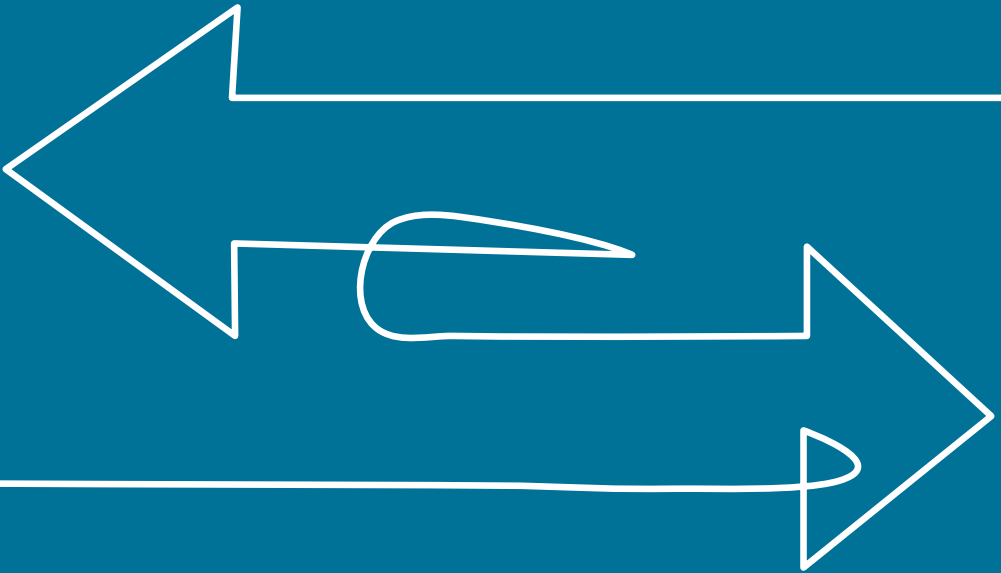




**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

# Mutual Exchanges

## Your Guide



# What is a mutual exchange?

A mutual exchange involves two or more tenants swapping their homes, its easy and can be quicker than going on the Darlington HomeSearch waiting list.

An exchange can be made with another council or housing association tenant within Darlington or with a tenant in another part of the country.

## How do I arrange a mutual exchange?

Firstly, you need to find someone to exchange with. This can be done by registering on the Homeswapper website (<https://www.homeswapper.co.uk/>) and registering your home. Further details on how to do this are on our website or your Housing Officer can assist you.

Once you have found someone to exchange with, you should thoroughly inspect their property and make absolutely sure that it is what you want. They should also do the same with your property. You should think about things such as:

- How much is the rent?
- What sort of tenancy will I be offered?
- Will I be eligible to buy the property in the future?
- What are the neighbours like?
- Is the garden private or shared?
- Where are the nearest shops?
- What kind of heating does it have, and does it suit me?
- What items will the current tenants plan to take with them? \*
- Does the landlord of the property accept pets?
- Does the property need decorating and are you able to do this?

\*please note we cannot be held responsible for any items or appliances that you agree for the outgoing tenant to leave.

Make sure you take a good look around, you are accepting the property as seen, if you spot any repairs you should make sure the current tenant has notified their landlord.

When you are sure that you want to go ahead, complete and return an application form through HomeSwapper. In the case of joint tenancies each tenant must sign the form.

No exchange can take place until we have given written approval. If you swap before we give permission, you could risk losing your tenancy. If you are exchanging to a property owned by another landlord make sure you have their written permission as well as ours before moving

## What is HomeSwapper?

HomeSwapper is an online service that helps connect tenants who are looking to move house and want to do a mutual exchange. It is a free service if you're a Darlington Borough Council tenant.

You can search for homes by area, and you'll usually be able to see photographs of what's available. You can sign up for email or text alerts when new homes come up that match your criteria.

## Can I swap if I owe arrears or court costs?

No, if you have rent arrears or outstanding court costs these will need to be cleared before a swap can be approved. After you move the Council can charge you for any costs incurred for damage or replacement of fittings in the property.

## What repairs will the Council do to the house I swap to?

The Council will carry out works that are considered to be necessary for health and safety reasons, such as a gas safety and electric checks when you move in to make sure these are safe.

Remember you will be taking the property in the condition it is in when you view unless the Council instructs the current tenant to make repairs or changes as a condition of giving permission for the exchange.

Routine repairs that would have been carried out if the exchange had not happened will be carried out after you move into your new property. You should not expect any improvements or major repairs to take place sooner than we have planned because you are not happy with the property.

# How should I leave my home?

You should leave your home in a good condition, exactly how you would expect your new home to be left.

When you exchange you must leave your home and garden, including any sheds or outhouses, in a good condition and clean and tidy for the incoming tenant. If you are going to remove any fixtures and fittings that you own, you must tell the new tenant and fit replacements before you move. Any electrical work must be done by a qualified electrician.

# Can the Council refuse a mutual exchange request?

Yes, it is not often that we refuse but we can do so if any of the following apply:

- You are in the first 12 months of your tenancy; Introductory tenants do not have the legal right to swap tenancies.
- You have breached your tenancy agreement and have rent arrears or outstanding court costs.
- You have a breach of tenancy, such as untidy garden, poor property conditions (including damage), rechargeable repairs or antisocial behaviour.
- You have breached your tenancy, damaged your home and we need you to carry out repairs first.
- You have a court order for possession made against you for breach of tenancy or are under a Notice of Seeking Possession of your home.
- The property would be too big or too small for you and your household.
- The home you, or the home you want to swap to has been designed or adapted for people with physical disabilities.

We may also refuse consent if the other exchanging tenant is ineligible for any reason.

# What happens after I have found someone to swap with?

Once you have completed all the necessary paperwork and provided the requested documents, we will arrange an inspection of your property to make sure it is up to standard. We will also check your rent account and our Housing ICT systems to check for any other issues. Following the inspection you will be advised of any issues and what we expect you to do to rectify them before approval can be given.

# How long will it take?

We have 42 days from receiving your application to swap to complete our inspections and paperwork, but this can be longer if we do not receive all the paperwork needed.

# What if I change my mind after I have signed all the documents?

If you change your mind after signing the assignment paperwork, you cannot withdraw unless the other tenant agrees.



# What happens when you have approved the swap?

We will contact you and arrange for you and the person you are swapping with to sign the deed of assignment, this may be at your home, at the Town Hall or some other agreed location.

# What happens around removals?

You should not arrange any removals until you receive approval from us. Once you have this you can agree with the other party/parties when you want to move.

You are responsible for arranging your own removals, the Council does not pay towards these.

# Who else do I need to contact?

You will need to:

- Update your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim for your new home.
- Contact your utility supplier to close your account at your old home and set it up at your new home.
- Advise the Council Tax Department that you are moving.
- Contact your water supplier (if you have a water meter).
- Contact your broadband supplier.
- Contact your bank, mobile phone company, or any other services that you receive to update your new address

You may also wish to have your mail redirected by the Post Office.

# How do I get the keys to my new home?

You should arrange with the other tenants to meet on the day of the move so that you can exchange keys.

If you are concerned about security, you may wish to have the front and back door locks changed. You will need to arrange this yourself, the Council can do this for you but this would be a rechargeable repair.

# What else should I think about before agreeing to swap?

Changes have been made to the types of tenancies offered by Local Authorities and Housing Associations and you need to be aware that the tenant you are exchanging with may have a different type of tenancy to then one you currently have.

Following the Localism Act new rules apply to tenancies granted after 1st April 2012, it is important that you fully understand the implications of a change of tenancy type, it is also important that you understand the implications for succession and the right to buy so you should speak with your Housing Management Officer or your new landlord for more details before agreeing to swap.



# Housing services contact details

 01325 405333

 [housing@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:housing@darlington.gov.uk)

 [www.darlington.gov.uk/housing](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/housing)

 [facebook.com/DBCHousing](https://facebook.com/DBCHousing)



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