

Under Occupancy – Downsizing Support

Thoughts following a meeting between Chris Bullock, VAEF Handyman(CB) and Debbie Torry, EFDC Under Occupancy Officer (DT)

The Handyman service provides support for those over the age of 60 or those who are disabled and are tenants of EFDC. Over 500 referrals have been completed and on several occasions the tenant has been the only occupant of a three bedroom house.

The Under Occupancy Officer provides information on funding incentives and provides other support to tenants considering or wishing to downsize.

However – both roles have identified gaps in provision, a challenge, a space for possible partnership working!

Tenants have remarked about having an interest in downsizing but have often quickly dismissed this with thoughts of the many obstacles they face especially without any family support, see table.

Tenants have visited smaller properties but have been put off by the need for decoration regardless of having DIY store vouchers to help.

Tenants often ask for a recommendation for a local and trustworthy contractor as they feel vulnerable – many will have already used the Handyman service and can have an informal introduction with CB when they view an available property along with DT.

Challenges	Possible Responses
But I can't afford to move	There is a grant of £500 plus £500 for each room you give up
Ok so you offer vouchers, but who can you recommend to do the work?	You can trade your vouchers directly for the services of the VAEF handyman service. You can be assured they are police checked, very reliable and approved by EFDC
What if I want a bit more done?	You can use the VAEF Handyman service at a reduced rate for extra tasks which can then pay for after you have received your downsizing payment.
But I like my room as it is	We can decorate the new property to your taste
What about all my pictures and trinkets?	We can put up pictures, shelves and arrange ornaments with you
What if I buy new furniture – how do I put it together?	We can do this for you, building flat pack furniture and arranging it where you want it.
What about the stuff in my loft?	We can get this down for you and help you sort it out
What about my shed / garage	We can help you sort this out, even help book and fill skips
I have some good stuff I don't want to throw away	We can help with donations to charities and recycling projects, if they cannot collect, we can take it there for you.
My TV is on the wall, what can I do about that?	We can put the TV on the wall of the new property if you like, or help source a TV stand
What if I need help a few weeks / months after I move?	Remember the Handyman service is available to you as an EFDC tenant for those small DIY tasks for as long as you need the help.
What about all my letters and bills?	We can help you to contact those who need to know and help with post redirection