

Transfers and exceptional moves policy

South Staffordshire and Shropshire



Transfers and exceptional moves service standards

Our promise to you

We are committed to providing excellent customer service, so that every time you contact us you have a good experience. Our transfers and exceptional moves standard sets out what you can expect from us when you apply for a transfer from your existing Homes Plus home in South Staffordshire and Shropshire.

We will:

- ♦ Aim to process your transfer application within five working days, which is the maximum time it will take from you making an application and hearing back from us. *
- ♦ Ask you to complete a virtual property inspection and provide the relevant information to us within ten working days. Guidance on how to do this will be sent to you.
- ♦ Offer a tailored service to customers who need extra support to complete an application or virtual inspection.* Further details can be found in our Access to services policy, which is available in the customer documents area of our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/documents.
- ♦ We will contact you within five working days of receiving your information, to confirm the outcome of your property inspection.

*** Please note: this does not apply to Homes Plus customers requesting a move to Shropshire.**

All transfer applications to homes in Shropshire are dealt with directly by Shropshire HomePoint. Homes Plus cannot influence their timescales or provide additional support with their applications.

Policy	Transfers and exceptional moves policy
Date adopted	November 2022
Date of next review	November 2025
Version	1
Responsible board	Homes board
Responsible officer	Head of lettings

1. Policy statement and purpose

This policy sets out our approach to internal transfers and exceptional moves for existing Homes Plus customers and should be read alongside our lettings policy.

This policy is aligned with the Regulatory Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing and our Quality Strategy.

2. What the policy covers

This policy covers all our social and affordable rented homes, including supported and specialist housing.

3. Definitions contained in the policy

Exceptional move – A move for a Homes Plus customer, who needs to move urgently because there is an immediate risk of harm.

Risk of harm – Definitions of risks of harm are detailed on page five of this policy.

Transfer – Existing Homes Plus/retirement living customers wishing to move to another Homes Plus home.

4. Applying for housing with Homes Plus in South Staffordshire or Shropshire

Existing Homes Plus customers who wish to transfer must have:

- ♦ Lived in their current Homes Plus home for two years
- ♦ Two weeks rent credit on their rent account, when the formal offer of a new home is made
- ♦ Passed our property condition inspection

You can apply for a transfer online at www.homesplus.co.uk. If you need assistance to do this, please contact our lettings team for support.

5. Current housing circumstances and property inspection

When applying for a transfer, you must be able to evidence the reasons why you need to move. You will be eligible if your circumstances meet the priority banding of Silver or higher, subject to the requirements set out above.

If you do not meet these requirements then your application will be cancelled and you will be unable to transfer to another Homes Plus property at this time.*

If you would like to consider a mutual exchange, you can find further information on our website www.homesplus.co.uk.

If you meet the banding criteria, you will be asked to complete a virtual property inspection. You will receive a letter informing you of what is required and the information you gather will be assessed by your neighbourhood officer*. They will make a decision if the virtual inspection shows that your home is well maintained and looked after. If so, your transfer application will be approved and you will be

given information about how to express an interest on properties, along with the priority banding that you have been awarded.

If you cannot provide a virtual inspection of your home, your neighbourhood officer** will arrange a home visit to complete the property inspection.

If your home is not in a good condition, for example there is damage or alterations have been carried out without the permission of Homes Plus, then a neighbourhood officer will let you know that you have not passed the inspection. If appropriate, the neighbourhood team will work with you to resolve the issues of concern.

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****** *If you live in one of our retirement living communities, your retirement living officer will support you with your virtual property inspection and make a transfer decision based on the information gathered.*

Decision not to progress a transfer application

We may decide not to progress your transfer application for any of the following reasons:

- ◆ Your home failed the property inspection
- ◆ You have not been in your current Homes Plus home for two years
- ◆ You owe money to Homes Plus on a current or former tenancy account, including rent arrears, court costs, rechargeable repair costs and former tenancy arrears
- ◆ Outstanding repairs at your home have not been reported to us
- ◆ You have been served with a breach of tenancy notice and there is an active notice in place
- ◆ You are subject to an active anti-social behaviour case or any other tenancy enforcement action

You will be advised in writing if your application is unsuccessful.

Once a transfer application has been refused, you will be unable to apply for a transfer for six months, unless your circumstances have significantly changed.

If you can give us evidence that shows you need to move but your application was unsuccessful, due to any of the issues listed above, your application will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by an appropriate neighbourhood officer. If it is agreed that a move is required, this will be considered an exceptional move. Further information about exceptional moves can be found below.

Bedrooms and priority banding – what does this mean for me?

Bedroom eligibility

When assessing your housing application, we will let you know what type and size of home you will be eligible for.

When we advertise our homes, we will be clear about the property type and number of bedrooms, including any lettings criteria for the property.

Further information regarding bedroom eligibility can be found in our lettings policy and lettings key facts sheet, which can be found in the customer document area of our website –

www.homesplus.co.uk/documents

Priority banding

We will award applicants one of three priority bands based on the information provided to us at the time of application, including information provided within the application form and supporting

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evidence. All applications are assessed on housing and medical need and the three priority bands are outlined in the table below:

Gold Priority	An existing Homes Plus customer is occupying specialist, adapted accommodation and it is no longer required.
Gold – The applicant needs to move urgently and can no longer live in their current home	An existing Homes Plus customer has been awarded high medical priority, defined as: ♦ Extreme physical disability requiring care assistance which restricts the customers independence or impedes their ability to live safely making their current property not suitable for their needs. ♦ Instances of mobility support within the customer's current home that make facilities above ground floor inaccessible An existing Homes Plus customer is over-crowded by one or more bedrooms (details of this can be found in the eligibility section of the lettings policy). An existing Homes Plus customer is under-occupying their current property by one or more bedrooms.
Silver – The applicant's current home is not suitable for their needs, but they are able to stay there whilst they find another home	Medium medical priority awarded where an existing Homes Plus customer suffers from incapacity or mobility problems, chronic illness or a long-term health condition which either prevents them accessing all facilities within the home, or only reaching them with severe difficulty. For example - but not limited to - disabling arthritis, severe asthma or angina, which prevents them from climbing the stairs inside the home, or steps outside the home. An existing Homes Plus customer currently resides in a 2-bed flat above ground floor, with no lift access and two children occupying the second bedroom. An existing Homes Plus customer needs to receive support from - or give support to - a close family member.

Transfer Promise

If you are accepted onto the waiting list for a transfer, you will be asked to sign a transfer promise. This promise means that you agree to certain commitments before a move to another Homes Plus home can take place. A copy of the transfer promise can be found in the customer document area of our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/documents

Exceptional moves

We understand that sometimes, existing customers may need to move outside of our lettings or transfer process. This will be infrequent and only in the most urgent of circumstances. An exceptional move will be considered when we have become aware that the safety of a customer or household is at risk if they remain in their current home.

It is anticipated that any exceptional move will be supported by the police, social services and any other appropriate supporting agency, where applicable.

Where an exceptional move has been accepted due to domestic abuse, the offer of alternative housing will be outside of the area that you currently live, to ensure your safety. This will also be considered in the case of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), hate crime or harassment.

If you have been accepted for an exceptional move yet refuse a reasonable offer of an alternative home, your priority will be withdrawn unless you can provide a legitimate reason for the refusal.

Below are examples of exceptional circumstances and the supporting evidence required. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk	Detail	Evidence required	Exceptional move decision
1. You are fleeing domestic abuse.	<i>All information applies to points 1-7</i>	<i>All information applies to points 1-7</i>	<i>All information applies to points 1-7</i>
2. You are a victim of anti-social behaviour, which is having a serious impact on your wellbeing, or you are at risk of harm.	The risk is serious and ongoing.	Current police reports.	Direct let
3. You are a victim of harassment or hate crime with threat to life.	The risk means you cannot remain in your current Homes Plus property or location beyond a certain length of time.	Current Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) or Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO).	Gold priority banding awarded for three months.
4. Your personal safety or mental health is at risk. The personal safety or mental health of a member of your household is at risk. These situations include, but are not limited to: - Domestic abuse - Child or adult safeguarding - Assault - Sexual assault - Neglect - Threatening behaviour - Torture or trauma - Modern day slavery, exploitation, trafficking, at risk of extremist views leading to terrorism. - Cuckooing (the practice of taking over the home of a vulnerable person in order to establish a base for illegal drug dealing, typically as part of a county lines operation).	Safeguarding concerns in place by Local Authority.	Supporting letter/information provided by a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).	Allow to move with rent arrears/property condition concerns.
5. You live in Shropshire and major adaptations cannot be completed on your own home. (If you live in Staffordshire, you will be awarded priority under this policy).	The current property or location significantly increases the risk and reduces your safety, so apart from moving there are no other practical steps to remove the risk.	Homes Plus employees can evidence a history of working with a victim of domestic abuse, where they don't feel safe in their own home.	To allow customers on to the waiting list to transfer early, regardless of current tenancy length.
6. You live in Shropshire and you are an existing Homes Plus customer who is occupying specialist, adapted accommodation and it is no longer required. (If you live in Staffordshire, you will be awarded priority under this policy).		Current reports or letters from a social worker. Current reports or an assessment from a medical practitioner or health professional. Current reports or letter from a school counsellor. Current child protection case notes/recommendations from the safeguarding team.	

Risk	Detail	Evidence required	Exceptional move decision
7. You are an existing Homes Plus customer and are awarded urgent medical need, are waiting to be discharged from hospital and your current home is no longer suitable for you to return to.			
You have no legal right to succession of a property.	You have been living in a property which is your permanent home, 12 months prior to the death of the tenant.	Proof of identity alongside evidence of residency at the address for 12 months prior to the death of the tenant. Further information can be found in our succession procedure.	

Appeals

If a decision has been made to not allow you to register with us for a transfer or we have withdrawn the offer of a home that has been made to you, you can appeal against this decision. You will need to tell us if you think the information you have provided has not been taken into consideration or you feel you have been treated unfairly.

All appeals must be received within ten working days from the date of this decision, making sure you explain the reasons for your appeal.

You can make an appeal either in writing, by calling our customer services team on **0800 048 8955** or emailing **housingappeals@homesplus.co.uk**

The lettings manager will consider all appeals and will respond in writing within ten working days.

We will not hold homes empty when an appeal is taking place. If your appeal is successful, we will work with you to find an alternative property.

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