

Moving home



Did you know....if you are looking to move home, you can use Homeswapper to search for homes to swap with throughout the UK. This system also searches for matches each day – this is where a home in the database meets your exact requirements and your home meets the requirements of the tenant in that home.

But moving home is one of the biggest changes you can make and it's really important to do it right.

Here are Homeswapper's top 10 tips for a successful swap:

1. Research the area

Think about the area. Is it close to public transport? Close to a busy road? Does it feel safe during the day? What about at night? Are there playgrounds and good schools nearby? Is it near a hospital? If so, can you hear ambulances all the time? Is it near a noisy pub or club?

2. What's included?

You need to find out what belongs to the tenant and what belongs to the landlord. Even if they say they are leaving something of theirs behind, there is no guarantee as this will not be included in the paperwork. If in doubt, assume anything that doesn't belong to the landlord will be going.

3. Décor

While it would be brilliant to swap into exactly the home of your dreams, it can often be necessary to do a bit of decoration after you have moved in. It's worth jotting down what you would like to change and how important this is so you've got a realistic picture of any costs before you move in.

4. Tenancy type

Check the tenant type of the home you want to swap into and make sure you know yours. When you swap homes, you don't take your tenancy with you, so this can be a really important factor for lots of people.

5. Rent and bills

Find out how much the rent is. Remember that this can be different to the amount the current tenant pays as they may receive housing benefit as a top up. It's also worth asking what the usual bills are – gas, electricity, water, council tax as these can vary greatly between council areas.

6. Neighbours

This is one of the most important things to ask. What are they like? Can you meet them? Are there any disputes or noise issues? If you can, visit at different times of the day to really get a feel for the area and, if it's a block of flats, make sure that you think about any neighbours above and below.

7. Condition

Is the property in good condition? Is there central heating? Is there double glazing? Is there enough storage space for your belongings? Are there enough kitchen cupboards and work surfaces? Are there enough electrical sockets and phone points and are they in the right places for your needs? Remember that you take a property 'as seen', so it's important to do this research. It is also really important to check that the current tenant has had permission for any changes they have made to the property. If they haven't got this, it can be a reason for the landlord to refuse the swap.

8. Eligibility issues

Some homes have eligibility rules in place that you must meet in order to move in. Some of these include age restrictions, the need for a local connection or the property has been adapted for a disability and this isn't applicable for you.

9. Occupancy requirements

If the property is too big or small for your needs, you probably won't be able to move in.

10. How serious is the other swapper?

Anyone on a swapping site will have read stories about time wasters. The advice in connection with this is simple – don't make any major changes to your life until the swap has been approved and you've signed the paperwork. Swappers – including you – have a legal right to pull out of a mutual exchange at any point before the paperwork is signed. If you are worried about having time to do everything, sign the paperwork and set up a swap date for a couple of weeks later to give you time to do everything.

If you don't have access to the internet at home, Homeswapper can be accessed via a kiosk in our Housing Reception area at the Town Hall.

Visit www.homeswapper.co.uk for further details

Need to contact us?

You can do this by:

Telephoning:

01255 686464

for rent account enquiries

01255 686468

for rent arrears enquiries

01255 686455

for right to buy enquiries

01255 686488

to report anti social behaviour or other nuisance complaints

01255 686477 to report a repair during working hours

01255 222022

to report emergency repairs only outside of normal working hours

01255 686466 for Housing Register or allocation enquiries

01255 686436 for enquiries about special needs housing or adaptations

Emailing:

housing.services@tendringdc.gov.uk for general enquiries

HousingRepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk to report any non urgent repairs that are needed to your home

HousingASB@tendringdc.gov.uk to report any incidents of anti social behaviour or nuisance

tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk to find out more about getting involved in our services

Writing to:

Operational Services
Tendring District Council
Town Hall, Station Road,
Clacton on Sea, Essex CO15 1SE

Visiting:

Housing Reception at the Town Hall in Clacton between 9am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4.45pm on Fridays

Tenants Panel Update

At the meeting of our Tenants Panel in April, Dennis Smith was elected to the position of Chairperson and John Johnson to the position of Vice Chairperson.

On his re-election, Dennis said 'I am very grateful for the support shown to me by other members of the Panel in electing me as their Chairperson for the second year and I look forward to working with the Council to build on what we have achieved to date'.

Dennis has also recently been re elected to the Association of Retained Council Housing's Tenants Group which means that he is able to represent the views of Tendring tenants at a national level.

Our Tenants Panel was set up in 2001 to represent and promote tenant opinion and its members normally meet with us every two months to discuss a range of housing policy, management and maintenance issues.

If you would be interested in finding out more about how to join our Tenants Panel. please contact us by emailing tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk or by phoning 01255 686490



Our Rents team have moved

Members of our Rents team have recently relocated to the Town Hall in Clacton and now form part of the Tenancy Management team, working under David Black, Housing Manager.

Their contact telephone numbers and email addresses have remained the same but their postal address is now Operational Services (Housing), Town Hall, Station Road, Clacton on Sea, Essex, CO15 1SE

Tendring Reports

Latest news for council tenants in Tendring

Issue 2 2017



New Council Homes

Two new properties have recently been purchased and added to the Council's housing stock.

One of these, in Alexandra Road in Harwich, was a former Council property previously sold under the Right to Buy. The other was a property in Cloes Lane in Clacton, which was demolished following a gas explosion three years ago. This property was previously owned under the Council's Do It Yourself Shared Ownership scheme but we negotiated with the former owners to purchase their share of the rebuilt property so that this could be added to our housing stock.

We currently own more than 3,000 council properties across the district and are committed to acquiring or building more as and when the chance arises.

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Anti social behaviour update

How many complaints of anti social behaviour do we deal with?

Our Tenancy Management team is responsible for dealing with complaints of anti-social behaviour and enforcing the conditions of our tenancy agreements.

Between 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 they dealt with 574 recorded complaints and the type of complaints that they dealt with are illustrated below and compared with the previous year:

Type of complaint	2016/17	2015/16
Abandoned vehicles	5	3
Alcohol related	4	0
Communal areas	100	142
Criminal behaviour	7	5
Domestic violence / abuse	1	0
Drug / substance abuse related	16	22
Garden nuisance	88	103
Hate crime	0	1
Noise nuisance	135	137
Non occupancy / tenancy fraud	22	42
Pet / animal nuisance	44	44
Physical violence	5	7
Prostitution	0	0
Rubbish nuisance	47	50
Vandalism / damage	27	27
Vehicle nuisance	40	53
Verbal abuse	33	38
Total	574	674

What action did we take in connection with these complaints?

During the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 we took the following action to tackle anti social behaviour

- visited or interviewed 95% of all new tenants within the first two weeks of their tenancy to make sure that they are aware of the conditions of their tenancy agreement and the action that would be taken if they break these. It took us a bit longer to visit or interview the remaining 5%.
- referred 8 neighbour disputes for formal mediation where an impartial third party helps those in dispute to reach an acceptable agreement.
- referred 32 cases to floating support or other support or care agencies
- referred 19 cases to Environmental Health for joint investigation into cases involving noise nuisance, fly tipping or filthy or verminous properties
- issued 17 notices of seeking possession against those who continued to break the terms of their tenancy agreement despite warnings from us - this is the first step in the legal process to evict someone.
- evicted 5 households who continued to break the terms of their agreement with us

Case study

During late 2016 it came to our attention that two neighbouring bungalows in Clacton were being used for the use and supply of Class A drugs.

Following partnership working with Essex Police and search warrants being executed, the Housing team referred both cases to County Court and were successful in evicting both tenants.

The properties have since been cleared and repaired and our clearance team reported that they filled approximately 40 boxes of hypodermic needles from the two bungalows and their gardens.

Both properties have now been relet.

Tenant involvement update



Last April, we introduced a new Tenant Involvement Strategy for the period 2016-2019. This set out our commitment to making sure that there are a wide range of opportunities for you to be involved and that your involvement makes a difference and improves services.

This strategy is based on the following objectives:

- Promote and raise awareness of tenant involvement as a means of encouraging more residents to get involved
- Ensure that we communicate effectively with tenants, providing good quality, timely and jargon free information
- Ensure that we are fully inclusive by providing a range of ways for tenants to get involved at a level and pace that suits them
- Make effective use of tenant feedback and involvement to improve service delivery
- Improve quality of life through effective tenant involvement
- Measure the impact of tenant involvement to make sure that it delivers effective outcomes for tenants and communicate this
- Provide sufficient resources, support and training to make resident involvement effective.

What have we achieved since then?

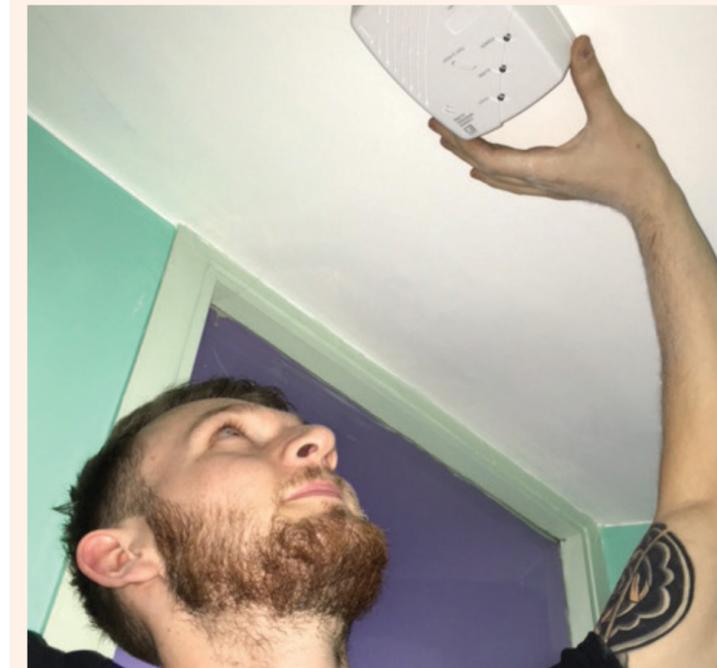
Carried out a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey	Purchased a key software tool to help us track and measure tenant involvement	Reviewed the information we send out about planned maintenance and improvement works
Involved local residents in estate walkabouts	Supported tenant representatives attendance at a national housing conference	Organised a training event for staff and tenant representatives on anti social behaviour
Organised a Community Fun Day in Dovercourt	Produced a Sheltered Housing Handbook	Commenced a review of our communal cleaning service

If you are interested in finding out more about getting involved, please visit our website www.tendingdc.gov.uk or email tenant.involvement@tendingdc.gov.uk or phone 01255 686490



How you can help us during repair visits

Your tenancy agreement says that you are responsible for keeping your home clean and tidy and we would especially ask you to do this before any of our contractors visit your home to carry out repairs or planned works.



Ready for business

Tending District Council (TDC) has recently received national recognition for creating housing opportunities to support its residents and strengthen local communities.

The Council has been awarded Housing Business Ready Status by the London-based Housing and Finance Institute (HFI) following an extensive assessment.

It is one of less than ten local authorities throughout the country to be granted the accolade.

Natalie Elphicke, Chief Executive of the HFI, said: **“TDC is among the very best in the country for understanding the importance of housing to its locality”** and among the successes highlighted were officer strength and experience; assessing the capability to build and monitoring delivery to drive housing success.

What to do if your Carbon Monoxide Detector goes off

- Open all doors and windows to clear any carbon monoxide that may be present
- Turn off all fuel burning appliances and leave the house.
- Don't switch on the lights, smoke or strike a match
- Contact us on 01255 686477 to get the problem sorted out but, if you suspect a gas leak, call National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999
- If anyone is experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headaches, dizziness, vomiting, you should seek medical advice.
- Do not go back into your home until it has been aired out and the problem corrected.

Stove or fireplace pilots lights can also be a source of carbon monoxide build-up if not operating properly and these should be serviced regularly by a qualified engineer.

Never burn charcoal inside no matter how much you want to recapture summer and never use your gas stove as a heater. Keep the oven door closed and use it for cooking only.

Never leave a car running in an attached garage even if the garage door is open.