



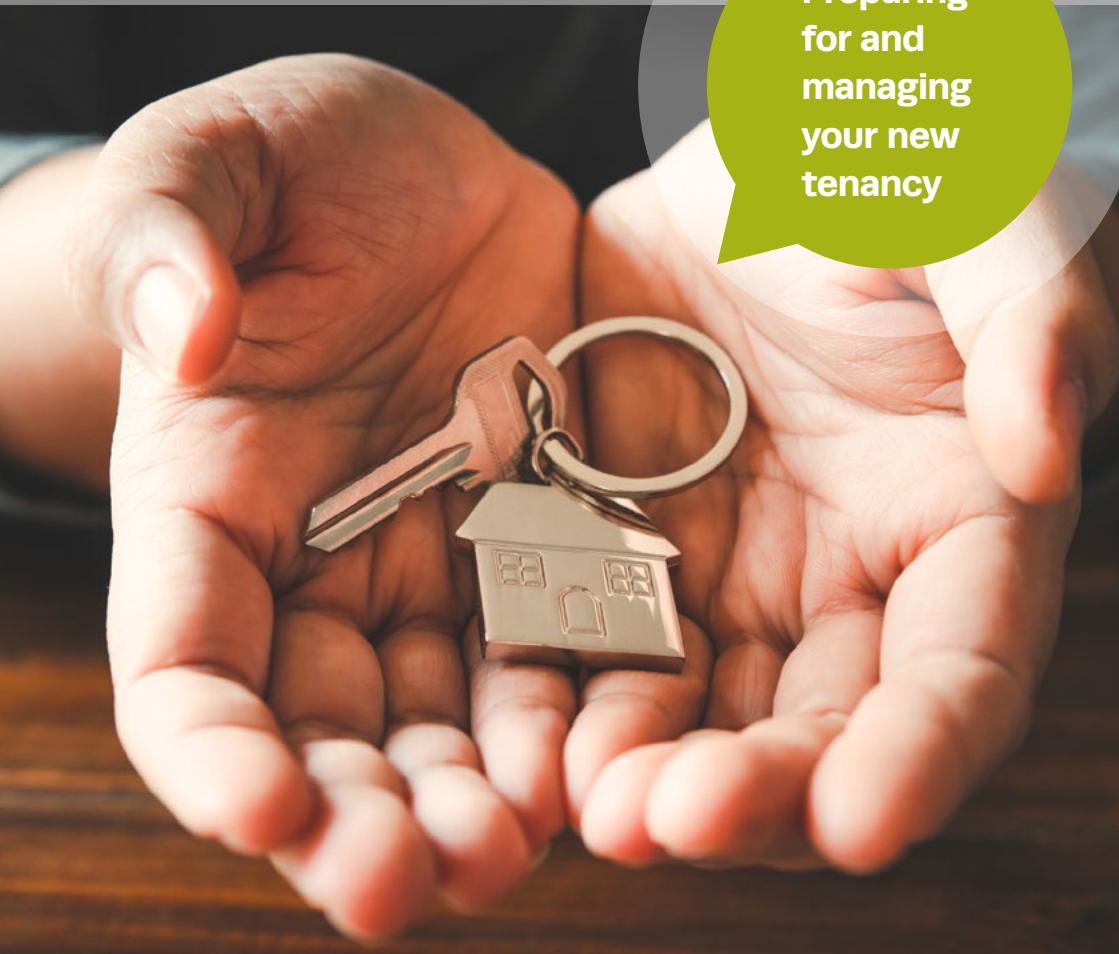
East Lothian
Council



First Steps

Housing advice & tenancy guide
for care-experienced young people

Preparing
for and
managing
your new
tenancy



Welcome

First Steps Housing Advice & Tenancy Guide has been written by **East Lothian Council** in partnership with **Who Cares? Scotland** and **Champions Board East Lothian**.

It is designed to help care-experienced young people prepare for and manage their first tenancy.

All information correct at time of publishing Oct 2024.

For up to date information visit us online at:

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/first-steps



Versions of this report can be provided in Braille, large print, audiotape, or your own language.

For assistance please call: **01620 827 827**

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via www.contactscotland-bsl.org



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Helping you prepare, ensuring support is in place, and explaining the steps towards independent living.

1 Considerations for your living arrangements

Your support network: Think about how close you would be to family, friends, and other systems which may help support your independence.

Transport links: Consider your access to transportation for education, work, health and social needs.

Local amenities: Look for nearby facilities like doctors' surgeries, leisure centres, and shops.

2 How to apply for housing

Complete and submit a housing application with assistance from a trusted worker. www.eastlothian.gov.uk/apply-for-housing

If you are care-experienced, one of our cases officers will refer you to our rehousing panel to prioritise you for a starter flat.

3 Being allocated and accepting a property

Starter flat offer and viewing

Once a starter flat is offered, a viewing appointment will be arranged with a Community Housing Officer and a trusted worker.

Decision on property

You will need to consider the property on offer and decide whether to accept or refuse. Discuss concerns with a trusted worker before deciding.

Preparation of a property

If accepted, the council will ensure the property is decorated, floored, and furnished before your move in date.

4 Signing a tenancy agreement

After the property is ready, you will be invited to a sign-up appointment where you will sign a Scottish Short Secure Tenancy (SSST) Agreement for a support period of six months, which will then roll on monthly.

1 Paying rent

At the sign-up appointment you will be asked to choose a rent payment method. The payment method will depend on your circumstances, such as whether you are in employment, full time education, or receiving benefits. Your payment method will be determined at the appointment based on your income details.

Pay your rent online at www.eastlothian.gov.uk/council-rent

2 Setting up utilities

It is important to set up your **main** utility accounts right away which include:

- **Council Tax** (includes water and sewage)* Pay online at: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/pay-council-tax or call **01875 824314**

**Care leavers do not pay Council Tax (only water and sewage) but you will have to apply for a Care Leavers Reduction so you are charged correctly. Visit: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/care-leaver-ctax*

- **Gas and Electricity accounts**

The Housing Officer will advise on the current supplier at your sign-up appointment. You will need this to either pay your bills or change supplier.

- **TV Licensing™** www.tvlicensing.co.uk

- **Insurance** www.eastlothian.gov.uk/home-contents

Council insurance scheme for home contents and accidental damage.

Additional utilities to consider may include:

- Landline / broadband / mobile phone
- Subscription / streaming services



3 Registering with a GP / Dentist

You may need to register with a new GP and/ or dentist if you live in a new area. Visit:

www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/gp-practices
www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/dental-services

4 Change of account billing address

It is important to remember to change your account billing address on all your active banking, insurance and service provider accounts.

You will also need to update your Driving Licence, but not your passport, with a change of address. You do not need to update your National Entitlement Card if you are moving within East Lothian.

5 Redirect your mail

Setting up a mail redirection will ensure you receive all your mail at your new address until your account details are updated.

Visit: www.royalmail.com/personal/receiving-mail/redirection

Emergency repairs

In an emergency call: 01875 612818

When you call to let us know that an **emergency** repair is required, we will provide advice to help you eliminate or reduce any immediate risk of danger.

Some emergency repairs are available to all tenants 24 hours a day, every day of the year. We try to respond to these within four hours of reporting.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- **No heating or hot water**
- **Leak within your property**
- **Property is insecure**

Emergency repairs will be done out-with working hours if the fault:

- **presents a serious risk of injury or death to you, your household or the public at large**
- **presents a serious risk to the structure of the property if not resolved immediately**
- **has resulted in the property being immediately insecure**
- **could place a vulnerable tenant's health or security at risk**

Our priority is to make the situation safe or carry out a temporary repair. If further work is needed, we will arrange a follow-up visit during normal working hours.

Gas leaks

If you suspect that there is a gas leak in your property, **report it immediately** to the **National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999**.

You must also report any gas leaks to us.



Reporting a non-emergency repair

To request a non-emergency repair, ask about the progress of a repair or seek advice about repairs to your council house call us on: **01875 824311** email: **housingrepairs@eastlothian.gov.uk** (inbox monitored during office hours only), or visit **www.eastlothian.gov.uk/repairs** for more information.

What to expect during a repair or maintenance appointment

If support is required with any repairs or maintenance appointments please contact a trusted worker.

Repair Appointments

All council or contracted staff must show ID before accessing your property.

Repair inspections should take no more than 30 minutes.

After inspection, a repairs officer will inform you about any necessary work and arrange for its completion.

Maintenance

Maintenance is typically planned annually and may involve kitchen or bathroom replacements.

A survey will be required, and you will be advised on how to prepare your property, such as moving furniture, or clearing areas.

After the survey you will be issued a letter with a date for the planned maintenance.

Compulsory access / safety checks

East Lothian Council has legal obligations to conduct compulsory safety checks including annual gas safety checks, EICR (Electrical Inspection Condition Report every 5 years), and Fire Alarm testing.

These checks are mandatory, so do not ignore any letters or emails you receive in this regard. Failing to provide access can result in a forced access to your property so if you have issues with the work being done, please speak with your trusted worker to ensure this does not happen.

Home fire safety visits:

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service offers everyone in Scotland a free home fire safety visit. Click the following link to book a home fire safety visit: **www.firescotland.gov.uk/contact-us/home-fire-safety-visits**

Neighbours

Neighbours and what to do in a dispute

Neighbours

You can greet neighbours whenever you see them. A smile, a wave, or a pleasant "hello" are probably the easiest ways to acknowledge them. Think of these greetings as forming good neighbour relationships.

Disputes and antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour can include:

- Constant loud noise or disturbance from a neighbour
- Drunken disorder
- Intimidating or threatening behaviour
- Violence
- Vandalism or graffiti

Reporting Antisocial Behaviour

Contact your local housing office or call the Antisocial behaviour helpline: **01875 824 307**

Visit **www.mygov.scot/antisocial-behaviour** for more advice and info on reporting noise or antisocial behaviour.

If you feel threatened or in danger, then please call emergency services 999 and ask for the Police.

Free, impartial, confidential advice and support

Our Financial Inclusion Team can:

- carry out a benefit health check to identify what benefits or grants you may be entitled to and help you to apply
- ensure you are receiving the correct amount
- help you to challenge or appeal decisions if you've recently had a benefit claim turned down

Visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financial-inclusion
email financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk or call **01620 827 827**
and ask for Financial Inclusion

The Scottish Welfare Fund – Assisting people on a low income who are in crisis or in need of support

The Scottish Welfare Fund is available to assist people on a low income who are having difficulty because of an exceptional situation or in meeting a one-off expense. Two types of grant are available:

- The **Crisis Grant** which can help with living expenses or for essential items following a disaster.
- The **Community Care Grant** which can support independent living and can be for essential items such as furniture, household equipment or travel costs.

Grants are discretionary which means even if you qualify, you may only be awarded a grant if your application meets the priority level set in East Lothian and there is money left in the Scottish Welfare Fund annual budget.

Apply online at www.eastlothian.gov.uk/scottish-welfare-fund
email scottishwelfarefund@eastlothian.gov.uk or call **01620 828 790**.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The CAB provides information and advice on a range of issues including benefits, debt and money, work and housing. www.cas.org.uk
There are two offices in East Lothian: Haddington **01620 824471**
and Musselburgh **0131 653 2748**.

Boost your income

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/boost

The cost of living is affecting us all.
Let's make sure you get the financial support you're entitled to.



Local area offices

Call 01620 827 827, or email your local council area office to contact your Community Housing Officer.

MUSSELBURGH AREA

The Brunton, Ladywell Way, Musselburgh EH21 6AF

housingmusselburgh@eastlothian.gov.uk

EAST AREA – DUNBAR, HADDINGTON & NORTH BERWICK

John Muir House, Brewery Park, Haddington EH41 3HA

housingdunbar@eastlothian.gov.uk

housinghaddington@eastlothian.gov.uk

housingnorthberwick@eastlothian.gov.uk

TRANENT & PRESTONPANS AREA

The George Johnstone Centre, 35 Winton Place, Tranent EH33 1AE

housingtranent@eastlothian.gov.uk

housingprestonpans@eastlothian.gov.uk

Verbal abuse and threatening behaviour is never acceptable. #zerotolerance

We're living through stressful times right now, and everyone's feeling it.

Our staff are doing their best to assist local residents and businesses whilst delivering essential services.

Please, be nice.



BE NICE
RESPECT US AS WE RESPECT YOU

East Lothian Council 2024 www.eastlothian.gov.uk

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