

# Homefront



The newsletter for East Lothian Council tenants

AUTUMN/WINTER 2024



## **Affordable Housing emergency declared in East Lothian**

**Also in this issue:**

**Are you ready for Winter?**

**Landlord Report to Tenants**

**Rent Level Consultation**

**Financial help over Winter**



**East Lothian  
Council**

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk)

# Contents

## In this issue of Homefront

### Breaking news

Affordable Housing Emergency 3

### Tenant News

Are you ready for Winter? 5

Condensation and mould 7

### Housing News

Allocations & Homelessness 9

Improvements to Council Houses 10

Rent Level Consultation 12

Landlord Report to Tenants 14

First Steps leaflet 16

### ELTRP

ELTRP Update 17

ELTRP News 19

### You and your community

SmartTec House 22

Fraud (Key Amnesty) 23

Antisocial Behaviour 24

Help for council tenants 25

Contacting our teams 27

### Money Matters

Rent Advice Surgeries 27

Financial help over Winter 28

### Useful numbers

32



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

For assistance please call

**01620827827**

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via

[www.contactsotland-bsl.org](http://www.contactsotland-bsl.org)

Homefront: the newsletter for East Lothian Council tenants. Follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ELCouncil) @ELCouncil, or [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EastLothianCouncil) East Lothian Council

# Affordable Housing emergency declared in East Lothian

At a special meeting on Tuesday 12 November, East Lothian Council agreed to declare an Affordable Housing Emergency.

Officers are doing all that they can to address the challenges in East Lothian's housing system. This includes delivering an action plan in response to housing and homelessness pressures that is showing positive results, but there

is now an increasing risk that these positive trends will begin to reverse as the council struggles to deliver new, affordable housing due to the reduction in investment by the Scottish Government for new build completions.

Councillor Andy Forrest, East Lothian Council spokesperson for Housing, said:

**“** *The serious impact of this reduction in investment cannot be underestimated given the current and growing housing pressures in East Lothian and in the context of a National Housing Emergency. The reason we are declaring this Affordable Housing Emergency now is that we are at imminent risk of losing affordable units on sites where housing is currently being built or where work is about to start, including sites in Musselburgh and Haddington. But there are sites all over East Lothian where we could potentially lose the affordable housing component that is so urgently needed.* **”**



Councillor Andy Forrest

We currently manage **9,353** properties and have **4,709** applicants on the housing list. Average turnover of stock is usually around **500** properties per year, however during 2023/24, a total of **664** properties were allocated, of which **209** were new builds – which has contributed towards mitigating some of the pressures.

The Scottish Government has confirmed East Lothian's resource allocation for preparing its Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) for 2025–2030 as £37million, averaging just over £7million per year – in comparison to an average of £12million per year for the previous five years.

Last year, East Lothian achieved 452 completions through the affordable housing supply programme. In comparison, we will deliver an estimated 340 units over the next five years. If investment were available to deliver all of the projects set out in the SHIP, a total of 1,566 units could complete over the next five years. Based on the actual allocation received, there is a very high risk that we could lose 1,226 units of affordable housing.

Councillor Forrest added:


**“What this means for our tenants, if this situation isn't addressed by government, is that we will have a huge reduction in new-build properties being built and our housing waiting list will continue**

**to grow. So for current tenants, moves from your current home will be more difficult. For example if the size of your household increases or decreases and you need a different property, there will be less options available and more people on the waiting list.**

**And if you need to move into an accessible property, many of these are new-build, so the options for that type of housing swap will be drastically reduced. We are doing all that we can to try and prevent that from happening, and to ensure as much new housing is built as possible. ”**

The council has written to both the UK and Scottish Government to seek additional funding support as part of the UK Government's budget announcement on 30 October 2024. We have asked for an urgent response to ensure East Lothian does not lose affordable housing opportunities available to the council via Section 75 agreements with developers of new housing.

# Are you ready for Winter?



As the weather starts to get much colder it is important to prepare now for winter, rather than waiting until extreme weather affects you and others in the community.

## Here are a few practical tips to help you get ready for winter

### Help prevent burst pipes

- Try to keep your central heating on, even if you are not at home or only using certain rooms. We know this can be difficult due to the current cost of living and high fuel costs, but keeping the heating on, even at a minimum of 12-15 degrees, can prevent frozen pipes.

### Never leave a dripping tap

- If you are planning on going away, turn off the water supply and drain the system – the council will do this for you free of charge.

### If your pipes do freeze

- If possible, apply a gentle heat such as a hot water bottle or hairdryer. **Never** use a naked flame.
- Raise the temperature in the home but do not switch on the immersion heater.



**If your pipes burst**

- ✦ Turn off the main stopcock – this is usually found underneath the kitchen sink.
- ✦ Switch off the immersion heater and damp down a coal fire if a back boiler is fitted.
- ✦ Call the Repairs Contact Centre on **01875 824311**
- ✦ If it's an emergency and it's out of office hours, call **01875 612 818**

**And finally -**

**Be a good neighbour**

- ✦ If you are able, help by clearing snow and ice from paths and pavements outside your home
- ✦ Be careful where you park – sometimes our gritters can't get access to roads because cars are blocking roads.
- ✦ If you have elderly and vulnerable neighbours, make sure they are warm and have food and medicines.



# Don't let condensation and mould ruin your home

**Condensation is more common in the winter months.**

Condensation happens when warm, moist air in your house comes into contact with cold surfaces and forms water droplets.

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. You may notice condensation in some areas more than others, such as around windows or on north-facing walls.

It is often found behind wardrobes or in cupboards and, when surfaces are colder, this can lead to unsightly mould growth.



You can prevent condensation by:

- making sure your house is heated regularly
- reducing the amount of moisture produced in your home
- ventilating rooms, especially after cooking or having a bath or shower.

# Mould

Mould is likely to appear if condensation is left untreated. It can be treated with a specialist mould remover, or soapy water and disposable wipes/kitchen towel. Every wipe/towel must be single-use and bagged and binned immediately.

Mould spores can pose a danger to health, particularly to children, older people and people with existing skin and respiratory conditions or a weaker immune system.

If you are experiencing problems with damp and mould, please report it by calling our contact centre on **01875 824311** and asking for the **Repairs Team**.

If using a specialist mould remover always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Fungicidal paints are available and can help prevent mould reappearing.



For more information and some tips to prevent condensation from affecting your home, download our leaflet at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk)



# Allocations Policy & Homelessness

---

**Applications from homeless households are increasing in East Lothian and demand for temporary accommodation is high.**

---

Because of this rise in applications, we have made temporary changes to our Allocations Policy, which started on 1 October 2024. The changes affect how we manage applications from homeless households and will allow the council to meet its legal duties.

Our Allocations Policy sets out how we allocate properties to all applicants, based on priorities and housing needs.

Previously, following a homelessness assessment, an applicant was able to select specific areas they wanted to live in and the house types they would prefer. These preferences were in place for the first six months and after that, if no offers of accommodation had been made or accepted, an applicant had to widen their choice of area and house type, to increase their opportunities of rehousing.

However, it was found that the use of the six-month policy was leading to longer time spent in temporary accommodation, waiting for an offer of permanent rehousing. Applicants must now make an immediate choice of area including at least one main town and a range of suitable house types.

Single homeless applicants are the largest group in need of permanent rehousing and they wait longer in temporary accommodation due to fewer one-bedroom properties becoming available.

From 1 October 2024, qualifying single homeless applicants who meet specific criteria may be offered a two-bedroom property to reduce the time they spend in temporary accommodation and increase their opportunities for rehousing.

# Improvements to council houses

In the past year a huge amount of work has been done to improve the quality of your homes, including:

🏠 **438 new kitchen installations**

🏠 **359 new bathrooms installed**  
*(excludes adapted bathrooms)*

🏠 **235 heating upgrades**  
*(including condensing gas boilers, air source heat pumps & high heat retention storage heating)*

🏠 **477 window and door replacements**

🏠 **123 insulation measures**  
*(includes lofts, cavity wall, external wall)*

🏠 **34 full house rewires**

**We are continuing with a rolling programme of stock condition surveys to make sure our homes meet the latest housing standards.**

Our qualified surveyors assess the age and condition of major components such as kitchens, bathrooms, heating, roofs, windows and doors.

Surveyors also carry out a comprehensive energy survey, collecting information which allows us to calculate how energy efficient homes are.

If components and/or energy efficiency measures are identified as needing upgraded, we arrange for these to be added to a planned programme of works. The council's technical teams then contact tenants to discuss options and talk them through the upgrade process.

This year's extensive programme of bathroom, kitchen, and heating upgrades is well underway. Some roofing & rendering projects are already complete, with others underway or due to start in Spott, Haddington, Dunbar, Pencaitland, Gullane, Prestonpans and Musselburgh. We continue to prioritise new windows and door installations as well as insulation measures to help reduce heating costs for tenants.

In addition to the stock condition survey, we carry out several other regular safety checks in our properties.

These include gas, electrical and fire safety. We have created a dedicated compliance team to support our tenants and ensure we remain compliant with the various national tenant safety standards.

**Last year, we completed more than 10,164 gas safety and 1,814 electrical safety inspections.**

This included bringing our properties up to the new smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detector standards. The figure does not account for any 'in year' double visits i.e. re-checks when a property becomes void in the same year as its last electrical safety check.



# Rent Level Consultation

have your say




**The council is currently considering a proposed rent increase of 7% for next year.**

We have recently written out to all our tenants to ask you for your views on our proposals. In our letter we explain that the money you pay in rent keeps the housing service running and allows us to improve and invest in your homes.

We want to make sure rent charges remain affordable for tenants, but we also need to deliver a level of service that meets national standards.

**The chart opposite shows how each £1 of rent money is spent.**

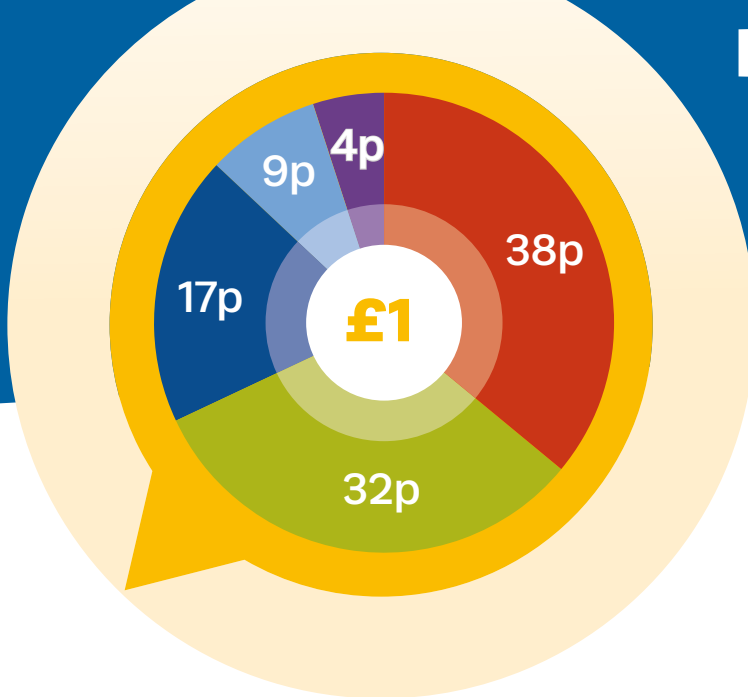
If you have not already responded to our consultation, please do so now. You can do this by:

- calling us on –  
**Freephone 0800 413 721**  
Please leave your name and number and a member of our team will call you back
- emailing –  
**[tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk)** 
- Or, writing to us at  
**Service Development Team,  
Community Housing,  
East Lothian Council, Penston  
House, Macmerry, EH33 1EX**

**You have until Friday 20th December to let us know your views.**

At the end of this consultation, we will use the results to prepare a report for a special budget meeting of the Council in February 2025. At this meeting, councillors will decide the level of rent and service charge change for council tenants in the year 2025–26. We will then write to tell you what your rent and service charge will be.

**You should receive a letter at least four weeks before Monday 7th April 2025, which is the date that your payment will be adjusted.**



## How each £1 of rent money is spent

*(chart is an extract from this year's Landlord Report to Tenants)*

### **Voids and Bad Debts = 4p per £1**

Money that cannot be recovered such as rent loss due to houses being vacant or chasing debt that is uneconomical to recover.

### **Employee Costs = 9p per £1**

Salaries and associated costs of those delivering landlord services to tenants.

### **Operating Costs = 17p per £1**

IT systems and equipment, office accommodation costs, tenant participation and running costs of the service.

### **Repairs and Maintenance = 32p per £1**

All costs associated with maintaining and improving our properties.

### **Loan Charges = 38p per £1**

These are payments the council makes to the Public Works Loan Board for the finance it has borrowed to deliver its capital investment plans, mainly for the modernising of existing homes and the building of new council houses.

# Landlord Report to Tenants

**Our latest Landlord Report is now available on the council website.**

Every year, in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel, we produce this report to let tenants know how we are performing as your landlord. The period covers 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and while the COVID-19 pandemic is now behind us, we are continuing to face serious financial challenges which are affecting both council services and our tenants.

The report shows that our performance last year was better than the national average in some of the key housing standards and we will do our best to improve where we are not performing as well. We will continue to plan and make sure we are prioritising investment in the right areas with the right support to meet individual needs through fair access to housing and housing services.

Thanks to the members of East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel for their dedication and commitment to improving services for tenants and service users and for their continued engagement and input in developing this report.

You can find out more and view the full report at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/landlordreport](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/landlordreport)



Shown below are some of the highlights of this year's report.

**During the year we...**

had a stock of **9,353 properties**

Our average rent was **£76.73** per week.  
We collected **£34,040,518** in rent.

we have **4,709 applicants**  
on our housing list

As at 31 March 2024 we had **273 empty properties** and **76** were undergoing major work

we **re-let 389 properties**  
within an average of **49.92 days**

**allocated 664** properties  
including **209 new builds**



**EMERGENCY REPAIRS COMPLETED**



**PROPERTIES ALLOCATED INCLUDING 209 NEW BUILDS**

carried out **19,299 non-emergency repairs**,  
and **3,171 emergency repairs**

Installed **438 new kitchens**  
and **359 new bathrooms**  
(excludes adapted bathrooms)



**NEW BATHROOMS INSTALLED**  
Excluding Adapted Bathrooms



**NEW KITCHENS INSTALLED**

# First Steps

Housing advice & tenancy guide for care-experienced young people



**East Lothian Council**, in partnership with **Who Cares? Scotland** and the **Champions Board East Lothian**, have developed a tenant handbook, ***First Steps: Housing Advice and Tenancy Guide for care-experienced young people***

Through the Champions Board East Lothian, some young people who are care-experienced played a key role in shaping the development and design of this guide.

It aims to support care-experienced young people as they prepare for and manage their first tenancy, making sure they have access to support systems and by providing clear steps towards independent living. It gives information on setting up a tenancy, property repairs and maintenance, getting on well with neighbours and financial support and advice.



To access the First Steps handbook go to [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/firststeps](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/firststeps) or scan the QR code >>







# East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel Update

## Annual Get Together

This year East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) held its annual get-together at the Fraser Centre in Tranent. More than 60 people attended the event, where a number of services were on hand to provide advice and information to tenants. Services included:

- Service Development Team
- Housing Officers
- Tenancy Support
- Occupational Therapy
- Rent Income Team
- Repairs Service
- Benefits Advice
- Community Safety Team
- Connected Communities
- Volunteer Centre, East Lothian (VCEL)
- Representatives from various Tenants and Residents Associations
- Members of ELTRP's Executive Committee (EC)

We also had an 'Ask the Managers' session hosted by **James Coutts**, Service Manager for Community Housing and Homelessness; **Paul Grant**, Service Manager for Property Maintenance and **Pat Veitch**, Community Protection Team Leader.

Tenants could request an interview with any of the managers to discuss outstanding issues or concerns they had. Tenants had the opportunity to visit a number of stalls where they could speak to staff and pick up information leaflets. One tenant who had requested an interview with a manager visited the housing stall where their questions were answered and therefore didn't need to speak to a manager. They said the staff were brilliant and couldn't believe they got the answers they wanted so quickly.

**Feedback from other tenants who attended the event was extremely positive and the fact that they had direct access to staff was very much appreciated.**



ELTRP would like to thank all the tenants who came along to the event, the staff who were on hand to give information and advice and to the staff at the Fraser Centre who helped set up the room and to the kitchen staff who provided an amazing buffet.

**Here's to next year's event!**

## Scrutiny

Members of ELTRP EC continue to be involved in scrutinising East Lothian Council's Housing service. The group has been meeting on a regular basis to begin to progress scrutiny activity on the voids process, which will include visiting void properties and shadowing officers. They are hoping to make suggestions on improving the process so houses can be brought back into circulation quicker.

The group has already met **Paul Grant**, Service Manager for Property

Maintenance; **James Coutts**, Service Manager for Community Housing and Homelessness; and **Rob Fulton**, Repairs and Voids Team Leader. All three managers have been very supportive of ELTRP's scrutiny activity.

The volunteers will undertake training, including GDPR and Information Security training, in the coming weeks before progressing with the voids scrutiny activity. We will keep everyone up to date through the next issue of Homefront.



## DATE FOR YOUR DIARY...

The next ELTRP event will be our **Christmas Meal** on **Thursday 12 December**.

For more information and to book a place at this event, please visit our website at [www.eltrp.co.uk](http://www.eltrp.co.uk)



## Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) Updates

We currently have **25 groups** across East Lothian, with new groups developing all the time. All the members of the Tenants and Residents Groups in East Lothian are volunteers and work extremely hard to promote community participation and get as many people involved as possible. The TRAs would be happy for more people to become involved, so please have a look at our website or contact us to find out if there is a TRA in your area.

ELTRP is also here to help start a TRA in your area if there isn't already one there, so again please contact us to find out more and/or have a chat with Sue, our Outreach Officer.

The success of the TRAs comes with members of the community working together, identifying concerns, issues and improvements and working with the relevant people to address these and find a solution.

Communities have a louder voice when they come together as a group! As always, the TRAs have been working behind the scenes for the benefit of their local communities.

**Here is a brief update of some of what the groups are doing:**

### Haddington Central TRA Pleased to be able to support Haddington Dementia Singing Group

Haddington Central TRA is working really hard on many community issues and concerns. They also support the Haddington Dementia Singing Group. The group, made up of people with dementia and their family, carers and volunteers, meets weekly at the Maitlandfield Hotel, Haddington. The group provides a fun experience that reduces anxiety and distress through an activity that focuses on retained skills.

This is all done in a safe environment where members can socialise with others and share information and find support. As well as singing, the group organises social events and outings that allow the person living with dementia and their partner/ carer an opportunity to take part in or attend events that may not usually be accessible to them.

The group is free to those who attend, thanks to volunteers and funding from various charities.

For more information about the singing group, but also what the TRA are doing please contact Susan at [haddingtoncentraltral@gmail.com](mailto:haddingtoncentraltral@gmail.com)

### **Well Wynd Tenants Group (Tranent sheltered housing)**

The WWTG committee has been very involved in planning significant upgrades to the building that will encourage better use of all the facilities and ensure better safety and security.

The first stage was painting and carpeting the public areas. Then, the outside area was addressed, following vandals setting fire to the waste bins that damaged part of the building. So the bins are now in a dedicated enclosure, that is conveniently accessible by residents and fully complies with the requirements of health and safety. This was funded by the Local Housing Partnership (LHP).

Furthermore, to ensure security and safety of residents, the fences surrounding the area have been upgraded to more solid and higher fences.

Ongoing projects include the replacement of the old conservatory with a more modern structure. When fully finished this will offer a comfortable lounge area, dining room for the proposed Lunch Club, and dedicated TV viewing area... Fingers crossed for Christmas so we can celebrate in style!

WWTG has worked extremely hard this year to achieve a number of tasks to improve their area, benefiting all tenants. The result is amazing!

For more information please contact Mary at [lieforit@aol.com](mailto:lieforit@aol.com)

### **Harkness Crescent TRA (Tranent)**

is an active, passionate and vibrant group addressing the issues raised by the local community. They have achieved so much over the years and are now planning a leaflet on the history of Harkness Crescent. They have some photos, as well as the priceless memories of the longest-serving resident! This is a very exciting project and the group would be grateful for any memories and photos from people who have lived in the Crescent over the years.

For more information, please contact Viv at [vtowsey@gmail.com](mailto:vtowsey@gmail.com).

### **Cockenzie Port Seton TRA (CPSTRA)**

This new tenants & residents group covers all of the Cockenzie & Port Seton area. Its aim is to create a safe space where the local community can come and share their issues and concerns, for example, Antisocial Behaviour (ASB), housing, dog fouling, speeding, parking issues etc. The group is already working well with council officers, police, local councillors, ELTRP and many others.

It's not just issues the group is there for – they welcome good things that happen within the community too, of course, and can help spread any good news, and/or help with volunteering.

The next meeting will be after the festive season - January/February 2025. Look out for posters around the community with the next date.

If you want any more information or would like to join the committee please contact [cpstra23@gmail.com](mailto:cpstra23@gmail.com)

### Sheltered Housing complex – 'Welcome Pack'

All the East Lothian sheltered housing complexes have been working together to create a Welcome Pack for sheltered housing tenants. They have worked really hard, had many meetings and are on their way to completing this important task – hopefully by the end of the year. Well done to everyone involved!

A new group has started in

### Blindwells, Tranent

Contact [blindwellstown@gmail.com](mailto:blindwellstown@gmail.com) or visit the Facebook page: Blindwells Residents.

There are also new groups in **Longniddry** and **East Linton** with possibly two more in **Musselburgh** (watch this space)...

Sadly, the long-standing **Ormiston West TRA** and **Haddington East TRA** have now become inactive. Plans are already underway to re-start the Haddington group so if you are interested in becoming involved please contact Sue at [scairns@tis.org.uk](mailto:scairns@tis.org.uk). Anyone interested in re-starting the Ormiston group should also contact Sue.

Some areas of East Lothian are not represented with a Tenants and Residents group for example Macmerry, Tranent areas, Aberlady and many more, so if anyone wishes to explore this further Sue Cairns, Outreach Officer at ELTRP is more than happy to support new groups in any way she can.

Patsy King, Development Officer, and Sue Cairns can provide more information about any of the groups and can be contacted at [scairns@tis.org.uk](mailto:scairns@tis.org.uk) or [pking@tis.org.uk](mailto:pking@tis.org.uk) or visit our website - [www.eltrp.co.uk](http://www.eltrp.co.uk) .

For more information e: [tenantspanel@hotmail.com](mailto:tenantspanel@hotmail.com)

[www.eltrp.co.uk](http://www.eltrp.co.uk)  [@EastLothianTRP](https://www.facebook.com/EastLothianTRP)  [twitter.com/ELTRP1](https://twitter.com/ELTRP1) 

# Daily independence through technology enabled care

**For many, technology is often something that is feared, but with a little bit of show-how and know-how, technology can provide instant support for daily living activities that can significantly improve your everyday experiences at home!**

East Lothian's Technology Enabled Care team are on hand to show you just how easily available and affordable new smart tech can be. Through devices such as door sensors, voice-activated equipment and sensor detectors, people can confidently manage their homes and lives with greater independence.


These devices are designed to support people to live safely within their own homes, helping to prevent falls and ensuring that help is at hand when needed. Plus, their simplicity means you don't have to be tech-savvy to use them. Voice activated commands, motion sensors and wearable devices can provide direct links to family members or 24 hour call centres in times of need, offering reassurance for both the user and their families.

Technology enabled care can integrate into daily life without

feeling intrusive too. For example, lights, heating systems, TVs and other electrical devices can be linked to a tablet, allowing people to adjust their environments easily – either at the touch of a button or via voice command.

Additionally, devices like video doorbells help improve security, giving users peace of mind by letting them see and communicate with visitors before opening the door.

If you would like further advice or to see technology solutions in action, public drop-in clinics are held within WellWynd Hub, Sheltered Housing, 6 Loch Square, Tranent, EH33 2JY on a monthly basis.

Dates for 2025 will be published soon and you can get further information at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/elrs](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/elrs) 



# Fraud (key amnesty)

We are holding a 'key amnesty' throughout January 2025 when tenants breaking the law by subletting their council property have the chance to hand their keys back in order to avoid legal action.




The aim is to reclaim council homes that are being illegally sublet so we can ensure they are given to people on our waiting list who are in desperate need of social housing.

We are investing more resources into investigating housing fraud and have recently recruited a dedicated Corporate Fraud Officer to investigate and track down people who make illegal profits by subletting their council home to others.

Usually, housing fraud carries serious penalties – including eviction. January's key amnesty gives people the opportunity to hand back their keys to their Local Housing Office without facing any further action. People can simply put the keys in an envelope with the address of the property written on and drop this into the reception area of their local housing office.

The month-long key amnesty is being promoted following National Tenancy Fraud week which took place from 15- 21 November to raise awareness of how housing fraud costs the public purse millions and denies people in genuine need of a home. This is a national initiative and all councils and agencies have agreed to share data in order to tackle housing fraud.

We also need you to help us identify housing fraud. You may have seen a tenant moving out or noticed a property where the occupants change regularly. Maybe you have seen someone collecting rent from subtenants? All reports will be treated in confidence and can be made anonymously.

Please contact your local  
Housing Office or email  
[corporatefraud@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:corporatefraud@eastlothian.gov.uk) 

# Are you experiencing antisocial behaviour?

## Help is available

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) comes in many forms but it can always be described as something that causes fear and alarm to those who experience it.

It can happen in or around a property or it can happen outside, in public spaces. Just some examples of ASB include:

! loud music  
! continuing loud noise  
! shouting & swearing

! youth or adult disorder in public spaces

! fly tipping  
! vandalism  
! graffiti

East Lothian Council and partner agencies have designed an Antisocial Behaviour policy that allows officers to deal with complaints as quickly as possible and in an appropriate way.

Many who suffer the effects of antisocial behaviour do not always report it, but please be reassured that there are various ways you can do this in a confidential and safe way:

☎ 01875 824 307 (24 Hours)

✉ [asb@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:asb@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/report](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/report)

If the ASB you are experiencing involves a **criminal act**, you should always report this to Police Scotland on 101 or ring 999 if it's an emergency. Non-urgent reports can also be made to Police Scotland on their website [www.scotland.police.uk](http://www.scotland.police.uk)

The council also operates a **mediation service** that can help if your relationship with neighbours has broken down. Details of this service can also be found on the council website [www.eastlothian.gov.uk](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk) 



# Help for council tenants

## Tenancy Support

We are here to offer support to new and existing council tenants who are having difficulty maintaining their tenancy.

We can provide practical support with application forms such as Universal Credit and Housing Benefit and can help with personal budgeting, applying for Scottish Welfare Fund grants or other sources of funding and we can offer practical support to allow you to live independently in your own home.

**Contact your Community Housing Officer** to be referred to the service by calling **01620 827 827**.

## Garden Aid

We can help tenants who, because of disability or age (60 years old or over) are no longer able to maintain their garden. The service starts in early April and runs through the growing season up to the end of October/November.

**Contact your local Community Housing Officer** for more information on **01620 827827**.

While some of these important services are mentioned in more detail in this issue, we thought it would be handy to have a short summary of some of the support you might find helpful, especially as we head into winter.

## Antisocial Behaviour

We want all tenants to feel safe in their homes. If you are experiencing any antisocial behaviour problems within your neighbourhood or community, we can help.

Please report any issues to the council's 24 hour confidential helpline on **01875 824 307**, email [asb@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:asb@eastlothian.gov.uk) or at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/reportit](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/reportit)


**Please don't suffer in silence.**

Remember, if you are in danger or need to report a crime, contact **Police Scotland on 101** or dial **999** in an emergency.




## Rent, Council Tax and financial help

Paying rent is the most important part of your Tenancy Agreement. If you find you are struggling to manage, please contact us straight away. Our Rent Income Officers are here to help and will discuss your concerns confidentially and sensitively and make sure you get any help and support that you need.

Phone our helpline on **01620 827 528**, email [rentadvice@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:rentadvice@eastlothian.gov.uk) or visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent) 

You may be entitled to financial help if you are struggling. Our Financial Inclusion Team offers free, impartial and confidential advice and support and can help identify what benefits or grants you may be entitled to and help you to apply.

To find out more call the team on **01620 827 827**, email [financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk) or visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financial-inclusion](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financial-inclusion) 



## Contacting our Housing Teams

If you need to contact any of our Housing Teams, including Housing and Tenancy Officers and our Repairs teams, they will do their best to get back to you as soon as possible.

Please be aware that most of our officers work away from their desks for much of each day so may not be able to respond to you immediately and they will respond to the most urgent enquiries first.

Every enquiry from every tenant is important to us and we all appreciate your patience and understanding if your call or email is not always returned right away.



## Communication by email

We are constantly trying to improve on the ways we communicate with tenants and are looking to send out more of our housing information, like **Homefront** and tenant consultations, to you by email and text message. We will also promote our services on social media.

However, we know that technology is not suitable for everyone and we will still provide paper copies of our information where we don't have an email address or mobile phone number for you – or if you ask to keep receiving paper copies.

If you would like to start receiving your copy of Homefront and other information by email, please contact your area housing office and ask that your contact details be updated to include your email address and mobile phone number.

## Rent Advice Surgeries



If you're an East Lothian Council tenant and need advice about your rent payments or rent arrears, call into one of our advice surgeries.

You can drop in for a friendly chat or if you prefer to make an appointment just get in touch in advance and we'll arrange this for you.

We hold regular surgeries in the following locations:

- Jobcentre Plus office, Musselburgh
- The Bleachingfield Centre, Dunbar
- The Ridge Centre, Dunbar
- The Pennypit Centre, Rope Walk, Prestonpans
- The George Johnstone Centre, Tranent

For details, visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent-advice-surgery](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent-advice-surgery) or call the Rent Income team on 01620 827 528 for dates and times of surgeries in your local area.

# Financial help over Winter

**If you're worried about household bills and other essential costs over the colder months, you're not alone.**

We have seen an increase in the number of people contacting the council for financial support or advice, many of whom have not had to access help before. Many people often don't know what support is available, or where to go for help.

Our Revenues team offers a wide range of services including:

- support to help people maximise their income and claim benefits and grants
- help to manage rent and Council Tax payments
- help for people who have been faced with a crisis or emergency situation

---

## Help identify what benefits or grants you may be entitled to and help to apply

You may be entitled to financial help if you're struggling. Our Financial Inclusion team offers free, impartial and confidential advice and support and can help identify what benefits

or grants you may be entitled to and can help you to apply. Officers can also ensure you are receiving the correct amount of benefit and help you to challenge or appeal decisions if you've recently had a benefit claim turned down, as well as providing other advice about welfare benefits for anyone in need of help.

You can also check what you're entitled to using the free independent online **benefits calculator** at

[www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk) ↗

---

## Help available if you are in crisis

The Scottish Welfare Fund provides a safety net for people on low incomes. The grants do not have to be repaid. Qualifying conditions apply for the two types of grant available:

### Crisis Grants

aim to help people on a low income who are in crisis due to a disaster (such as a fire or a flood) or an emergency (such as where money has been lost or an unexpected

expense has arisen) and can provide occasional assistance to people where there is an immediate threat to the health or safety of that person or their family.

### A Community Care Grant

which is usually in the form of goods or services, can be provided to help qualifying people who need help in order to establish or maintain a settled home. To be eligible for a Community Care Grant you must have savings of less than £700 (£1200 if you are pension age).

To apply for a Scottish Welfare Fund grant you must be over 16 and normally have a low income, for example, be in receipt of Universal Credit or Pension Credit.

*Please be aware that these 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.*

---

## Pension Credit

Pension Credit tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs. If you are over State Pension age, you may be eligible to claim Pension Credit, even if you own your home or have savings. People who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get:

- ▶ **The Winter Fuel Payment\***  
 (please make sure you apply for Pension Credit before 21 December to qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment)

and other help with heating costs

- ▶ **Help with rent and Council Tax**
- ▶ **A free TV Licence for those aged 75 or over**
- ▶ **Help with the cost of NHS services, such as NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments**

You could be eligible for Pension Credit if your weekly income is below £218.15 or, if you have a partner who lives with you, £332.95. Qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

**Don't miss out. Check your eligibility at [gov.uk/pension-credit](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit)  or by calling 0800 99 1234**

---

## Help to manage rent payments

If you're a council tenant and need help with your rent, our Rent Income Officers will deal with any concerns you have confidentially and sensitively. We understand there are lots of reasons why people fall behind with rent payments, such as a change in circumstances or

difficulties managing your bills. Rent Income Officers can arrange to meet you at one of our advice surgeries to discuss any concerns you have or can arrange a home visit if you prefer.

If you're pension age, you may qualify for **Housing Benefit** to help pay your council rent. You can apply if you're working or out of work. How much you get depends on how much rent you pay, how many people live with you and your household income, including benefits, pensions and savings.

Working age Housing Benefit is only available if you live in supported or temporary accommodation. If you're working age and in general accommodation, you can apply for **Universal Credit** to help with your housing costs.

If you receive Housing Benefit or the Universal Credit housing cost element and need further financial assistance to meet your housing costs, you may qualify for a **Discretionary Housing Payment**.

If you've been affected by the Department for Work and Pensions **Benefit Cap**, you may be eligible for a Discretionary Housing Payment. This additional support is designed to help people whose income is impacted by a Benefit Cap deduction. This payment can help cover rent or other expenses and can make a real difference. We encourage anyone impacted by the benefit cap to apply

and explore whether this support can ease the pressure. Don't wait – reach out and make an application today to see if you qualify.

---

### Help to manage Council Tax payments

If you've fallen behind with Council Tax payments or are struggling to manage your payments please don't ignore the problem. Get in touch as soon as possible and we'll do everything we can to help you.

Our Council Tax & Debt Management Officers can check you are receiving any discount or exemption you may be entitled to, or even discuss arrangements to spread your payments over a longer period of time.

You may also be eligible for help with your Council Tax payments via the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It doesn't matter if you're working, out-of-work, retired or a carer. Eligibility depends on your income, including income from people who live with you.

You won't qualify if you have more than £16,000 in savings, although the savings rule does not apply if you receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit. You may also qualify if you receive Adult Disability Payment, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Carer's Allowance.

## Get in touch

If you're struggling or need advice, get in touch straight away and we'll do what we can to help. Our officers also work with other council teams and agencies who may be able to help you.

You can find more information about all of our services on the council website, including application forms. Visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financial-support](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financial-support) ↗

If you wish to speak to an officer, contact details are shown below. If you're not sure who to contact, get in touch with the Rent Income team and they can help you to access the service you need.

### Rent Income

Advice or support with your rent payments

**T 01620 827 528**

**E [rentadvice@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:rentadvice@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

### Council Tax

Advice or support with your Council Tax payments

**T 01875 824 314**

*Lines are open Tue, Thu, Fr 9am – 2pm.  
Lines are closed on Mon & Wed.*

Help or advice to apply for the **Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Housing Benefit** or a **Discretionary Housing Payment**

**T 01620 827730**

**E [financialsupport@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:financialsupport@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

*Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am – 1pm or  
Wed 10am – 1pm*

### Financial Inclusion

For help to maximise your income and claim what you're entitled to

**T 01620 827 827**

**E [financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

Find out more or apply for a Scottish Welfare Fund **Community Care Grant** or **Crisis Grant**

**T 01620 828790**

**E [scottishwelfarefund@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:scottishwelfarefund@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

*Mon to Thu 1pm – 5pm or Fri 1pm – 4pm*

# Get in touch

## AREA OFFICES

Call 01620 827 827, email us, or visit your nearest housing office.

### MUSSELBURGH

The Brunton, Ladywell Way  
housingmusselburgh@eastlothian.gov.uk

### HADDINGTON

John Muir House, Brewery Park  
housinghaddington@eastlothian.gov.uk

### TRANENT & PRESTONPANS

George Johnstone Centre  
Winton Place  
housingtranent@eastlothian.gov.uk  
housingprestonpans@eastlothian.gov.uk

### NORTH BERWICK

Library & Customer Services, School Road  
housingnorthberwick@eastlothian.gov.uk

### DUNBAR

Bleachingfield Centre,  
Countess Crescent  
housingdunbar@eastlothian.gov.uk

Benefits  
01620 827730

Scottish Welfare Fund  
01620 828790

Antisocial Behaviour  
01875 824 307

Council tax  
01875 824314

Social work  
01875 824309

Gas Leaks  
0800 111 999

Housing  
01620 827827

Special uplift  
01875 824305

Homelessness  
01620 827536

Switchboard  
01620 827827

Repairs  
01875 824311

Welfare Rights  
01620 827827



If you need Homefront in another format e.g. Large Print, audio, or in your own language, please call 0800 413 721.

Spotted a broken street light?  
Pothole? Fly tipping?  
01875 824 305  
[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/reportit](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/reportit)