

Temporary Times – information for Midlothian Tenants in temporary accommodation

Welcome to this newsletter and we hope everyone is in good health. We are living in difficult times where people are having to spend longer in their homes. Here is some information we hope is of use in the circumstances.

Protect your home this winter

Winter weather can cause serious damage to your home and the things in it. You can cut down the risk if you follow this advice:

- Check you know how to use your heating system properly and also where the stop valves are; if unsure contact Changeworks on 0131 555 4010.
- If you are away from home for more than a few days turn off the water and drain the plumbing system.
- If the pipes freeze and are part of the hot water system, turn off or put out the source of heat for example immersion heater, gas boiler or coal fire with back boiler.
- If a pipe does burst, turn off the water at the main stop valve in the house and turn on the taps to drain the system. Switch off the boiler and switch off the immersion or water heating system.

In the event of a burst pipe council tenants should contact the Housing Repairs team on 0131 663 7211

Please remember:

- Repair dripping taps
- Ensure all taps are turned off as running taps may cause water pipes to freeze.

Insurance

You should always make sure you have adequate insurance to cover your household goods and personal belongings.

To find out how to check if you have insurance, email: housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk

Gas Checks

We are continuing with a statutory gas service in line with national industry guidance. It is vitally important that we make sure your gas supply is safe and working properly to avoid any risk to you. If you have Corona virus or a member of the household is positive please let us know and we can make alternate arrangements when everyone is symptom free.

If you smell gas, or if you are concerned about the safety of your appliances, switch everything off and call the gas emergency service on 0800 111 999.

Do not use your appliances again until the gas emergency supplier or a registered gas engineer has attended and told you they are safe to use.

Midlothian Council Draft Tenant Participation and Customer Engagement Strategy 2020-2023

We want to hear the views of tenants and other service users about this draft Strategy which includes the proposed actions we plan to take so that tenants and other service users find it easy to participate in and influence decisions in our services to you.

You can view the draft strategy:

[Tenant Participation and Customer Engagement Strategy 2020-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

Or contact us on tenant.participation@midlothian.gov.uk by 30 November 2020 with your comments.

Changes that came into force in April 2020

We have recently made changes to our Housing Allocation Policy. All homeless applicants were sent a letter earlier in the year explaining the new policy.

All homeless applicants will be offered any type of property when being made an offer of permanent accommodation. Any existing medical recommendations will be considered.

Area Choice

All homeless applicants are now required to choose a minimum of two of the following areas. Dalkeith, Mayfield, Gorebridge, Penicuik, Loanhead and Bonnyrigg to maximise their prospects for early rehousing.

Ready to Rent

There are 4,000 applicants on the council's housing waiting list but most years around 300 properties become available. Therefore demand significantly outweighs supply. If you need to rent a property quickly, you might want to think about our **Ready to Rent** homes which are available immediately. Ready to Rent properties are advertised for a limited period, with only those applicants who bid for the property being considered for the tenancy.

If you would like to be informed by text as Ready to Rent properties become available phone 0131 271 3580 and you will be added to the list.

You can have a look at the list of homes available on our website using the search facility:

www.midlothian.gov.uk

Warm Home Discount Scheme

You could get £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2020 to 2021 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The 2020 to 2021 scheme opened on 12 October 2020.

The money is not paid to you – it is a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March.

You may be able to get a discount on your gas bill if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier to find out.

The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

Eligibility

There are 2 ways to qualify for the Warm Home Discount Scheme:

- You get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit- known as the 'core group'
- You're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme – known as the 'broader group'

Pre-pay or pay-as-you-go meters

You can still qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter.

Your electricity supplier can tell you how you'll get the discount if you're eligible, for example a voucher you can use to top up your meter.

More information is available at www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

Help from Changeworks Affordable Warmth Team

The Affordable Warmth team is here to help you. Their experienced energy advisors can help you reduce energy, and food bills and stay affordably warm, whether you are in temporary accommodation or moving on to longer term accommodation.

The service offers you:

- Advice on getting the best use from your heating system and tips on home energy efficiency
- Support on preparing household budgets
- Help applying for grants, discounts and assistance available from the Scottish Government and energy companies
- Advocacy support to help with fuel debt and billing issues
- Information on reducing food waste

To find out how Changeworks' advisors could help, call 0131 555 4010 and ask for the Affordable Warmth team or email: warmth@changeworks.org.uk

New Parental Employability Support service

Are you a Midlothian parent who is unemployed or experiencing in-work poverty and is looking for support? Our Communities and Lifelong Learning team has a new service to help you.

The Parental Employability Support service can support you to address barriers to employment and/or upskill while in work.

To find out more

- Call 01968 664 106 or
- Email cll@midlothian.gov.uk

Important News for EU citizens

EU citizens have until the end of June 2021 to apply for settled status to be allowed to continue to live, work and study in the UK, as well as continue to use the NHS.

More information from www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland or www.gov.scot

Draft Equality Outcomes – tell us what you think?

The Equality Act 2010 requires all public bodies to publish equality outcomes at least every four years.

Equality outcomes aim to achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

Midlothian, Edinburgh and West Lothian councils working in partnership with NHS Lothian, Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership and East Lothian Integrated Joint Board have developed a set of draft equality themes and outcomes. Housing is one of the themes covered.

Your views on the draft themes and outcomes will help shape and influence the development of the final outcomes and help to agree actions that can make a difference to people's lives.

[Equality Outcomes Survey - tell us what you think](#)

Useful contact numbers

- Scottish Welfare Fund 0131 270 5600
- Scottish Women's Aid 0800 027 1234
- Police Scotland 999 or 101(non-emergencies)
- Samaritans call 116123
- Gas Emergencies 0800 111 999
- Age Scotland Helpline 0800 12 44 222
- Scottish Power 105 or 0800 092 9290 (for power cuts)
- Scottish Water Helpline 0800 0778 778
- Citizens Advice Bureau:

Penicuik -01968 675259

Dalkeith- 0131 660 1636