Benefits include:

- Opportunity to promote properties to a national audience
- New tenants who have chosen their home and neighbourhood
- Reduction in the number of empty and difficult to let properties
- Reduction in anti-social and economic drawbacks associated with empty properties
- Opportunity to help tenants escape from negative impacts of welfare reforms and to access employment
Welcome to Homefinder

A year from our inception I am delighted to report that Homefinder UK has successfully helped households who were looking to move to improve their housing and financial situations. I’m very excited at the opportunity we are providing to landlords who wish to extend the housing mobility options they provide to their tenants.

We know that landlords are looking to use all of the tools at their disposal in order to reach the widest possible audience for their available homes and we are here to help. The demand for moves across the UK is huge, so there should be no reason for any landlord to have properties sitting empty.

I encourage all landlords who have not yet joined the scheme to get in touch and let us help you.

Stephen Ellis
Manager Homefinder UK

“Being part of such an innovative project enables us to make sure our tenants get every opportunity to respond to a change in their circumstances. Being able to help them move to take up employment or to access education is really important to us.”

Asif Choudri, Regional Director, Amicus Horizon

Stephen Ellis previously managed the Department of Communities and Local Government’s Seaside and Country Homes, and the Mayor of London’s Housing Moves mobility schemes.
Choice and opportunity

Homefinder UK presents a choice of homes across the UK. It gives social housing tenants the opportunity to move without always having to arrange a mutual exchange and offers them the ease and mobility previously only enjoyed in the private sector.

In recent surveys, 80-90% of social housing tenants looking for a new home said that they would welcome information about homes in other areas, yet until Homefinder UK was developed, their choice was restricted to homes in their local area or a swap with another tenant.

Families living in socially rented housing have lacked choices over the size and location of their home that residents in other tenures take for granted. Whilst they are free to move to homes in other tenures (subject to affordability), they are unable to move easily to other socially rented homes.

Current economic difficulties and cutbacks in housing benefits have increased the need for tenants to look further afield for work – and even for homes that they can afford to live in. Homefinder UK now provides a real opportunity for tenants to find the home they need where they want it and at a rent they can afford.

West London Housing Partnership (2009) ‘Striking the Balance’

In recent surveys, 80-90% of social housing tenants looking for a new home said that they would welcome information about homes in other areas.
How Homefinder works

Homefinder aims to integrate choice based lettings and mutual exchange schemes, complementing what landlords are able to offer now and uniting them in a comprehensive national mobility scheme.

Homefinder launched in autumn 2013 and, although initially open only to tenants from a handful of landlords, was inundated with registrations from households keen to move. From the summer of 2014 visitors to Homefinder need only register once for access to all of the properties available through an easy-to-use, integrated system.

Users will continue to benefit from Homefinder UK’s unique brokering and hand-holding services whereby Homefinder staff pro-actively case manage individual customers’ needs and liaise with landlords to ensure tenancies are sustained.

Moving home is always a challenge, but with Homefinder, tenants receive help and support throughout their move. This includes tenancy advice such as how best to manage the impact of the social sector size criteria and other financial concerns; and information on the local areas such as amenities, and signposting to employment opportunities and advice.

Landlords who are interested in joining should contact the Homefinder team by emailing stephen.ellis@homefinderuk.org

Why joining makes sense

1. It offers social housing tenants genuine opportunities to move homes wherever they want in the UK and better match their financial and personal circumstances.
2. It complements all local choice based lettings and mutual exchange schemes, improving a landlord’s offer to all their tenants.
3. Landlords retain complete control over the number of properties involved and the allocations policies applied.
4. Homefinder provides active case management and support to guide tenants through their move and in choosing the most appropriate home.
5. Homefinder UK is run on a not for profit basis by experienced choice based lettings and mutual exchange providers

“Getting all this together was no easy task – but tenants need and deserve it”

Stephen Ellis, Homefinder UK
Homefinder UK is open to all social housing tenants who want to move, whatever their reasons for doing so. They may wish to move to be closer to family and friends, for better employment opportunities or for financial reasons.

Homefinder has been developed by Home Connections, one of the leading providers of choice based lettings services and is being delivered in partnership with House Exchange part of Circle Housing, one of the largest mutual exchange schemes in the UK. Homefinder brings together the experience of both and builds on good practice to create a national mobility scheme open to all social housing tenants, that complements existing local choice based lettings schemes and mutual exchange arrangements. Homefinder is encouraging all social housing landlords to join and deliver a comprehensive service to Britain’s tenants.

“Transforming lives

Rosalyn moved from her large three bedroom house in North Norfolk for a much smaller house near Norwich. Having been made redundant and suffering acute stress she made the decision to move and start afresh. Since the move Rosalyn’s health has improved and she has been able to find a new job.

“Alix and her two young children, Eddie and Jessie, recently had to move. “We were in a small two bedroom bungalow and it was getting difficult to find the room for everything. Added to this, I am studying for an undergraduate degree in textiles and I need a lot of room to do my coursework.”

“It has worked out so well for us. We can walk to a lot more places, the children have their own bedrooms and we have a lot more room – it has been very beneficial all round for us.”
Benefits for landlords

Homefinder UK is run on a not for profit basis and is free to use for all social housing tenants. It is supported by its members – a mix of landlords. These include local authorities, arms length management organisations and some of the largest housing associations in the country.

In addition to homes available for mutual exchange, Homefinder offers a range of vacant properties across the country that have been made available specifically to assist tenants looking to move whether they want to be nearer family and friends, take up job opportunities or are looking for a new home that better matches their household size and financial circumstances.

Local landlords retain complete control over the number of properties they want to offer and the allocations policies applicants have to satisfy. The service is tenant focused and choice based, improving the offer local landlords can currently make and widening the horizons open to tenants.

Social mobility can help regenerate communities allowing people to move more freely to where they need and want to be. It can also contribute to a reduction in the risk of rent arrears and repossessions now faced by those affected by recent welfare benefits changes – offering practical solutions that empower local residents.

By joining Homefinder UK, landlords are able to:
1. Advertise their homes nationally.
2. Reduce the number of their empty properties and contribute to their more efficient allocation and at the same time reduce arrears and evictions.
3. Increase the range of properties available to their tenants.
4. Enable their tenants to take advantage of job opportunities throughout the country.
5. Provide additional options for tenants affected by recent welfare benefit reforms.
6. Be part of House Exchange with access to a national mutual exchange service.

“We’ve seen real benefits from offering tenants the chance to move. They benefit from moving closer to employment or family members and we are able to re-house another family from our waiting list”

Mark Meehan, Assistant Director of Housing Demand, Ealing Council

“Homefinder UK is a great option to be able to offer residents who want the opportunity to be able to move. Islington council is pleased to support Homefinder UK as a valuable option for residents.”

Karen Lucas, Head of Housing Needs, London Borough of Islington
A job worth doing

Establishing a national mobility scheme has been tried before. It is a complex process requiring a mix of technical skills and resources and the support of a critical mass of landlords who look beyond the day-to-day issues of managing quality homes and see the benefits of giving social housing tenants choice and opportunity over where they live.

Being able to move to a home elsewhere in the country isn’t a pressing need for all tenants but it is an unmet need for too many – stifling their ability to access employment opportunities or strengthen their family support network and enjoy the right sized home, where they want it and at a rent they can afford.

Home Connections and House Exchange, part of Circle Housing are experienced service providers in their respective fields. We can handle the technical issues well and deploy the resources a national scheme needs. We have come together with a range of major social landlords to do what needs to be done and are looking for all social landlords to consider how best they can help create a truly national scheme.

Every landlord that joins increases the choices and opportunities available for all their tenants – and social tenants elsewhere. Every move makes better use of social housing, matching personal requirements to property size, location and price.

Landlords have the option of joining Homefinder to access properties across the country for their tenants and/or to offer properties of their own to let. The allocation of a landlord’s properties remains entirely within their control – they can set and change the number of properties they offer and ensure every let is to a good tenant, able to pay and contribute to enriching their community. Homefinder will help each tenant with their move and settling into their new home and is run on a strictly not for profit basis.

Homefinder offers new choices and opens up unrivalled possibilities to tenants. It presents an opportunity to all social housing landlords to broaden their offer, further satisfy the aspirations of tenants, and unlock the potential that a national mobility scheme entails.

If you would like to know more about Homefinder UK, please contact Stephen Ellis on 07769 175043 or email him at stephen.ellis@homefinderuk.org.

“At Circle, we don’t want to just improve the service to our tenants we want to improve their opportunities too. That is precisely what our aim of enhancing lives is all about”

Kevin Devlin, Mercian Housing (part of Circle Housing)
If you have a question about how Homefinder UK can help improve the choices and opportunities open to your tenants, please contact:

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