

Autumn Today

Tenants' Newsletter Autumn 2021



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Welcome

Over 18 months ago all our lives changed dramatically. Most of us were not ready for all the restrictions that followed and impacted on all our daily lives. I am sure a lot of us have struggled in one way or another, but hopefully the end is in sight and we can all get back to our new normal daily lives.

This newsletter contains an update on some of the things that have been happening in the Housing Service and I hope there is something of interest to everyone in this edition.

There is a list of useful telephone numbers on the back page of this newsletter. To access the latest updates and information regarding Midlothian Council services check out the council's website at:

www.midlothian.gov.uk

Tenant Participation

In early September we held our first on-line Tenants' Day which was open to all tenants to participate and give their feedback. We value your involvement in a wide range of activities within tenant participation either by joining the tenant panel group, taking part in our meetings on-line or completing surveys. All this information supplied can help when we are reviewing services and reflecting your priorities in coming years.

Below are some of the recent winners of our annual Garden Competition for Midlothian Council tenants. Winners were from Bonnyrigg and Mayfield and both received vouchers. A big thankyou to our tenant panel members who judged this competition.



Coffee and Chat



Tenant participation has managed to continue throughout the Covid restrictions through online tenants meetings. We would like more tenants to get involved by joining our new **Coffee and Chat** sessions which will be held on the Microsoft Teams platform. These fortnightly sessions will have no agenda and will offer general chat, help and advice. We are hoping those of you feeling socially isolated will take part in these sessions and gain new interests over the coming months.

If anyone would like to join in our Coffee and Chat meetings then please don't hesitate to get in contact with our Tenant Participation Officer at tenantparticipation@midlothian.gov.uk or call 07785382170

Meeting Housing Need

We are pleased to let you know new council housing developments were recently completed at Roslin, Danderhall and Pathhead providing 39 new affordable homes. The allocations were prioritised using a Local Lettings Initiatives. Work is underway to deliver further new council properties in Bilston, Newtongrange, Dalkeith, Bonnyrigg and Danderhall.



Winter is approaching

A few helpful tips

With winter on its way, it is good to be prepared especially if you are going away over the holiday period. Please leave the heating on low if only going away for a few days, or drain down your heating system if going for an extended period. This procedure involves turning off the heating system, turning off the stop valves and draining down both the hot and cold systems by opening the taps.

When you return you should open the taps, turn the stop valve back on and turn off the taps when the water has a steady flow. You can then turn on the heating.

If in any doubt about these instructions please contact our repair line on 0131 663 7211 or email contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk. You should be aware that you will be charged for work arising from burst pipes if precautions have not been taken.

Another important thing, is to ensure the contents of your home are insured in case of any serious mishap. We offer all Midlothian Council tenants a contents insurance policy which can be paid weekly, and premiums can be paid along with your rent.

You can request an application form from your Housing Officer on 0131 271 3394, or visit our website and search 'home insurance' to download and print the form.

Get help with your electricity and heating bills

Many of us are spending more time at home and lots of people are homeworking. This means using more heating, hot water and electricity, and for some a decrease in income too.

Changeworks' Affordable Warmth Advisors can help you keep your home warm and your heating and electricity bills low.

They can help you:

Understand your heating and electricity bills

Switch to different suppliers

Talk to your energy company on your behalf

Access energy efficient grants

Keep your bills down

Call Changeworks Affordable Warmth Services team on 0800 870 8800 (free) to speak with one of their advisors or email warmth@changeworks.org.uk. Office hours are 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Thinking of moving home

Incentive to move scheme

The council offers grants to Midlothian Council tenants who move to a smaller property owned by the council through normal letting or by a mutual exchange. This grant payment is designed to encourage Midlothian Council tenants living in under-occupied situations to downsize and release family sized housing.

Midlothian Council tenants who downsize by 1 bedroom - £1,000

Midlothian Council tenants who downsize by 2 or more bedrooms - £1,500

Any tenants with an outstanding debt owed to Midlothian Council will have this offset against the grant before any payment is made.

Mutual Exchanges

To encourage and assist Midlothian Council tenants to meet their own housing needs, we provide a Mutual Exchange grant of £250 to any Midlothian Council tenant who moves to another property as a result of a mutual exchange. Any tenants with an outstanding debt owed to Midlothian Council will have this offset against the grant before the payment is made.

Midlothian Council also participates in the Home Swapper scheme to allow tenants to find properties to exchange with in a simple, safe and effective way. Midlothian Council tenants will be able to register with this service for **free**.

Further details can be found at:

[Swap your home | Midlothian Council](#)

Provided all landlords grant permission, mutual exchanges can take place between two or more tenants, this includes:

Any Scottish Secure tenant of a Scottish local authority or housing association.

A tenant of any other local authority, registered social landlord or housing association in the United Kingdom.

A water authority tenant in Scotland.

Midlothian Council will consider all applications for a mutual exchange on an individual basis and will not unreasonably withhold consent to a mutual exchange. However, Midlothian Council may refuse an application for a mutual exchange on any ground it considers reasonable.

Low cost Initiative for First Time buyers (LIFT)

Get a Lift onto the property ladder in Midlothian

The LIFT (Low-cost Initiative for first-time buyers) scheme helps first time buyers get onto the property ladder with Scottish Government support. It also helps other priority groups including current social renters.

In addition to first-time buyers, LIFT is open to:

Social renters

People with a disability who can demonstrate a housing need

Members of the armed forces and veterans who have left within the past two years

Widows, widowers and other partners of those who have lost their life while serving in the armed forces within the last two years

People aged over 60 who can demonstrate a housing need (not required to take a mortgage)

The Scottish Government contributes up to 40% towards the property price, and gets the same percentage back when it is sold. You can increase your share if you wish to at any time.

You can buy any size of property if:

You meet the financial criteria and

The property is large enough to avoid overcrowding.

To be eligible, properties must be:

Advertised for sale publicly e.g. on a website and

Priced within the maximum price threshold for the area.

Find out further details and how to apply for free at:

[LIFT for Local Authority and Housing Association Tenant](#) or text 'LIFT' to 66777.

LIFT has helped me to get on the property ladder and changed my life for the better.

Tamar, LIFT scheme buyer

LIFT Example

A buyer with a household income of **£29,000** and savings of **£3,000** buys a three-bedroom property in **Midlothian**.

Property price:
£145,000

Buyer contribution: (deposit & mortgage)
£87,000 (60%)

Scottish Government contribution:
£58,000 (40%)

LIFT

Useful Numbers

Police Scotland non-emergency - 101

Electric (power cut) - 105 or 0800 31 63 105

Scottish Water Enquiries - 0845 601 8855

Age Scotland Helpline - 0800 12 44 222

Samaritans Support line - 116 123

Citizens Advice Bureau (Penicuik) - 01968 675259

Citizens Advice Bureau (Dalkeith) - 0131 660 1636