of the repairs.

- When you move into your new home, you will be accepting the property in its current condition. Therefore it is important to make sure you inspect the new home thoroughly and are happy with the condition of the property before you agree to the exchange.
- If everything is acceptable, you will be asked to come into the offices to sign the paperwork. **All tenants** must be present: If one tenant does not turn up, the exchange cannot go ahead.
- Before you will be able to move, we will arrange for our gas contractors to check the boiler and any other gas appliances which are to be left in the property to ensure that they are safe. The contractors will also disconnect any gas appliances which are being moved as part of the exchange. We will also arrange for our electrical contractors to carry out an electrical safety check and if possible will try to arrange these visits for the same day.

How long will this take?

We will give you a final decision on whether or not the exchange can go ahead as quickly as possible. The decision may take up to 42 days.

Mutual exchange conditions

Sentinel may refuse the exchange for any of the following reasons;

- The incoming or outgoing tenant is subject to a current Court Order or current Notice of Possession or Demotion Notice.
- The incoming or outgoing tenant is on a temporary or Starter Tenancy.
- The property is larger than needed by the incoming tenant. It is acceptable to have one bedroom more than what is needed.
- The property is too small for the incoming tenant.
- The property is suitable for a specific group of people and nobody moving into the home is in this group. This includes properties with disabled adaptations, close to a special needs facility, in a rural development, or properties for a specified age, such as over 55's.
- The incoming or outgoing tenant has rent arrears or court costs. These will need to be cleared before the exchange can go ahead.
- There are other breaches of tenancy such as damage or unauthorised adaptations which will need to be rectified before the exchange can go ahead.

Your rights and responsibilities

Your rights and responsibilities may change when you exchange, in particular your rights to succession and your right to buy. Please contact your Neighbourhood Co-ordinator for more information on 0800 195 5515 from a landline or 0300 666 5515 from a mobile.

Further advice for tenants exchanging

- If you have a pet, you must ask for our permission to keep your pet in your new home before you exchange. Ask for a copy of our Keeping a pet, information sheet.
- Don't arrange removals etc until a date for the exchange has been agreed by the Association, in writing.
- Make sure you have visited the property you intend to move to in daylight and are satisfied with its condition.
- You must allow our contractors into your property to check your boiler and any other gas appliances, such as a cooker or fire. They will disconnect any gas appliances which you are taking with you.
- If you move into a Sentinel property, you must have any gas appliances fitted by a Gas Safety fitter at your own expense.
- Remember to agree with the other party as to what is to be left behind. We will not be responsible for items removed or altered after our inspection.
- Be aware that a condition of this exchange is that Sentinel properties will be subject to an inspection prior to approval being given. Both the outgoing and incoming tenants will be required to be present at these inspections.
- Remember to tell the Electricity and Gas companies and TV licencing that you are moving and the date. Please also inform the Council Tax Section of the Local Authority in whose area you are moving to and let the Water Board know you are moving.
- Make sure you clear any arrears on pre payment gas and electric meters and remember to leave your key/card for the incoming tenant.
- You must arrange to swap house keys with the person you are exchanging your home with. Please do not hand them in at our offices.
- If you are receiving Housing Benefit, you must complete a new Housing Benefit form before moving in, preferably on the day you call into the Association's offices to sign the documentation.
- If you are receiving Income Support/Unemployment Benefit etc you **must** tell the Department of Work and Pensions **immediately**. If you do not, your Housing Benefit will not be granted until you have told the Department of Work and Pensions and you will be responsible for the full rent until you do.
- Don't forget to get your mail redirected. Call at your Post Office for details.

If you would like
Mutual exchange
in large print, braille or translated please contact the
Customer Service Centre on
0800 195 5515 from a landline or
0300 666 5515 from your mobile.

