

Downsizing Incentive Scheme

a Guide



Alternative Formats

If you need information from the Moray Council in a different language or format, such as Braille, audio tape or **large print**, please contact:

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Jeśli potrzebuj? Państwo informacji od Rady Okręgu Moray w innym formacie, takim jak alfabet Braille'a, kasety audio lub druk dużą czcionką, prosimy o kontakt:

Se necessitar de receber informações por parte do Concelho de Moray num formato diferente, como Braille, cassete áudio ou letras grandes, contacte:

Ja Jums vajadzīga informācija no Marejas domes (Moray Council) citā valodā vai formātā, piemēram, Braila rakstā, audio lentā vai lielā drukā, sazinieties ar:

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What is the Downsizing Incentive Scheme?

The Downsizing Incentive Scheme is a voluntary scheme that offers practical support and financial assistance to help eligible applicants to move. Tenants and qualifying occupiers must apply for the scheme. There is no pressure to move if you don't want to.

To be eligible you must be either:

- a tenant who lives in Council housing that is now too big for your needs; or
- a tenant or qualifying occupier who lives in an adapted property and you no longer need the adapted or specialist feature of the house.

The aim of the scheme is to help people who want to transfer to a smaller or more suitable house. It also releases properties which are in greatest need and are in areas that have the highest demand. The Scheme aims to help 25 households each year to transfer to more suitable housing.

Why would I want to move?

You may want to move because your current home:

- is too big for you. You may find it easier to maintain and pay the bills in a smaller house; or
- has been adapted and your household no longer needs the specialist features of the house.

How can I apply to the scheme?

If you are interested, please contact us (see [page 12](#) for details). We will ask you to confirm some basic details. One of the questions we will ask is whether or not you have a current housing application.

What are the criteria for the Scheme?

You may qualify if you:

- are a Moray Council tenant and you:
 - live in a three or more bedroom Council property (flat, maisonette, bungalow or house);
 - have at least one bedroom spare; and
 - want to move to a smaller property. This does not have to be the same type as your current home.

or

- are a tenant or qualifying occupier who lives in an adapted property of any size and there is nobody in your household who needs the specialist features.

In addition:

- you must have a satisfactory tenancy report that shows that:
 - your home meets our standards;
 - we are not taking antisocial behaviour action against you; and
 - you do not have unmanageable housing related debt;
- your current home is in an area of demand and we can easily relet it.

What is a qualifying occupier?

You are a qualifying occupier if you live in one of our tenant's homes as your only and main home, and:

- you are a member of the tenant's family and aged at least 16;
- the tenant has, with our agreement, transferred the tenancy, sublet or otherwise given up possession of their home or any part of it to you; or
- they have, with our agreement, taken you in as a lodger.

For more information please see our leaflet 'Qualifying Occupiers'

Are there any circumstances when I would not qualify?

In certain circumstances you may not be eligible for the scheme. These include:

- if you live in an adapted property and a member of your household still needs the specialist facilities;
- if you want to downsize but do not live in a three or more bedroom property;
- if the property that you live in is not in an area of demand and we will not be able to easily relet it;
- if the type of property that you live in is not in demand and we will not be able to easily relet it;
- if you have unmanageable housing related debts;
- if an inspection of your property, that would be carried out as part of this scheme, proves to be unsatisfactory;
- if we have recently taken action against you or members of your household because of antisocial behaviour; or
- there is no funding left.

Do I have to fill in a housing application?

Yes. If you have not filled in a housing application form you will need to fill one in. If you have already filled in a housing application form, you are probably on our waiting list and will not need to fill in another form. We will check this when you contact us.

Do I need to move to the same area or could I move to another area?

You do not need to apply within the same area where you live but it must be in Moray. If a property that meets your housing needs (as decided by our Allocations Policy) is available in an area of your preference, we may be able to make you an offer in this area.

How many offers can I have?

The scheme works along with our Allocations Policy. This means you will be given two reasonable offers that take your preferences into account. If you refuse both offers within a period of one year, we will not make any other offers of housing to you for six months. This starts from the date of your last offer. Refusing an offer of housing because you did not get assistance from the scheme will not be considered a reasonable refusal.

Can I be sure that I will get help?

We will always try and give you practical help. However, funding for this scheme is limited. You will get the financial help:

- if you are eligible; and
- if there is still money available in the budget.

How will you consider my application?

If you have registered an interest in the scheme, we will review your housing application and assess your eligibility.

If I am successful, what practical help will I get?

Depending on your circumstances and needs, we can help you with the following:

- giving you information and advice about the downsizing scheme;
- filling in forms;
- viewings and removal arrangements;
- arranging to disconnect/reconnect utilities etc;
- notifying agencies of your change of address, GP, Bank etc;
- helping you to arrange and dispose of unwanted furniture; and
- giving you information about Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, money advice and making the most of your income.

What will happen if I get an offer of housing?

We will:

- allocate you a named officer who will give you advice and assistance; and
- tell you about additional help that we can offer you. For example, your named officer can also help you fill in any forms and help you through the tenancy sign up process.

If you accept an offer of housing you will also be expected to give up your current tenancy. You must sign a form to agree to this. This means that you and any members of your household must move out of your property and return the keys to your local area office. Any relatives, friends or lodgers who stay with you will not be granted permission to take over this tenancy.

Your named officer will provide you with more information about this before you sign up for your new tenancy.

What if I have a lot of furniture that I don't need?

If you have furniture that you won't need in your new home, then we can give you information and signpost you to agencies that can help you. We can also help with arranging to dispose of it.

How much financial assistance can I get?

If you qualify for the scheme and there is funding left, you will get a basic payment of £1500. In addition, we will give you a disruption payment of £400 and £400 for each bedroom that you give up. For example, if you move from a four bedroom house to a two bedroom house you will be entitled to:

Basic grant	£1,500
Plus disruption allowance	£400
Plus (£400 per bedroom given up)	£800
Grant awarded	£2,700

What if I owe the Council money?

You may owe us money due to outstanding rent arrears or rechargeable repairs. If this is the case, we will deduct this from the amount that you are due to get and will pay you the difference.

When will I get the downsizing payment?

We will arrange for a payment to be made as soon as possible after you sign your new tenancy agreement. (Remember, if you are paid by cheque, your bank will take additional time to process the cheque).

What if I do not have a bank account?

If you do not have a bank account, you can suggest someone else who has a bank account gets a cheque on your behalf. This can be arranged when you sign your tenancy agreement.

What happens if I change my mind about moving?

Remember this is a voluntary scheme. You do not need to move unless you choose to do so. If you change your mind about moving just get in contact with your named officer as soon as possible. They will tell you if you need to do anything else.

It's also important that you keep your named officer up to date with any changes in your circumstances.

What happens if I move again after I have used the downsizing scheme?

If you end your tenancy within 12 months of getting a grant, you may have to repay the money that you received, unless there are exceptional circumstances. You will only get a downsizing grant once.

What are my rights to appeal?

If you are not satisfied with a decision made under the downsizing incentive scheme you should write to the Housing Services Manager within 28 days of getting your decision.

The Council operates a complaints procedure that is available to any applicant who is not satisfied with the way in which an application has been dealt with. Contact us for more information.

Your Notes

Contacts

Housing and Property
PO Box 6760
Elgin
IV30 1BX

0300 123 4566

housing@moray.gov.uk

We are continually trying to improve the services that we offer and welcome any comments or suggestions. Please send them to:

Housing & Property (Housing Policy)
Moray Council
PO Box 6760
Elgin
IV30 1BX

housingpolicy@moray.gov.uk

Or visit any of our access points:

Buckie Access Point
13 Cluny Square
Buckie
AB56 1AJ

Forres Access Point
Auchernack
High Street
Forres
IV36 1DX

Elgin Access Point
Council Office
High Street
Elgin
IV30 1BY

Keith Access Point
The Resource Centre
26 Mid Street
Keith
AB55 5AH



We review our leaflets regularly to make sure you have the most up-to-date information. However, the content of this leaflet is only correct at the time it is published.

For more information or advice contact us on **0300 123 4566** or visit our website at **www.moray.gov.uk/housing**