Easy Move Policy

Policy Owner	Assistant Tenancy and Neighbourhood Housing Manager
Version	V1
Frequency of Review	Every 3 years
Date Document Last Reviewed	June 2026
Date of Next Review	June 2029
EIA Required / Completed	Completed June 2026
Data Impact Assessment Required / Completed	Not required as the policy does not involve any notable changes to the way in which Cottsway process personal data.
Reviewed By	Housing Management Team/Customers
Approved By	Deputy CEO 09/07/2026

1. Policy Statement

1.1. At cottsway we seek to improve efficiency and ensure the best use of our homes by supporting tenants living in under-occupied general needs properties, particularly those requiring aids and adaptions to move to more suitable accommodation where appropriate. This policy and associated procedure provide a framework of how we will target our resources more effectively, ensuring they are directed to those in greatest need and deliver best value for money.

1.2. The impact of welfare reforms and specifically the under-occupancy charge (bedroom tax) has led to a greater need for social housing tenants to be able to access accommodation that meets their needs and budgets.

1.3. We recognise that managing under-occupation within our properties encourages mobility, helps to sustain tenancies. To support mobility and make the best use of our housing stock the Easy Move scheme incentivises tenants of family-sized (2+ bedrooms), general needs houses to move to accommodation that more appropriately meets their needs.

2. Definitions

Welfare Reform	Changes to the welfare system that affect how benefits are calculated and paid, impacting tenants' ability to afford and sustain their homes.

Under-Occupancy Charge (Bedroom Tax)	The reduction in housing benefits for social housing tenants who are deemed to have more bedrooms than their household needs.
Easy Move Scheme	An incentivisation scheme to encourage tenants to move to appropriately sized accommodation, supporting mobility, tenancy sustainability, and effective use of housing stock.
Starter Tenancy / License to Occupy/AST	Types of tenancy arrangements that do not qualify for the Easy Move Scheme.
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	A system operated by local authorities enabling customers to bid for properties advertised by social housing providers.
Aids and Adaptations	Improvements or modifications made to a property to meet a tenant's health or disability related needs.
Security of Tenure	The legal rights and protections described in a tenancy, which will remain unchanged following an 'Easy Move' transfer.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	The commitment to treating all tenants fairly and ensuring the policy is implemented in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, taking account of individual needs and protected characteristics.

3. Policy Scope and Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure the aids and adaptations budget is focused on delivering sustainable, long-term adaptations within suitable properties.
- Encourage mobility and support tenants to access accommodation that better meets their needs and financial circumstances.
- Provide practical solutions for tenants affected by welfare reform.
- Support the efficient use of housing stock by enabling under-occupying tenants in family-sized general needs accommodation to move to more appropriately sized homes.

- This policy, together with the accompanying procedure, sets out eligibility criteria for the Easy Move Scheme and explains how Cottsway can support tenants to relocate to accommodation that is better suited to their needs.

4. Regulatory and Legal considerations

In accordance with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Tenancy Standard, this policy supports the effective use of housing stock by promoting the appropriate occupation of properties. This includes facilitating the release of family-sized general needs accommodation to better meet local housing demand.

5. Stakeholder Consultation

Households that accessed the Easy Move Service in the last 18 months were consulted during this policy review to provide feedback on their experience and inform service improvements.

6. Policy Details

6.1. Eligibility criteria:

- The Easy Move Scheme is only available to Cottsway tenants in family-sized, general needs properties who are under-occupying and moving to another Cottsway property.

- The new property must be either a smaller (one/two bed), general needs property or housing for older people i.e.: bungalow

- The tenant(s) must have no more than £5,000 in savings to be eligible for the scheme.

- The tenant(s) must not be subject to legal proceedings or be in arrears with no repayment plan in place.

- The tenant(s) must not be on a Starter Tenancy/AST or Licence to Occupy.

- Priority will be given to tenants affected by the under-occupancy charge (spare room subsidy) and/or have been refused aids and adaptations to their current property.

- All applications will be assessed for eligibility in accordance with the Local Authority housing allocation scheme.

6.2. Under-Occupation:

In general, households are considered to be under-occupying if they have one or more bedrooms greater than their assessed requirement. This is based on the number, age and relationship of members of the household for a period more than six months.

6.3**. Priority to Move:**

To apply for a new home Easy Move applicants will need to register with their local authority Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. Cottsway will provide support with this process. Whilst each CBL scheme varies, they all offer some form of priority category for existing tenants wishing to downsize.

6.4. **Acceptance on to the Easy Move Scheme:**

Once accepted onto the Easy Move scheme tenants will remain on the scheme for:

• Up to two years (24 months from date of acceptance), or:
• Until declining the offer of three suitable properties.

Once either of these criteria are met the tenant's place on the scheme will be reviewed and they may be removed to ensure the scheme is accessible to other Cottsway tenants.

6.5**. Easy Move Grants:**

- A grant of £3000 will be made available for each move regardless of the number of bedrooms released.
- The number of grants made will not exceed the allocated annual budget.

6.6. **Easy Move payments:**

The grant made available for each Easy Move will be used to cover all associated costs of the move, up to the allocated budget, and we will deduct:

- One month's rent in advance for the new property.
- The amount of any rent arrears or recharges owed to Cottsway at the time of the transfer.
- The cost of removals, new carpets, decorating, skips or similar.
- The cost of any works Cottsway need to carry out once the property has been vacated (re-charges) may also be off set against the Easy Move grant.
- Any grant remaining once the move is complete, and all costs have been met will be paid to the tenant.

6.7. **Easy Move support:**

Easy Move applicants will receive support throughout the move from a dedicated Tenancy Support & Sustainment Officer (TSSO) who will be a single point of contact and will support them through the transfer process and the move itself.

The TSSO will help applicants arrange and pay for skips, removals, disconnection and

reconnection of services, carpets, decorating etc.

The TSSO will ensure the tenants understand and adhere to the details in the tenancy termination pack when leaving their existing property.

The applicant(s) will retain the same security of tenure offered by their existing agreement.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1. We will monitor the number of applicants to the scheme, the number of completed Easy Moves and the costs of each Easy Move annually to ensure the scheme continues to provide value for money.

7.2. We will ensure that information about the Easy Move Scheme is made available through a range of communication channels, including our homepage, newsletters, website, social media platforms, and direct contact with eligible tenants.

8. Equality, diversity and inclusion

8.1. Cottsway will treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise that we have an ethical and a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination on the grounds of age, sex and sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.

8.2. We will aim to ensure that the individual needs of our customers are met in implementing this policy by having due regard to the Equality Act 2010, for example the provision of translated materials, or home visits with a carer or other support agencies if appropriate.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years subject to any changes in legislation or regulation and/or recommendations by the Audit and Risk Committee and the business which may trigger an earlier review or earlier if required.

10. Associated Documents Policies and Procedures

- Aids & Adaptations Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Decant Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Vulnerable Customer Policy
- Voids Policy
- Local authority allocations policies
  - Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus
  - West Oxfordshire Homeseeker Plus
  - Wiltshire Homes4Wiltshire

Wychavon Homechoice Plus
Swindon Homebid

List of changes

Date	Change
May 2026	Introduction of new policy template and policy refreshed
	Section 4 – Updated statement in line with RSH expectations
	Section 6.5. – Updated monetary values
	Section 7 – Updated wording to better reflect practise with directly contacting customers.