

Runnymede Borough Council Housing Services
Interim Policy Statement on Mutual Exchanges - Covid 19 Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 Pandemic brings with it an extraordinary set of circumstances which means the Council may not be able to respond to requests for approval of Mutual Exchanges in the normal way.

Government guidelines are clear that people who have coronavirus or are self-isolating with their family member should not leave their home to move home or undertake property viewings.

The following changes to the Council's policy on Mutual Exchanges (attached) are applicable until further notice.

1. The Council's interim policy is to confirm provisional consent, conditional consent (if applicable) or refusal of a mutual exchange in writing within a period of 42 days from receipt of the fully completed application forms by all involved parties. Consent may be given subject to a full inspection of the condition of the property (properties).
2. While the Council will endeavour to confirm provisional consent, conditional consent (if applicable) or refusal within the 42 day time limit, should the Council fail to respond within the this time limit the tenant cannot assume consent to have been given and must not proceed with the exchange, to do so would constitute a breach of tenancy and would be enforceable through the courts.
3. The Council will arrange for an inspection of the electricity and gas supply (as applicable) if it is considered safe and appropriate to do so. If a member of the household(s) is shielding or has potential symptoms of Covid 19 these inspections will not proceed until the Council is satisfied it is safe to do so. The contractors will complete the inspections in line with government guidance, including socially distancing and use of PPE. A general inspection of the condition of the property (properties) may not be possible at this time as the Council is prioritising urgent and essential visits to tenanted homes. The tenant(s) will be asked to provide photographs to illustrate the condition of the property. These, together with any recent evidence held by the Council, will inform the decision to confirm provisional consent, conditional consent (if applicable) or refusal of a mutual exchange.
4. The Council may grant provisional consent for a mutual exchange between tenants with conditions. Such conditions may only include clearing any rent arrears or remedying any unauthorised home improvements.
5. If the Council is able to confirm provisional consent for the mutual exchange to take place subject to a full inspection of the property, a proposed future date for this inspection will be offered subject to the prevailing government guidelines and the Council's capacity to undertake routine inspections. Full written consent will be given as soon as possible after the inspection has taken place.
6. If a tenant is able to evidence an urgent need to move by way of a mutual exchange, their application will be considered by a senior manager with authority to waive the need for a physical inspection of their property.

7. If the proposed mutual exchange involves another landlord, their policy at this time will also inform the action the Council can take in processing the request.
8. If the Council gives consent for the mutual exchange to proceed the current government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government> must be followed and it is important to be aware that this can change at short notice. In particular:
 - Those who are shielding or otherwise clinically vulnerable should ensure they are aware of the [medical advice](#), including staying at home and avoiding unnecessary contacts over this period, if at all possible. All parties should prioritise agreeing amicable arrangements to change move dates for individuals in this group.
 - Moving home is not appropriate if you pose a direct risk of transmitting coronavirus.