

Mutual exchange Factsheet

What is it?

Mutual exchange is a way for council or housing-association tenants to swap their properties for a more suitable home anywhere in the UK. The mutual exchange scheme is an advisable alternative to the Choice Based Lettings points systems for re-housing.

Who is it for?

Council or housing association tenants.

You do not need to be registered on the transfer list or have any points to participate in this scheme.

Benefits of swapping:

- you find the home you want, which will be more suited to your needs
- you decide when you would like a move to take place
- you could choose to swap into a home that is either one bedroom too large or one bedroom too small (tenants of working age that are under occupying beyond their housing need may be susceptible to the bedroom tax of between 14-25%).
- you do not need points
- you do not bid for a property.
- you may not need to decorate (you will be accepting the property as it is)
- you will not be subject to clearance charges.

How do I apply?

Tenants can sign up to the **Homeswapper** or **Houseexchange** websites to find an exchange partner which suits their needs. Both websites are free to Islington Council tenants and some RSL/HA tenants. Some housing association tenants may have to pay a small fee to register if their landlord is not part of the scheme.

Once found both/all tenants wanting to exchange properties must complete and sign an **Islington Council Mutual Exchange form** which is available at all Area Housing Offices and from the Islington Council website. If applying as joint tenants both tenants must sign the form.

Mutual exchange forms can be posted to:

**PO Box 34750, London,
N7 9WF**

Alternatively forms can be handed in at all Housing Area offices and

**The Islington Customer
Centre, 222 Upper Street,
London, N1 1XR**

How does it work?

Once you are registered with the site of your choice, you can log on at any time to view and search for matches. Both Homeswapper and houseexchange will search for possible new swaps every day.

You can also arrange to be sent 'match alerts' by email or by text message to your phone.

The Homeswapper list is also available to view at your area housing office.

Contact any matches asking of their interest in your property (keeping descriptions and questions brief).

Once a possible match has been found, you should arrange a visit (preferably accompanied by a friend or family member) to ensure that the property is suitable to your needs.

If all parties are happy then each tenant involved will need to complete their own Islington Council Exchange form. Out of borough and housing association tenants will need to contact their landlords to complete the correct forms.

The Islington Council Mutual Exchange form is available at www.islington.gov.uk/housing

Your landlord will have to give permission before you can go ahead with the swap.

Successful exchanges require a clear rent account with no arrears. However, incentives may be able to be used to assist with such circumstances for under occupying tenants planning to take part in a **smart move**.

Under occupiers are still eligible for the incentive grant through the smart move scheme providing they swap within the borough with an overcrowded family, to date this is £750 per room given up and up to £400 for removals (Exact housing need can be provided by the housing options team).

Who can help me?

If you need help to register with Homeswapper, Houseexchange or to complete the Mutual Exchange application form you can contact the Housing Options team on **020 7527 4140 and select Option 3** to speak to a Mutual exchange officer. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to visit the Mutual Exchange Officer at:

The Islington Customer Centre
222 Upper Street
London
N1 1XR

The exchange process

- Once received mutual exchange forms will be processed and your 42 day count will begin. All mutual exchanges legally require a decision to be made within this timeframe.
- Within one or two weeks after all forms have been received you should be visited by a tenancy officer who will assess your property and prepare a reference. (Laminate flooring above the ground floor may need to be removed if it is located above a neighbouring tenant).
- References are passed between landlords and providing there are no issues, you will be contacted with a decision from the tenancy management team.
- A member of the tenancy management team will arrange a time for tenants to come in and sign over tenancies, sign up can take minimum 45mins- max of over an hour depending on questions.
- Tenant and Joint tenants will need to attend the sign up as photographs will need to be taken and put on the assignment sheet.
- The date of assignment is decided by the tenants and assignees. This will be the date the tenancies are exchanged between tenants (this can be any time after approval is given but must be a Monday – the start of the new rent period).
- If the incoming tenant wants to apply for housing benefit, they will need to see a housing benefit officer, at sign up. This part usually takes 10mins.
- Lastly, the incoming tenant would need to see an Income Recovery officer, to provide their details and ensure that their new rent account is set up correctly.