



## POLICY ON MUTUAL & RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES

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**This document explains Linstone Housing Association's policy in relation to mutual and reciprocal exchanges.**

## **APPENDICES**

- 1. APPLICATION FORM (LINSTONE TENANT)**
- 2. APPLICATION FORM (NON LINSTONE TENANT)**
- 3. LETTER TO LANDLORD**
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Linstone Housing Association encourages mutual exchanges as a valuable management tool which helps people obtain housing they need or wish without altering the supply of houses available to applicants on the waiting list.

## **2.0 MUTUAL EXCHANGES**

- 2.1 A mutual exchange can involve two or more parties and may involve houses owned by bodies other than the Association e.g. Local Authorities, other Housing Associations, Private Landlords, Owner Occupiers (in this case an outgoing tenant must purchase the house from the prospective tenant).
- 2.2 When permission is given all householders involved in the exchange are expected to occupy their new accommodation for a minimum period of 6 months.
- 2.3 Missives should not be signed by the new tenant until as near as is practicably possible to the day he/she takes up the tenancy of the Association's property. This reduces any potential problems which may arise if one party decides to renege on the exchange.
- 2.4 The Association will make its decision on whether or not to agree to any mutual exchange request within 28 days of receipt of the application. Failure to do so may mean that Linstone is deemed to have given consent.
- 2.5 In general permission will normally be given providing:-
  - (i) there will be no overcrowding
  - (ii) there will be no excessive underoccupation (an exchange should not normally be permitted where a house exceeds a prospective tenants' housing needs by more than one double bedroom taking into account growing and diminishing families)
  - (iii) satisfactory tenancy report is received for the incoming tenant.
  - (iv) all potentially rechargeable repairs have been carried out.
- 2.6 The Association will not carry out any redecoration work on the property. Allocations staff will visit both parties and advise Linstone tenants of any necessary repair work which falls within their own responsibility. Permission to exchange will not be granted until the necessary repairs have been completed.
- 2.7 The new tenant must take up permanent residence of the property within a reasonable timescale. Failure to occupy within one month may result in the property being repossessed
- 2.8 An application from a Linstone tenant will be refused if the rent account is more than one month in arrears.

### **3.0 THE MUTUAL EXCHANGE PROCESS**

- 3.1 The Linstone tenant(s) should complete the application at Appendix 1 whilst the tenant of any other Landlord should complete the application form at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 Applicant's attention should be drawn to the notes on the back of these applications.
- 3.3 On receipt of the application forms, details should be logged in the register together with the target date for response i.e. 28 days hence. (The target date should be based on receipt of the final form).
- 3.4 Firstly the Housing Officer should immediately carry out a rent and tenancy check for the Linstone tenant(s).
- 3.5 If at that stage we are unable to process the application further e.g. due to arrears, a letter should be sent to applicants advising our decision.
- 3.6 Providing the above checks are satisfactory then at this stage a letter must be sent to any other Landlord involved advising them of the application (see Appendix 3).
- 3.7 A staff member will then arrange to visit each applicant at home to ensure:-
- (i) that the contents of the application form are accurate.
  - (ii) that the tenancy has been satisfactorily maintained  
and
  - (iii) to discuss and explain the exchange policy and process.
  - (iv) that all necessary repair work has been carried out.
- NB Tenant must be advised that no physical move should take place until normal consent is given in writing.
- 3.8 A tenancy report for the Linstone tenant should be submitted to any other Landlord involved and a reference requested for the non Linstone applicant(s).
- 3.9 On receipt of the reports in 3.7, providing all Landlords involved agree that the exchange can proceed, a letter (Appendix 4) should be sent to all applicants confirming this decision and inviting them into the office to complete all appropriate paperwork.
- 3.10 When both parties call into the office, access arrangements should be made with any incoming Linstone tenant to allow the Association to have appropriate safety checks carried out, e.g full electrical inspection and gas safety check (if appropriate).
- This should be done either on the day of the removal or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 3.11 Alternatively if permission is not being granted a letter (Appendix 5) must be sent giving

the reasons for refusal. Consent must not be withheld unreasonably.

#### **4.0 DEFERRED RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES**

- 4.1 A deferred reciprocal exchange is where one Housing Authority houses the tenant of another on the understanding that at a later date, the “donating” Landlord will, in return, house a tenant from the former.
- 4.2 Linstone will consider such applications where the “donating” Association cannot provide alternative accommodation from within their own stock. Acceptable reasons would include an applicant fleeing domestic or some other type of violence; an applicant with some special need which could be met by a Linstone property etc.
- 4.3 Any application for a deferred reciprocal exchange will be passed to the Housing Manager for a decision.