This guide tells you how the Seaside & Country Homes scheme works, how to apply and what happens once you've applied. You should read it carefully before you make your application. You may also find it useful to refer to once you’ve applied or if you need to contact us.
WHAT IS SEASIDE & COUNTRY HOMES?

The Mayor of London’s Seaside & Country Homes scheme offers older tenants of councils or housing associations in London the opportunity to move away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Over 3,000 properties, mainly two bedroom bungalows and one and two bedroom flats, are exclusively available to London’s social tenants aged 60+. These are dotted all along the south coast, from Cornwall in the south west to Norfolk and Lincolnshire in the east, and across the countryside from Dorset to Cambridgeshire to Shropshire. Many have private gardens or outdoor communal areas and are in peaceful, purpose built developments. They are ideal for single people, couples or others who have retired or wish to do so.

The scheme helps more than 200 households to move from London each year. Some of those who have moved in the past chose to do so to be closer to family or friends. Others have sought out locations where they spent childhood holidays or about which they have other happy memories. For many, the appeal lies in a quieter, more relaxed way of life, living among people of a similar age.

As well as giving older people the opportunity to move to a new area, the scheme helps homeless and overcrowded families in London. This is because it gives them the chance to move into the homes vacated by those people who move to the seaside or countryside. For this reason, priority is given to Seaside & Country Homes applicants who will free up the most bedrooms.

People who move through the scheme become a tenant of the housing association that manages the property. They pay a social rent and their former tenancy rights are protected. Seaside & Country Homes tenants do not have the Right to Buy.

The scheme is operated by the Mayor of London and is funded by the London boroughs.

APPLYING FOR THE SCHEME

As well as reading this guide, you should read our Areas and Properties Guide. This gives you much more detail about the areas in which the properties are located, as well as the properties themselves. It may help you decide which areas and schemes you would prefer to live in. You can find it www.housingmoves.org. Please contact us if you would like a paper copy.

The Seaside & Country Homes scheme is very popular, so we cannot guarantee a move to everyone who applies.

Who can apply?

Seaside & Country Homes is open to households living in council or housing association properties in London where at least one member of the household is aged 60 or above.

Any members of the household who are under 60 years of age must be either the partner, joint tenant or registered carer of the lead applicant. Second applicants aged under 60 are not able to become joint tenants of, or have succession rights to, Seaside and Country Homes properties.

We are unable to consider applications from more than two people.

Applicants should have no rent arrears or history of anti-social behaviour, and should not be going through possession proceedings or being evicted.
How to apply

If you would like to apply, you can fill in an application form online, or you can download and complete one and send it back to us. Online and downloadable forms are available at www.housingmoves.org.

Alternatively you can pick up an application form from your landlord or local council’s housing office, or contact us - the Mayor of London’s Housing Mobility Team. Our contact details are on the back cover of this guide.

If you complete a paper or downloaded application form, please send it to us by post or email it to us as an attachment. Completed paper or downloaded applications should be sent direct to us rather than to your landlord.

What happens once you’ve applied?

First of all, we will do an initial check to make sure that you are eligible for the scheme. If you are not eligible, we will let you know by email or letter (if you do not have an email address) that your application has been rejected.

If your application is accepted at the initial stage, we will send it to your landlord for a further check. You may be contacted by your landlord at this stage for additional information. For example, if there is a second applicant who is under 60 and your registered carer then you will be asked to provide evidence of this, such as proof of receiving Carers Allowance.

Once we hear back from your landlord, you will receive an email or a letter (if you do not have an email address) to let you know if your application has been successful.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU APPLY

Moving away from London is a big step. Once a move has taken place it is extremely difficult to return to social housing in the capital. The Mayor of London, who operates the Seaside & Country Homes scheme, is not a landlord and so does not have properties in London to offer to households who wish to return.

Are you prepared for a different type of life?

Many of our properties are in quiet cul-de-sacs or estates and are in much smaller towns than London. Things you might take for granted in London might not always be available in the area you choose to move to. If you need to be close to specific amenities, such as hospitals or mainline rail stations, you need to check whether they are available when choosing which areas to put down on your application form.

If you decide that you would rather stay in London but still want to move, the Mayor runs another scheme - Housing Moves - to enable social tenants in London to move to other parts of the capital. Housing Moves is available to households of all ages and applications can only be made online. If you are interested in both Seaside & Country Homes and Housing Moves, you can make a single application for both schemes online. You can find more information about Housing Moves at www.housingmoves.org.

Are you sure about the areas you want to move to?

When you complete the application form, you will need to choose which of the Seaside & Country Homes areas you would like to be considered for. There is no limit to how many areas you can choose. The more areas you are willing to move to, the more chance you have of being successful through the scheme.

However, you must be fully committed to moving to all of the areas that you select. It is likely that you will have to cover the costs of travelling to view properties, so we do not want you to waste time and money viewing a
property only to find that you do not like the area. If you choose areas that you have not previously visited, then we strongly suggest visiting them as soon as you can. Once you're registered on the scheme, you can always get in touch with us to ask us to change or add to the areas on your application.

**Can you manage a garden?**

As well as maintaining the property in accordance with the tenancy agreement, you may also be responsible for maintaining a garden. Almost all of our bungalows have private gardens.

**Do you need a lift?**

While most of the Seaside & Country Homes properties are bungalows, some are flats and a few are houses. And although most of the flats have lifts, some do not. If you will need a lift to reach higher floors, then please check that any flats in the areas that you put down on your application form have this facility. Also, if you have a floor preference (for example, ground floor only) please make sure that this is included on your application form.

**Do you need a bath or walk-in shower?**

When you apply, you need to tell us whether you need a bath or a walk-in shower, or are happy with either. Please be aware that when we are deciding which properties to put you forward for, we look carefully at the information that you have provided. So, if you choose only one type of bathroom you will not be put forward for properties with the other type of bathroom.

**Do you have pets?**

Not all of our landlords accept pets. Pets are usually permitted in bungalows but not in most flats. If you have pets, please make sure that the properties in the areas that you select meet your requirements.

**Do you need help with the move?**

Moving home can be costly. Everything from going to view properties to buying new furniture comes at a cost. We do not offer any financial help to households who move. However, your landlord may do so. You may wish to ask them whether they offer any financial incentives to households freeing up a property, or financial or other help with removals. Sometimes this kind of help is available for only a limited period. So, you may wish to ask your landlord about this both when you apply for the Seaside & Country Homes scheme and if and when you are considering going for a viewing or whether to accept an offer.

In addition, if you are under pensionable age and receive Housing Benefit you need to consider any impacts of the Spare Room Subsidy if you were to move to a two bedroom home. More information about this is available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

**ONCE YOU’RE REGISTERED ON THE SCHEME**

**What if your circumstances change?**

If, after you’ve applied, you need to change anything that you put down on your application form, you can do this yourself at [www.housingmoves.org](http://www.housingmoves.org). You will need your User ID number, which you will be given as and when your application is successful. Alternatively, you can contact us and we will change your form for you.

If for any reason you are unable to move but wish to remain on the scheme so that you can move at a later date, please contact us immediately. We will place your application on hold until you tell us that your situation has changed.
If you no longer wish to remain on the scheme, you should also let us know immediately so that we can cancel your application.

**What happens when a property becomes available?**

When one of the Seaside & Country Homes landlords tells us that a property has become available, we send them details of five households from our list. These are households who, at that time, would be freeing up the largest properties in London, and have asked to be considered for properties in that particular area and of that particular type. The five households are prioritised in order of the size of the property that each of them would vacate.

If your application is one of the top five, we will phone you to ask whether you wish to be put forward to view the property.

If necessary, we will call all the numbers you have given us. If we cannot get hold of you, we will leave a message if able to do so and you will have 24 hours to get back to us.

So, you should check your answer phone messages regularly. You should always ensure that we have the correct number(s) for you, so please tell us if you have a new landline or mobile telephone number.

When we speak to you on the phone, we will give you details about the property and should be able to answer any questions that you have.

You will need to let us know whether you are interested within 24 hours of speaking to us. If you do not let us know within that time, you will no longer be considered for the property.

If your name is put forward and you are first on the list, the landlord of the property should contact you within the next month. You will be given seven days’ notice of the date of the viewing, but may view sooner if it is convenient for you. You must view the property on the date agreed with the landlord.

If we tell you that you are second, third, fourth or fifth on the list, you will probably only be contacted by the landlord if the person or people above you turn down the property and you move to top of the list. If you are contacted at this stage, again, you will be given seven days’ notice of the viewing.

If you are second, third, fourth or fifth on this list and you hear nothing within a month, you can assume that you have been unsuccessful. Please do not contact us to find out if there is any news. **We will only contact you again if and when another suitable property becomes available.**

**What happens when the landlord contacts you to arrange a viewing?**

Once the landlord has phoned you to arrange a viewing, they will write to you confirming the arrangements.

Some landlords may send you an additional application form to complete. This will be specific to their organisation and must be completed before you view the property. They may also ask you to bring identification and, possibly, other documentation in relation to your housing application.

Sometimes landlords invite several people to a viewing at the same time, but the person at the top of the list will have priority.

If you have any questions about the property, you should look at the **Areas and Properties Guide.** If, having read this, you still have questions, you should ask the landlord before you go to the viewing. Having all the information you need before you go could save you a wasted journey. You may decide that the property is not suitable and so will not have wasted your (and the landlord’s) time and money by travelling to a viewing.
What happens when you go to view a property?

An officer from the landlord will meet you at the property. You will usually be expected to cover your own travel costs, though it is worth checking with your landlord and the landlord of the property you’re visiting to see if they can pay these. You will have to make your own way there and must arrive at the agreed time. It is always a good idea to take the name and telephone number of the officer with you, in case you have any problems on the way there. Your journey may involve several changes or types of transport. It is your responsibility to find out how to get to the property on time.

If you are unable to attend the appointment to view the property, you must inform both the landlord with whom you arranged the view and us as soon as possible.

Unless otherwise impossible, you should visit the property yourself, and not ask family members or friends to visit on your behalf. You are, however, very welcome to take someone with you to the viewing.

You can accept or turn down the property on the day of viewing if you wish, but you do not have to make a decision that quickly. However, you must make a decision within five days (these include weekends). If you do not notify the landlord of your decision within five days, then they may move onto the next person on the list and you will lose the opportunity to move to that property.

Please note that your application will be suspended if you repeatedly refuse viewings, refuse properties or fail to attend viewings without notifying us or the landlord. Your application will also be suspended if you refuse three reasonable offers without good reason.

What do you do when you accept a property?

Once you sign the tenancy for the Seaside & Country Homes property, your tenancy will usually start the following week.

You must notify your current landlord of your intention to end your current tenancy as soon as possible. This is known as ‘giving notice’. The notice period on your current property can be as much as four weeks. However, some London boroughs and housing associations will be flexible with this timeframe for people moving through Seaside & Country Homes.

Please be aware that a tenancy is a legal document and once you have signed it you are bound by its terms and conditions. If you change your mind after signing a tenancy, you are likely to be liable for at least four weeks’ rent.

Moving to your new home

You may need to book a removal company. They will need to know how many items you need to move and whether you wish them to pack your belongings for you.

Removal companies should provide a contract highlighting the agreement between you. The agreement should also include details of the insurance cover, should any of your belongings be damaged or lost during the move.

If you are moving to a smaller home, you may not be able to take all of your possessions with you. If this is the case, you should make sure that you leave your current property empty when you move. You will also need to cancel your current arrangements with utility companies (for example, water, gas and electricity companies) and make sure you change your address with your bank and other important organisations that may need to know.

Similarly, you will need to make new arrangements with utility companies for the home that you are moving to.
SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do you use a waiting list and can you tell me where I am on it?

We are unable to tell you where you are on a list, or how long it might take to receive an offer, because who lettings go to varies according to a combination of a number of factors. These include what areas people have chosen, how many bedrooms people would free up and what properties become available. The situation can change on a daily basis because new applicants join the scheme all the time and existing applicants can change their area preferences at any time. Applicants are contacted when a property becomes available in an area they have chosen and according to their priority.

Will I be given higher priority if I have medical reasons for a move?

No. Seaside & Country Homes’ applicants are expected to be able to independently maintain their tenancy when they move as the properties on offer may have stairs and/or gardens. You may wish to discuss your application with your landlord who could contact the Housing Mobility Team if there are other circumstances behind your reasons for wanting to move.

Can I have my priority reassessed?

Yes, you can contact the Housing Mobility Team by email or letter explaining why you think your application has been reviewed incorrectly, or if your housing situation has changed. We will respond to you within five working days of receipt. A review does not necessarily mean that your priority will be altered.

Can I be guaranteed a move?

No. This is because we can only nominate people to properties when the current resident moves out. Usually around 200 households move each year and we have more than 1,000 people registered on the scheme.

Are the Seaside & Country Homes properties wheelchair accessible?

While many of our properties have a level access shower, no other adaptations come as standard across all of our properties. It is possible that further adaptations could be made, but this is something that the landlords of the Seaside & Country Homes properties would consider on a case by case basis. The only wheelchair accessible properties available through the scheme are the flats in Brighton. Please see our Areas and Properties Guide for further information.

How is Seaside & Country Homes funded?

The scheme is operated by the Mayor of London and funded by the London boroughs. The boroughs pay on a letting by letting basis. At the beginning of every year, each London borough chooses the maximum number of lettings it wants to pay for during that year. Once they reach this maximum, no more people living in that borough can move through the scheme. However, boroughs can buy more lettings during the year if they wish to, and we remind them of this as soon as they reach their limit.
WE’RE HERE TO HELP

The Mayor of London’s Housing Mobility Team is happy to answer questions about the scheme or how to apply.

If you would like more information or advice, please do not hesitate to contact us by email, phone or letter.

Email  housingmobility@london.gov.uk

Phone  08450 21 20 20

Write to  Housing Mobility Team
         Greater London Authority
         3rd Floor
         City Hall
         2 The Queen’s Walk
         London SE1 2AA

We regret that the Housing Mobility Team are unable to accept visitors at City Hall.

We are also unable to deal with any enquiries that are not specifically about Seaside & Country Homes.

If you need advice about your housing options, or about the Mayor’s other housing mobility scheme – Housing Moves, please contact your landlord.

If you want to move to another home within London, you may be interested in applying for Housing Moves. You can find out more at www.housingmoves.org.