

Welcome to HomeSwapper[®]

The biggest and best way to swap your home!

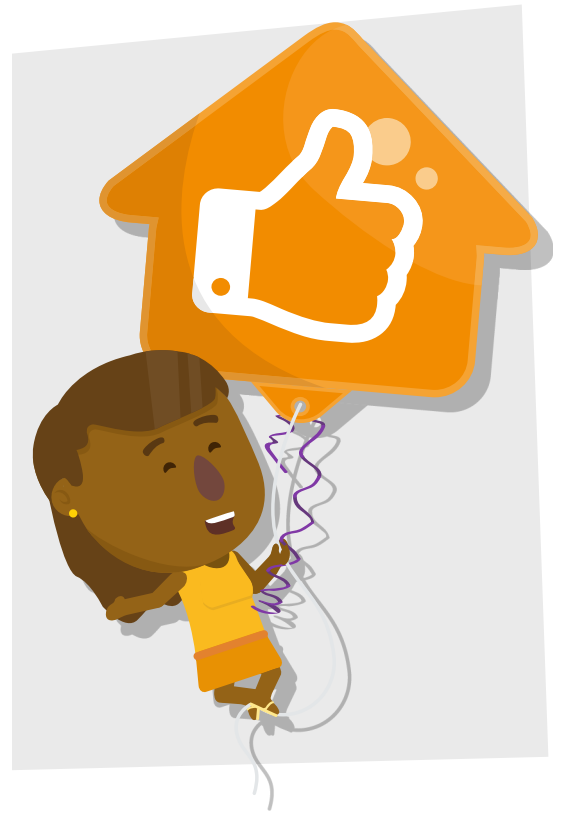


Log in today at
www.homeswapper.co.uk

Welcome to HomeSwapper!

We're really pleased you've decided to join HomeSwapper, the UK's most popular way to swap your social home, with over 14,000 new members joining every month. Since 2007, HomeSwapper has helped more than 260,000 families and individuals swap their homes and we're here to help many more!

You're joining thousands of people who log on to HomeSwapper every day. For many this is because of needing more space, moving for work or to be closer to family. Some of you may be in a crisis situation or need to move on and make a fresh start. We hear hundreds of these stories every month, and that's what makes us passionate about what we do.



This guide has been developed to help you get the most out of your HomeSwapper account. We've worked with our swappers to bring you advice and guidance about the swapping process, from creating your advert to the exchange process itself. The HomeSwapper blog – **SwapperCentral** – is regularly updated with stories from our swappers, top tips, 'how to' guides, information on welfare reform and much more.

We love getting feedback from our members – it's what makes us keep getting better – so please join us on our Facebook page:

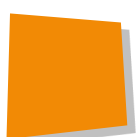
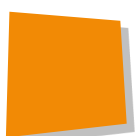
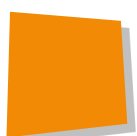


Good luck with the search for your swap. We hope you find the home of your dreams!

The HomeSwapper Team



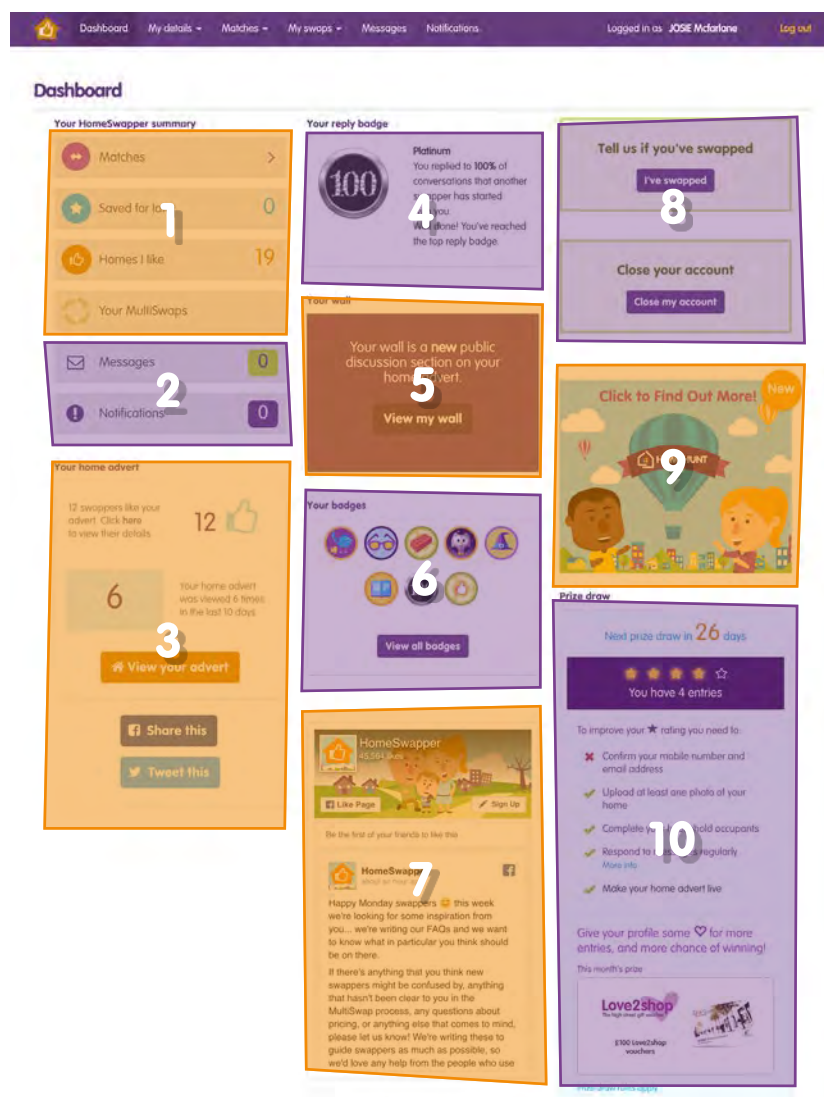
Contents page



Your Dashboard

When you first log in you'll see your Dashboard. This is where you can easily access all the areas of HomeSwapper.

Information about your home advert and any potential swaps are in the left column, social and community links are in the middle and the right is for quick access to any extra features you might find useful.

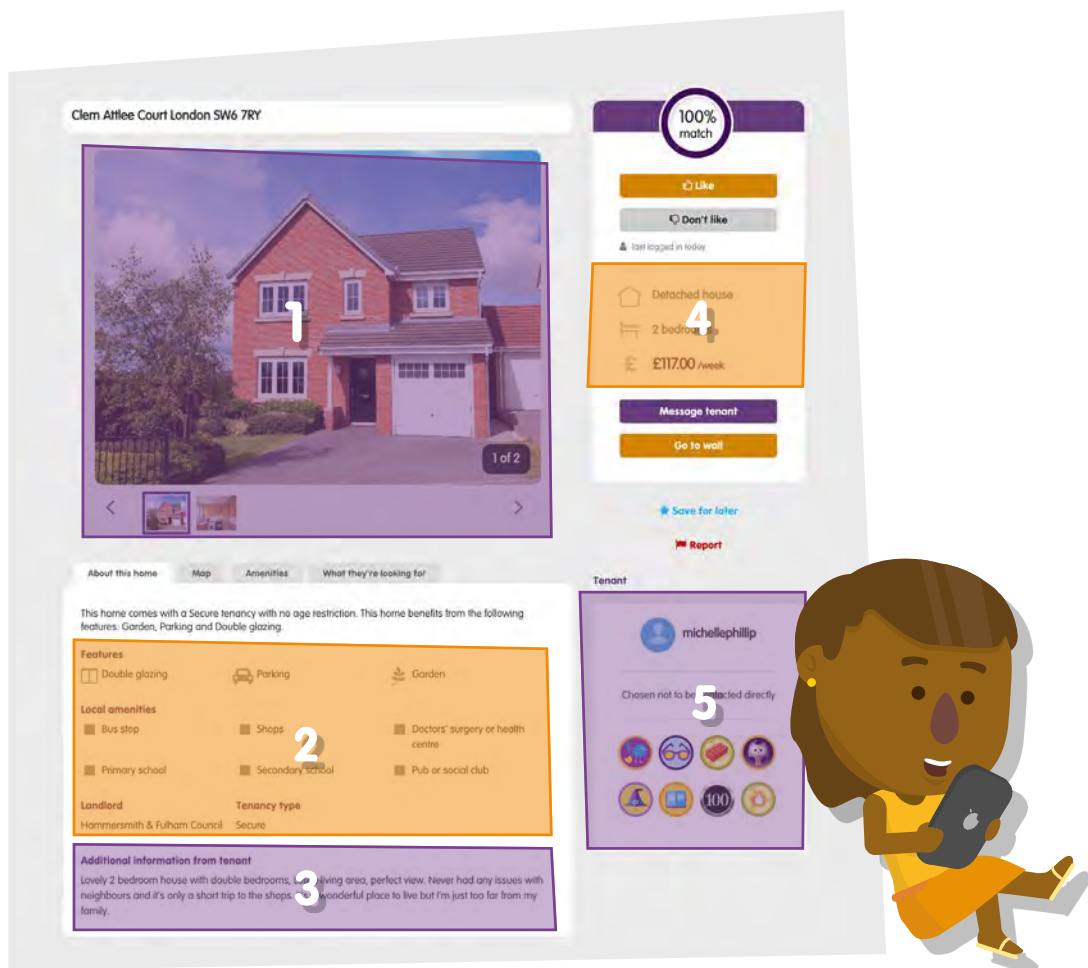


- 1 View all your possible swaps, either the homes you've matched with, the ones you've saved or liked, or your MultiSwaps
- 2 Click to view your messages from other swappers and notifications from HomeSwapper
- 3 This shows how much interest there is in your home. You can also click to check your advert or share it with more people through Facebook and Twitter
- 4 View your reply level – go for platinum!
- 5 See the what people are saying about your home advert
- 6 Your badges show other swappers how serious you are about swapping
- 7 Scroll here for a quick view of our Facebook posts
- 8 Let us know when to remove your ad
- 9 A shortcut to our partner site HomeHunt, where you can look for affordable homes to buy or rent
- 10 Complete these actions to get more entries in the monthly prize draw to win shopping vouchers!



Your advert

Your advert is the most important part of the swapping process and it's really important to get it right. When you registered for HomeSwapper, we asked for lots of information about your home (The Home I've Got), and the type of home you want (The Home I want). These things create your home advert, and it will look a bit like this to other swappers:



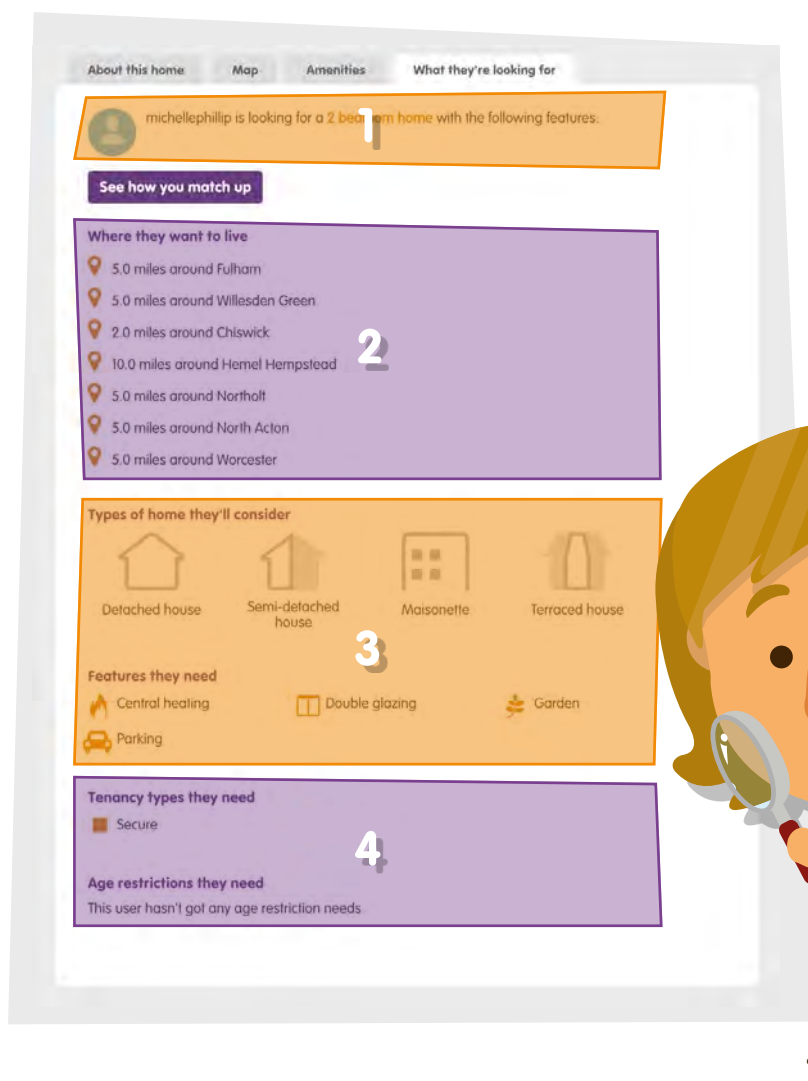
- 1 Make sure you add great photos of your home, the more the better!
- 2 You added these details at registration. You can update them if they change
- 3 Make sure you add this extra info about your home, mention anything that you think might convince someone who's never seen it before
- 4 Check your rent amount is correct
- 5 Your badges show other swappers how serious you are about swapping



What they're looking for

On your advert, the information box at the bottom will have 4 tabs; the last of these is 'What they're looking for'. This tells other swappers if their home matches your needs.

Make sure that all of this information is correct on your advert, or you'll be getting matches that you don't want.



1

Check the bedroom quantity is correct

2

Add all locations you'd be happy to live in. Use a wider radius if possible to get more matches!

3

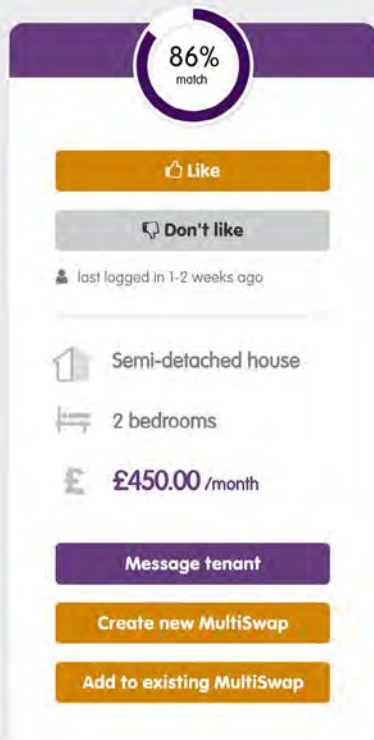
Check the preferred home types and features you want are all correct

4

Check that any tenancy requirements and restrictions are correct



Find out more about a match



When you're viewing another swapper's advert, you'll see a % match. The higher the number, the closer the match.



If you click the button, you'll see how YOUR home meets THEIR needs, and how THEIR home meets YOURS. You can see any gaps, with ticks and crosses



Advice for swapping

Be honest

When filling out the details of your home, BE HONEST! It will save you and other swappers a lot of time and disappointment in the long run if your advert shows a realistic version of the home you're offering.

Add photos

Over 90% of successful swaps last year had at least one photo of their home, so if you're serious about swapping, get snapping! It really helps other swappers to be able to know if your home would be right for them and will quickly screen out people who aren't interested.

Try to show your home at its best though – give your house a spring clean, set the scene and get the angle right! Ask yourself "what does this show someone who has never seen this room before". Hold the camera in the corner of the room to try and get as much as you can in the picture. If you're worried for any reason about your home being identified, upload photos of the inside or a garden, and make sure you use the additional information box to add information about the outside of your home.

Add extra info

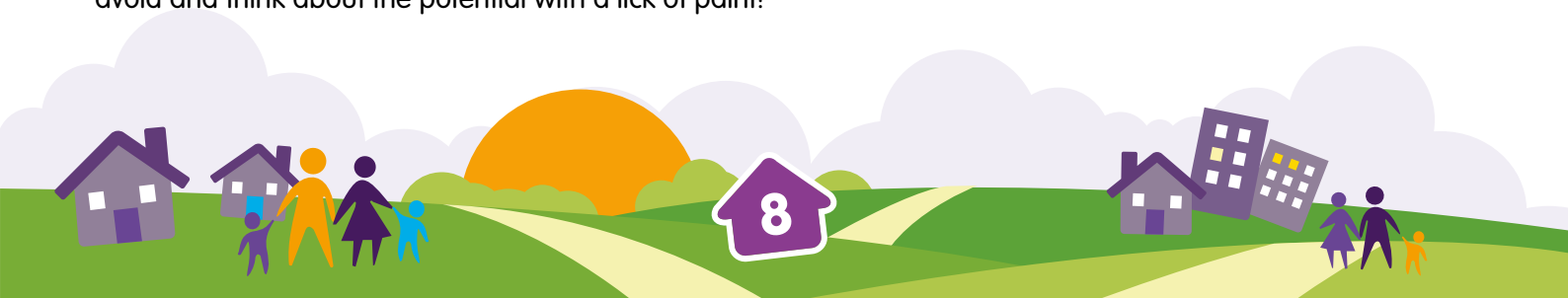
Your advert is the most important part of the swapping process and is where you can really sell your home to other swappers. You can do this by filling out the 'Additional information from tenant' section and let other swappers know what a great home they could move into!

Use this box to describe the location as well as the property. Have a think about these things:

- Do you have nice neighbours?
- Do you have any extra space? E.g. Shed, Garage, Parking Space
- Do you have any close transport links? E.g. Bus stops, train stations
- Do you have any local facilities? Church, school, shops, gym, playground
- Are pets allowed in your property?

Be realistic

Be realistic about what you are swapping from and to and make sure you read the other tenant's requirements before contacting them. When viewing other users' adverts, think about what you need rather than what you want - what are your biggest priorities? Consider the bedroom tax and the extra costs you might be able to avoid and think about the potential with a lick of paint!



Advice for swapping

Be as flexible as you can

No matches? This is usually because you've made your search area too small. When searching for homes, it might help to widen your search area a little. If you set up one location within 0.1 miles, we can only show you homes on that particular street and they may not come up very often. A home you could love may be just a little further away from areas you normally search in, so bear this in mind.

On the other hand, you may be receiving matches for somewhere you don't want to live. This is usually because you've added a location and then a large search radius around it. Even if you've specified the areas you're happy to live in the comments, the system doesn't know this and will show you everything within the search radius you've indicated. If you want to be more specific, try adding more locations but with a smaller radius around them. Be mindful though, that going to the other extreme, all the way down to 0.1 miles, will reduce the matches you get.

Remember to check your rent amount too – lots of people have the rent they're prepared to pay at £125/month, which may be what they pay, but it's unlikely to be the total rent.

In the end, remember that sometimes it's worth being flexible. If you're really set on one particular area and rent amount, then you might just have to be patient - we can only provide you with properties that match your criteria if they are on the site.

Get back to people

Respond to all messages. One of the biggest complaints we have from swappers is of 'timewasters' or people who don't reply. Because of this, if you don't reply to all your messages over a period of 3 months, you will no longer be able to arrange or accept swaps until that has been done. Any messages that need replying to will show in red to make it easy to identify them – but it really is much easier to reply as soon as the message appears in your inbox! Even if you are not interested in proposals or have found other matches that better suit you, it's much better for our swapping community to explain this either personally or by using one of our message reply buttons, so that people aren't wasting their time waiting for you.

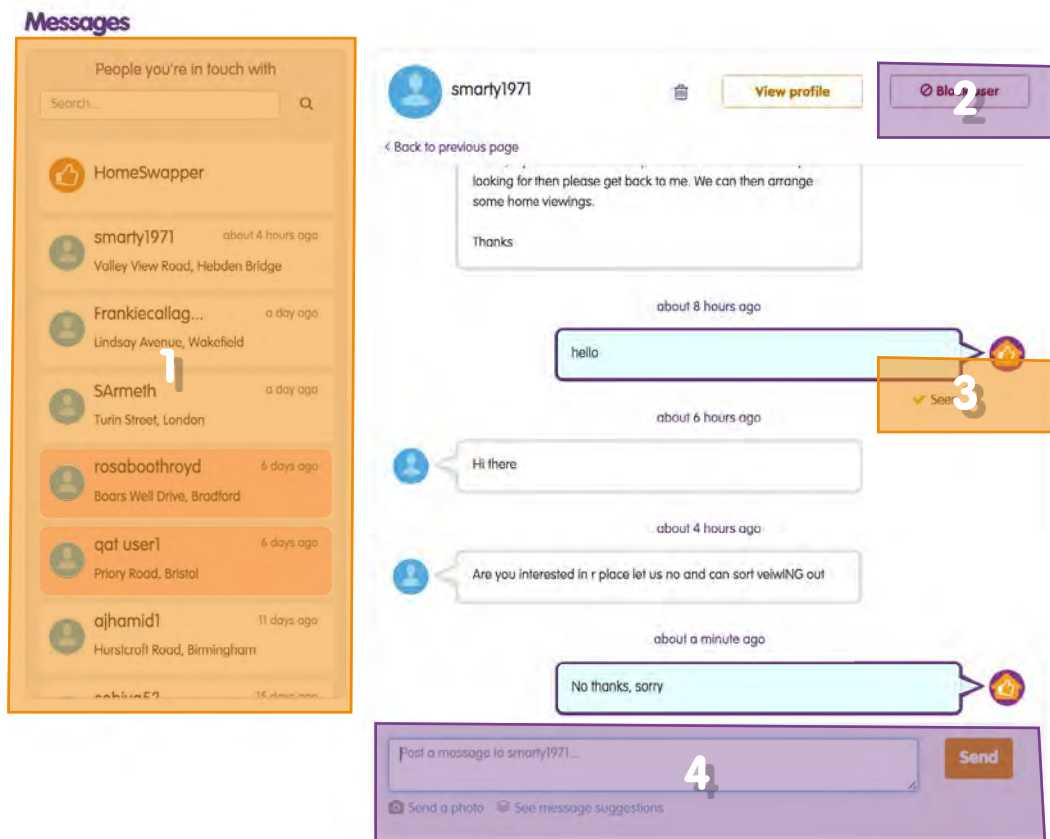
Be nice

Manners never cost a thing... which is certainly worth remembering when you're trying to swap homes with another person. We have seen some fairly rude responses from a minority of swappers, which are both unfair and unnecessary. Remember, you're talking to another person who may be desperate to move for many reasons and will be hurt by your comments. If you're not interested in their home, be polite and nice - a simple 'no, thank you' works well!

Equally, if you receive unpleasant messages, you can find a button allowing you to block another user within the Messages section of your HomeSwapper account.



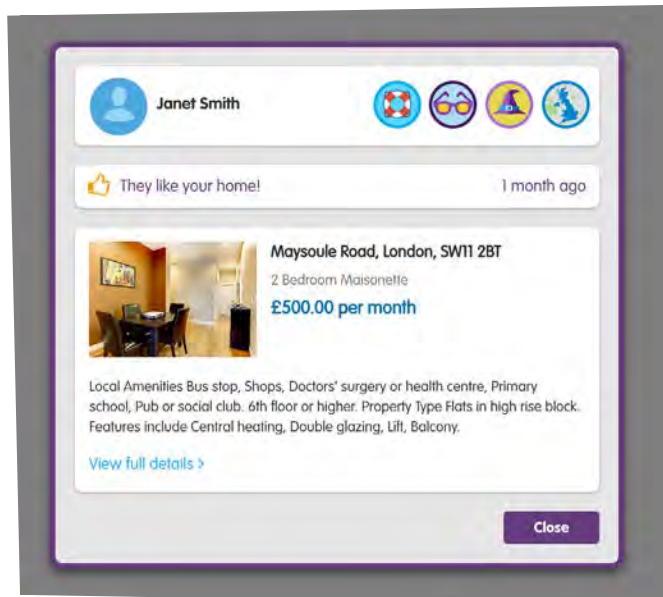
Chatting to other swappers



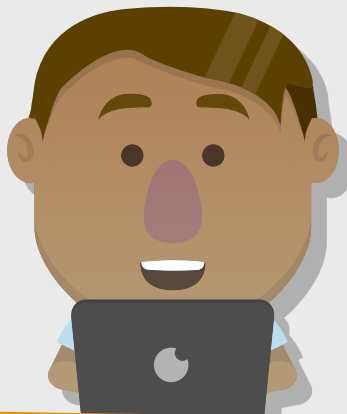
- 1** All of your conversations appear in this list, with the most recent at the top. Different colours mean different things;
 - A red name means someone has started a new conversation with you. You'll need to reply to all of these to keep sending new messages
 - A blue name means they have sent you a new message on an existing conversation. You don't have to reply to these, but it's still important to read them
 - A green dot next to a name means they're online now, so they're more likely to reply quickly
- 2** You can easily block other users if you need to so that they can no longer contact you through HomeSwapper
- 3** If your message has been seen, we'll tell you here
- 4** Write and send your message here. There are buttons underneath to send a photo or use one of our pre-made message suggestions



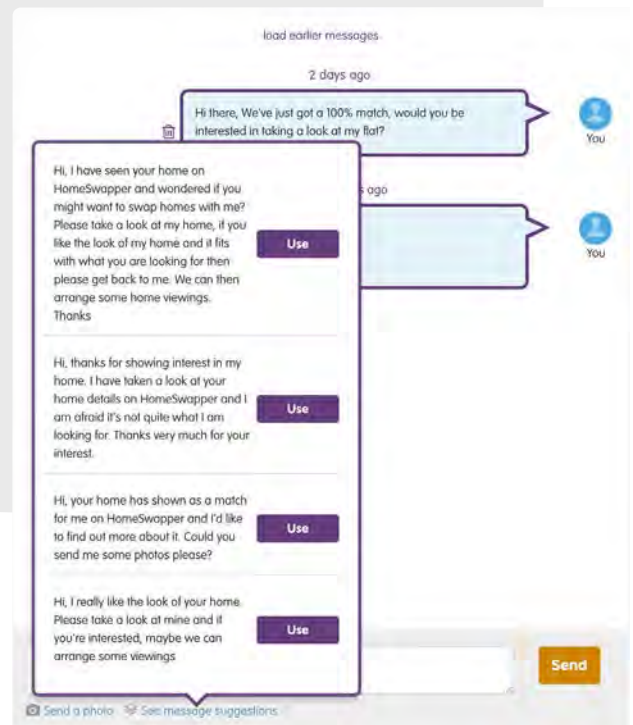
Chatting to other swappers



Clicking **“View profile”** opens this quick view showing all the basic information about the swapper you’re talking to and their home.



By clicking **‘See message suggestions’** we’ll give you ideas of what to say if you’re not sure. You can edit the message after you’ve clicked ‘Use’ if you want to.



Find a match

Here you can see all your matches in one place, add new searches and filter your results. Click on any of the matches to view their full home advert.

This page is split into 2 parts, what you're searching for and the homes that match it.

The screenshot shows the search interface with the following elements and callouts:

- 1**: Points to the search filters including 'All saved locations', 'search a new location', 'No. of beds' (set to 2), 'Rent' (set to £), and 'Month'.
- 2**: Points to the '+ show options' button.
- 3**: Points to the 'View as list' and 'View on map' toggle buttons.
- 4**: Points to the 'Update' button.

Other visible elements include tabs for 'Matches', 'MultiSwaps', 'All homes', and 'Looking for a home like yours'. Below the filters are buttons for 'Serious about swapping', 'No swap required', 'Only homes with photos', 'Council homes only', and '100% matches only'. At the bottom are 'Reset' and 'Search' buttons.

- 1** Change all of the basic search options including location, rent and number of beds
- 2** Show all search options including type of home as well as specific features, keywords and tenancy options
- 3** Switch between seeing your results as a list and seeing them on a map
- 4** Click here every time you change your search to show your updated list of homes

The screenshot shows a home listing card with the following elements and callouts:

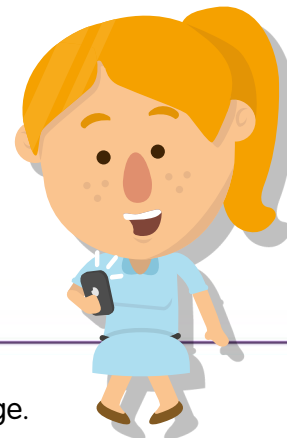
- 5**: Points to the user's profile picture and badges.
- 6**: Points to the home details including the address 'Whittington Road, Whittington, Worcester, WR5 2RY', the type '1 bedroom Flat or studio', and the price '£90.44 per week'.
- 7**: Points to the interaction buttons: 'Like', 'Don't like', 'Save', and 'Message swapper'.
- 8**: Points to the 'Looking for...' section which lists preferences like '2-3 bedroom Bungalow', 'Detached house', etc., and a '78% match' indicator.

Other visible elements include a 'view map' link and a note 'last logged in 3-4 weeks ago'.

- 5** The badges shown here show how often this swapper responds to messages, if they're happy to live in any location and whether they're open to MultiSwaps
- 6** Read the details about this home including how the swapper has described it
- 7** You can add homes to your 'Like', 'Don't like' and 'Save' lists, or send them a quick message to find out more or see if they want to swap homes with you
- 8** See what this swapper is looking for and get a match % to quickly see how you match up



Find a match



Matches

MultiSwaps

All homes

Looking for a home like yours

Easily change your search by using the tabs at the top of the 'Find a match' page. Try them all for the best chances of finding a swap!

Matches

This is the most used tab of all and shows homes you want AND swappers that want a home like yours. This is based on rent, type of home, location and the number of bedrooms in each home.

MultiSwaps

This option shows homes which you might be able to move into via a chain of swaps. If you see a home you like in this search, the system can help you build a chain of swaps to make this work.

All homes

A one-way search that matches what you are looking for only, NOT what other swappers are looking for. This will show you a lot more homes than you would see on the other tabs, like Matches. Just be aware though, that these swappers will not necessarily be looking for your type of property or area.

Looking for a home like yours

Another one-way search, but the opposite way around. This brings all the people who are searching for your type of home into one place. This is a great option if you are more open to exploring other locations, or if some of your preferences are not essentials. You might find a great home here that wouldn't have shown up in your results otherwise!



Top 10 tips

Moving home is one of the biggest changes you can make, and it's really important to do it right.

When swapping, especially if you're keen to get out of where you're living, it can be easy to get swept away in the excitement and forget the practicalities.

1 Research the area

Location, location, location – for some this is almost as important as the home itself. Think of what is important to you - do you need good local schools? A quiet area with parks and playgrounds? Or is your priority being close to public transport? Does it feel safe during the day? What about at night? Are there playgrounds and good schools nearby for the kids? Is it near a hospital? If so, can you hear ambulances all the time? Make sure you've researched it all before making the move.

2 What's included?

You need to find out what belongs to the tenant and what belongs to the landlord. Even if they say they're leaving something of theirs behind, there is no guarantee they will as this isn't included in the paperwork. If in doubt, assume anything that isn't the landlord's property will be going. Ask specifically about white goods (like fridges and cookers), curtains etc.

3 Decor

Many swappers are searching for a 'dream home' that ticks all their boxes. Whilst this can happen, the realistic chances of finding perfection will reduce your options a lot. It can often be necessary to do a bit of decoration (with permission of course!) once you move in to make the property really feel like home. It's worth jotting down what you'd like to change and how important it is, so you've got a realistic picture of any costs before you move in. Most of all, keep in mind a property's potential! Once you've put your mark on it, you might just find that it is in fact that dream home you were searching for after all.

4 Tenancy type

Check the tenancy type of the home you want to swap into, and make sure you know yours. If you're not sure, ask your landlord. A different tenancy type means that you may lose your 'Right to Buy' or may not have the 'Right to Acquire' with this new property, so it's worth checking this ahead.

5 Rent and bills

Find out how much the rent is. Remember this can be different to the amount the current tenant pays as they may receive housing benefit as a 'top up'. It's also worth asking what the usual bills are – gas, electricity, internet, water, council tax – as these can vary a lot between council areas. It's no guarantee that yours will be the same, but at least you'll have an indicator.



Top 10 tips

6 Neighbours

A great neighbour is almost priceless but a bad neighbour can ruin your experience of a new home... so what are the neighbours like? Can you meet them? Are there any disputes or noise issues? Visit a potential home at different times of day to really get a feel for the area, and if it's a block of flats, make sure you think about the neighbours above and below too.

7 Condition

Remember that you're accepting the property 'as seen' – so give it a good look over! Inspect any white goods that will be staying (fridge, freezer, washing machine, cooker, microwave, dishwasher, etc) and check they're in good working order.

It's really important to check that the current tenant has permission to make any changes to the property. If they haven't got this permission, it can be a reason for the landlord to refuse a swap.

Some things you should think about are:

- Is it in good condition? Are there signs of damp, flaking paint or infestations of any kind? Do repairs need to be carried out?
- Are there any broken items of furniture that will be staying?
- Is there central heating? Do all the radiators function properly? Is it properly insulated? Is there double glazing?
- Is there enough storage space for your belongings?
- Is there any sign of dodgy wiring, loose wires or faulty plugs or lights?
- Are there enough kitchen cupboards and work surfaces?
- Check the bathroom(s) and make sure taps are not leaking. Does the shower work properly? Are the sealants around the bath / shower intact?
- Are there enough electrical and telephone points and are they in the right places for your needs?

All of these are important things to look out for during any viewing and the landlord will have expected you to do your research.



Top 10 tips

8 Any eligibility issues

Some homes have eligibility rules in place that you must meet in order to move in. These often don't come up until late in the process and we've seen plenty of swappers be really disappointed because of this. Some of the things to check are:

- Age restrictions
- Mobility restrictions, e.g. it's a sheltered home
- The need for a local connection
- It's been adapted for disability and this isn't applicable for you
- You have to work for the council or in a specific job to move in

There can be other eligibility issues, but these are the most common. If you're not sure, ask.

9 Occupancy requirements

If the home is too big or too small for your needs, you probably won't be able to move in. Some landlords are more flexible about 'over-occupation' than others, but it is a valid reason to decline a swap and it's one of the most common. If you're in any doubt, check the government's eligibility calculator [here](#):

10 How serious is the other swapper?

Anyone on a swapping site will have read stories about 'timewasters'. People selling furniture only to be let down at the last minute, even withdrawing their children from schools in advance of a move. Our advice is simple:

Don't make any major changes to your life until your swap has been approved and you've signed the paperwork. Swappers (including you) have a legal right to pull out of a mutual exchange at any point before paperwork is signed.

If you're worried about not having time to do everything, sign the paperwork and set a swap date for a couple of weeks later to give you the chance to make all these changes. Remember that swaps can fall through for lots of reasons, and someone pulling out usually has a valid reason – they're not being spiteful. We know it's really tough but try not to get too emotionally invested in your potential new home before the paperwork is signed.



You've found a swap – what next?

You've spent loads of time on HomeSwapper, done plenty of viewings, and you've found a swap! So, what happens next?

Forms

All tenants are required to complete a mutual exchange form, just ask your landlord for details. It's usually a paper form rather than one you can fill in online and it asks for details about your home and the tenant you want to swap with. Once you've filled it in, return the completed form to your landlord.

Your landlord then has a maximum of 42 days from receiving your form to tell you in writing whether your application has been approved or refused. Some landlords have their own timelines – such as 28 days – but it will never be more than 42 days.

Things you need to check

As we've mentioned above, you must make sure you check the rent amount of your new home and the type of tenancy you will hold with your new landlord. You may lose your 'Right to Buy' or may not have the 'Right to Acquire' so it's worth checking these things. Make sure you have a few viewings during the exchange process as you're accepting the property "as seen". Ask lots of questions – this could be your new home and it's really important you're happy with it. Things to think about are:

- **Condition of the home** – decoration, layout, state of repair
- **Location** – make sure you visit at different times of day, evening and at the weekend so you can get a feel for the area
- **Transport** – is there parking? Are you close enough to public transport?
- **Amenities** – where's the nearest supermarket? What are the local schools like?
- **Neighbours** – what are the neighbours like? Are there any disputes? Visiting several times can help you assess the situation.



The swap approval process

Landlord checks

Before a swap can be finalised, your landlord may carry out a few visits to check that your home is ready for the new tenant. Your new home will also go through these checks to make sure it's ready for you.

These checks are;

Property Inspection

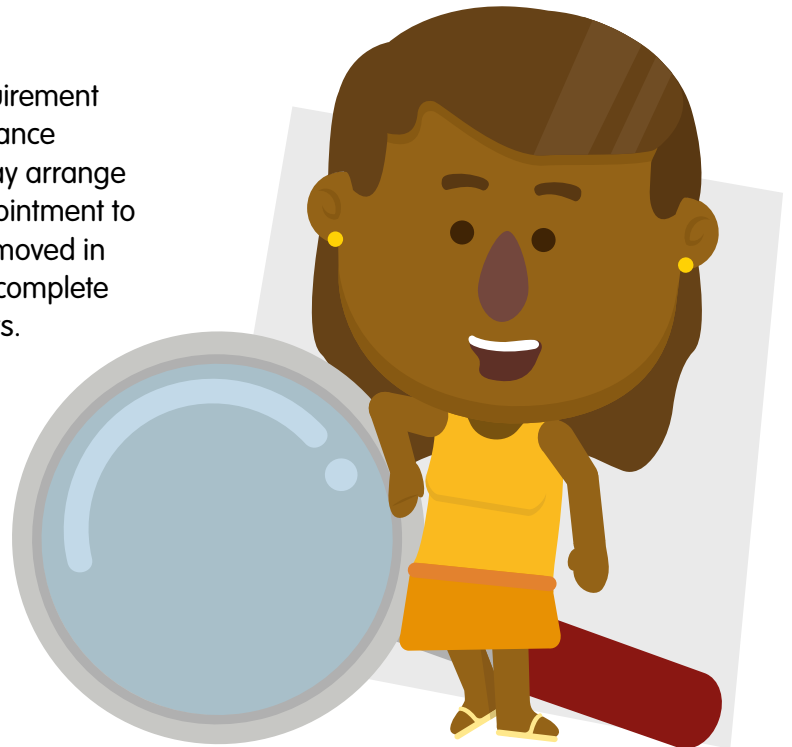
They will assess the condition of your home and look for any damage or alterations you may have made. They will discuss any items you may be leaving or taking with you, such as fridge-freezers or cookers. They will discuss tenancy matters and any rent arrears. If you or the tenant you're swapping with has made alterations without permission, the swap could be refused.

Health & Safety checks

They will complete a thorough health & safety gas and electrical check. Anything that needs to be fixed should be identified and sorted out before your move.

Energy Performance Certificate

From the 1st October 2008 it became a legal requirement for social landlords to provide an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) on change of a tenancy. They may arrange for an Energy Assessor to contact you for an appointment to complete an EPC prior to your move. If you have moved in after October 2008, it might not be necessary to complete another, as the (EPC) certificate is valid for 10 years.



The swap approval process

Property report and review

Following the visits, a property report will be sent to the other swapper to sign and return. Your landlord will check your rent account and look at any conditions they have asked to be put right. A clear rent account is required. They will confirm the health & safety checks are pass or fail.

Your landlord will send a tenancy reference to your new landlord. They will confirm your new landlord is at the same stage in the process before proceeding. They will confirm in writing their decision to grant you consent to exchange. They will ask you and your swap partner to agree a date to move and you should each notify your landlord of the agreed date. They may require 5 working days' notice to prepare the paperwork. All landlords involved in the exchange must give their consent before you can move.

If you move before you have signed the 'Deed of Assignment' or without your landlords' permission they will ask you to move back. You could risk losing your home.

Arrange a date

You will be asked to arrange a time and date that you and your swap partner can attend your landlords' offices to sign the 'Deed of Assignments.' This appointment is usually arranged mid-week before your move the following weekend. Your assigned tenancy will commence the following Monday.

You will be required to provide your original tenancy agreement and two forms of ID, (please include one photo ID). If you are in receipt of housing benefit, please remember to advise your local office you are moving as you may be required to complete a new form/change of circumstances. You will be required to discuss all moving arrangements with your swap partner. Once you have signed the 'Deed of Assignment' it is legally binding and you are expected to move on the date as agreed with your landlord. You, or your swap partner can pull out at any time before this document is signed with no penalties.



Refusing a swap

Landlords may only refuse your home swap application for reasons set out in Schedule 3 of the 1985 Housing Act & Section 15 of the 1988 Housing Act.

These are:

- Your landlord has started eviction proceedings
- You work for your landlord and your home was provided in connection with your job
- Your home is adapted for a person with special needs and nobody in the new tenant's household has special needs
- The home you want to move to is much larger than your household needs
- The home you want to move to is too small for your household, and you would be overcrowded

They will advise you in writing on what grounds they have refused your application.

Landlords may also require you to correct a tenancy matter – e.g. rent arrears – before permission to move is granted. They will also check if any alterations have been made and approved by the landlord.

Remember: Don't make or accept any payment for exchanging. This is illegal and you could be prosecuted and evicted.



If you get stuck...

Our Help Desk team are here from Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm and will be able to help with any technical questions. We can't offer individual help with finding a swap, but if something's not working they'll be able to assist you.

To contact us, email tenants@homeswapper.co.uk

Useful websites

HomeSwapper blog

Government bedroom calculator

Shelter - general housing advice

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Money and benefits advice

Benefits eligibility calculator





Homeswapper helped so much and I got a house out of it, **I never thought I'd get a house when I was in a flat.**

- Brian -



I found this swap within weeks so I'd like to thank you. I tried 39 different sites and swapping groups with no luck, but after **just a few weeks on HomeSwapper** I found my perfect swap.

- James -



I have a beautiful house now and when I wake up every day **I still can't believe that it's mine.** I've used this site a couple of times now. I love it. Easy to use, nice platform and loads of options. Thank you Homeswapper, I couldn't be happier.

- Louise -