

TENANTS' courier

Spring/Summer

2024

The newsletter for
**City of Edinburgh
Council tenants**



◆ EDINBURGH ◆
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL





Introduction

Councillor Jane Meagher Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Convener

Welcome to the latest edition of the Tenants' Courier. I'd like to use this opportunity to explain why we've declared a housing emergency in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh is a growing city and we're under pressure because there just aren't enough homes for everyone. We have over 5,000 households in temporary accommodation, meaning they are homeless.

It's also very important that you can live in well-maintained homes, especially with rising expenses.

We've a plan to deal with this, including the 7% rent increase, but we can only do so much with the money we have. Edinburgh receives the least government funding of all the local authorities (per person) and we need more help from the Scottish Government to resolve this crisis.

The 7% rent increase will help us to fix, improve, and make our homes more energy efficient, as well as build new social and affordable housing for rent. But I do understand that dealing with rent increases

is not always easy for tenants. If you're struggling to pay your rent, please talk to your housing officer as soon as possible.

Everyone deserves a safe and comfortable home, and we're committed to doing everything we can to end this housing crisis. I'll keep fighting for fairer funding.

Moving on to a different topic: your views matter. In this edition of the newsletter, you'll find information on how to have your say on the services that matter to you most and where you think we can save money or do things differently with our budget. You'll also find a short survey on the new Tenant Participation Strategy. Please let us know what you think to be in with a chance of winning shopping vouchers.

We consult regularly with tenants and other residents on ideas to change or improve services. Most recently, for example, on damp and mould in Council homes, the anti-social behaviour strategy and library services. If you'd like to be contacted about consultations and other opportunities to give your view, please email tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk or speak to your housing officer.



Your rent

The City of Edinburgh Council's housing rent consultation ran between 9 October and 17 December 2023. We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to take part.

We received a record number of responses through our online, postal and telephone surveys and had just under 2,100 responses in total.

A summary of your responses made up part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Strategy 2024/25 - 2028/29 report, which was considered by the Council at its budget meeting on 22 February 2024.

Many comments from tenants showed that there was an understanding of the need to increase rents to pay for increased costs, but it was clear that the financial pressures from the cost-of-living crisis were also a concern.

If you need financial support or advice, please contact your local housing officer who will be able to provide information on what help may be available. A tenant hardship fund has been set up to support tenants experiencing financial difficulties, including those who cannot access benefits.

We'd also like to congratulate David who was the lucky winner of the rent consultation £100 shopping voucher prize draw. Thanks for all your entries.





Looking to move home?

House Exchange is a free website which lets council and housing association/co-operative tenants to register for free to look for a potential home swap with other tenants anywhere in the UK.

Can anyone apply?

You must be a named tenant of a council or housing association/co-operative in the UK. You cannot apply if you are not the named tenant on the tenancy agreement.

How does it work?

Tenants can visit <https://www.houseexchange.org.uk/> to register with House Exchange.

It must be the main tenant who completes the registration. During registration you'll be asked about your current home and will have the option to add photographs and a description of the area. You'll then be asked about the type of home and area you'd like to move to.

You can only move to a home that meets your households needs i.e. not too big or too small. Once you've completed your registration your details will be verified by your landlord before your advert goes live on the website, then you can search for suitable exchanges.

Please note that once you have identified a potential exchange you must get permission from your landlord before you make any arrangements to move.





Leading the way with energy efficient homes

We're investing millions in major energy upgrades to improve council homes. Over the next 10-15 years, thousands of council homes will benefit from our innovative retrofitting project, which will help tenants save money on energy bills, make homes warmer and reduce carbon emissions with measures such as external wall insulation, new windows and doors and improved ventilation.

Visiting some of the projects in Oxbgangs and Gilmerton, Cllr Jane Meagher (Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Convener) was joined by Patrick Harvie, the then Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants, to see the difference these pioneering projects are already making to people's lives.





Getting involved with a Tenants a

Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) has been working with several new TRAs across Edinburgh and would like to encourage more communities to consider setting up a TRA in their area. In the last few months Dumbiedykes, Oxfangs and Clermiston have all been in the process of setting up residents' groups, with other potential groups considering starting up too.

What is a TRA?

A TRA is a constituted group made up of tenants and residents, who work together to improve their communities. They can have a bank account and apply for funding to spend on their aims.

What can they help with/benefits of a TRA?

Some of the benefits of a TRA include that they are a local group, with knowledge and experience of living in the area, and want to help support improvements in the local community. They can hold open meetings for residents to discuss issues that impact them and invite guest speakers to talk about specific topics, e.g., fire safety, environmental improvements, antisocial behaviour and more.

What roles and responsibilities are there on a TRA?

TRAs are made up of a committee with roles and responsibilities. There's a chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, and ordinary committee members. These roles can be shared between more than one person, and all members of the committee will share the tasks between them.

How do I find out if there's a TRA in my area?

You can contact ETF (see details below) or the Council if you want to find out if there's one in your area.

How to set one up?

If you don't have a TRA in your area and want to set one up, you can get support from ETF and there are start-up grants available, so you're not out of pocket.

Alternatives

Some resident groups might not be able to meet face-to-face as regularly as other groups. There are alternative options for keeping in touch about local issues, such as using social media or WhatsApp. ETF can help wherever possible to support residents to facilitate these groups and follow up on issues.





and Residents' Association (TRA)

What can ETF help with?

ETF can help from the very start, from advertising the first meeting, talking to residents about what's involved, helping with paperwork and funding applications, and delivering training and support on the different committee roles. ETF can be involved for as long as the group needs support, and the group will be invited to ETF events and have access to ETF resources.

Contact Details

To find out more about TRAs or ETF and its other work please contact us by phone at 0131 475 2509 or by email at info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

You can also follow ETF on Facebook or X (Twitter) for up-to-date news and events.

www.facebook.com/EdinburghTenant

www.twitter.com/EdinburghTenant



Be fire safe

If there's a fire

If a fire starts in your home, there are three steps that can save your life

- Get out
- Don't go back inside
- Call 999 as soon as you are safe to do so.

If you live in a multi-storey block

If there's a fire in your building, but not in your flat, stay in your home and keep the front door closed unless

- you're directly affected by heat, smoke or fire
- the Fire and Rescue Service or Police tell you to get out.

Your Concierge Team and the Fire and Rescue Service check your blocks regularly.

Have an escape plan

It's important to have your own personal escape plan, especially if you're less mobile. The Fire and Rescue Service can help

- visit www.firescotland.gov.uk to arrange a free home safety visit
- or call 0800 0731 999 or Text FIRE to 80800 on your mobile phone.

Check your smoke alarm

Smoke alarms give you early warning of fire. All our homes have a smoke alarm, and almost all of them now have the new interlinked smoke alarms. If your smoke alarm is not working, please email repairs.direct@edinburgh.gov.uk It's a good idea to test your alarm every week.

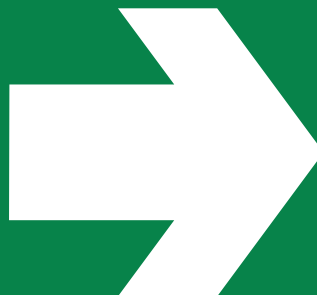
Keep common areas clear

Keep stairwells and landings clear of rubbish, especially of flammable materials. Report any dumped rubbish to your housing officer.

When you go to bed

- make sure doors are closed and exits clear so you can get out quickly in an emergency
- keep door and window keys in the same place and make sure everyone knows where they're kept.

Remember, fire safety is everyone's responsibility. Follow these tips to protect yourself and your community. For more information, visit www.firescotland.gov.uk or call 0800 0731 999.



Have your say on the new Tenant Participation Strategy

If you wish, you'll be entered into a draw for a chance to win a £50 shopping voucher. You must live in a council tenancy to enter the draw.

Complete this short survey and post it to us (at no cost to you) using Freepost HOUSING RESEARCH (no other address details required) by 15 August 2024. Or email tenantandresident@edinburgh.gov.uk or complete the survey online at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/tenantparticipationstrategy

It's important that tenants feel able to influence and have a say on the housing services they receive. We want to understand how we can better support tenants' participation in developing services and what opportunities or ways you would like to get involved.

The Tenant Participation Strategy sets out how we'll make sure that tenants can take part and have a say in how housing services are delivered. This means making sure that there are different ways for tenants to participate and scrutinise services.

The last Strategy focused on four broad principles. These were that:

- tenants know the different ways they can become involved
- tenants can take part and influence decisions if they want to
- tenants have the support and resources they need to take part, and
- tenants can help to develop quality services.

Building on these principles, we've updated them for the new 2024-2027 Tenant Participation Strategy. The draft principles are:

1. Communications will be clear, informative and accessible for all tenants. New technologies will be better used to strengthen communication with tenants.
2. There'll be a range of improved participation opportunities and it will be easier for tenants to take part in ways that suit them best.
3. We'll support tenants to scrutinise housing services and ensure tenant feedback is considered.
4. We'll support organisations, like Edinburgh Tenants' Federation, who help tenants to participate by ensuring that tenants are aware of them and know how to access their services/become involved.





Please tell us your views to help to make sure the new Tenant Participation Strategy supports how you want to take part.

1. Are you a Council tenant Yes No

2. What is the best way for the Council to share information about housing services with you?

Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tenants' newsletter (Tenants' Courier)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	Text / Direct message	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other: Please state below and provide more detail:

3. What are the best ways for you to share your views with us? (please tick all that apply)

In person meetings and events	<input type="checkbox"/>	Online events	<input type="checkbox"/>
Via Housing Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text / direct message	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state below)	<input type="checkbox"/>





4. Please tell us about any other ideas or suggestions you have on how we can improve communications

5. How can we improve opportunities for tenants to help with checking housing services? (e.g. estate walkabouts with housing officers, looking over performance information, and making it easier to share your views with housing officers)

6. Have you heard of Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF)?

Yes No

7. ETF supports tenants to become involved and represents tenants' views to the Council. What do you think ETF should be focusing on?

8. If you have any further comments you'd like to add on the draft Tenant Participation Strategy, please tell us below.





9. Please provide your information below (name, address, email and telephone number).

10. Please tick the following boxes to confirm

I want to be entered into the prize draw

I want to be involved in developing and strengthening tenant participation

Neither

11. What is your age?

Under 16

35 – 44

65 – 74

16 – 24

45 – 54

75 and over

25 – 34

55 – 64

Prefer not to say

Thank you for completing this survey. We'll update you on the final Strategy in a future issue of the Tenants' Courier.

To complete this survey online, scan the QR code





Tell us what matters to you most

Please tell us about the services that matter to you most and where you think we can save money or do things differently. This survey is for everyone in Edinburgh, not just Council tenants. It's about the public services we all use.

The way people use public services is changing and so we need to run services more efficiently and continue to invest in the future of Edinburgh and its population, which is expected to grow by almost 60,000 people over the next 20 years.

We've saved £400 million over the last ten years, but due to this increasing demand for services and higher costs, we need to save £143m by 2028/29.

Please complete our budget survey and tell us where Council services are being run well or areas where spending could be made differently. This information will help to inform the decisions councillors need to make next year and, in the future, to balance the city's budget.

You can also sign up for focus groups this autumn to discuss your concerns and ideas in more detail.

Please complete our survey by Friday 28 July at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget

You can also complete a survey at any of our libraries.



Helping women to feel safe

As many as 80% of women have experienced some sort of harassment in public spaces in Edinburgh. People often don't realise they're making women, girls or others feel unsafe or scared. So, we're encouraging men to make small changes to their behaviour to make people, especially women and girls, feel safer in Edinburgh.

Small changes, such as crossing the road instead of walking directly behind someone or making a phone call, can reassure women and girls who may otherwise feel unsafe while in a public place.

Other things you can do:

- don't walk directly behind a woman or girl if she is walking alone, cross the road
- make a phone call, this can make people on their own feel safer if they know you're doing something else
- if you're on or waiting for public transport, do not sit too close to someone sitting alone
- call out your friends (discreetly) if they're making inappropriate comments about women
- if someone is out exercising or walking their dog, try and keep your distance
- leave women alone if they don't want to talk.

We're also working to make our city safer for our residents by improving park lighting and new smart security in our cutting-edge City Operations Centre.

You can find out more about what we're doing and how you can help on our web pages www.edinburgh.gov.uk/respectherspace



#Respect HerSpace

City centre low emission zone is here, are you ready?

The City of Edinburgh Council began enforcing the city centre low emission zone (LEZ) on 1 June 2024. If your vehicle doesn't meet the Euro emission standards you can be fined if you drive through it.

The LEZ circles the city centre from Haymarket, along Queen Street, round Abbeyhill, the Pleasance, across Melville Drive to Tollcross, Lothian Road and along Morrison Street.

Most people's cars meet the Euro standards – you can check yours through our website www.edinburgh.gov.uk/lez

Motorbikes and mopeds may drive through the zone.

If your vehicle doesn't meet the standards but you have a Blue Badge, you can apply for an exemption. Remember, if you live within the zone and have a parking permit, you're not exempt from being fined. If your vehicle doesn't meet the emission standards, you can be fined each time you enter the LEZ.

Edinburgh's zone is one of four in Scotland. Glasgow's been enforcing since June 2023 while Dundee and Aberdeen also go live in June 2024.

LEZs will reduce harmful levels of air pollution and help us to improve health and meet climate targets.





And she's the winner

In the last edition of the Tenants' Courier, we let you know that Robyn Kane, Secretary of the Edinburgh Tenants' Federation, had reached the finals of the highly contested Tenants' Information Service National Excellence Awards for 2023.

We're delighted to report that Robyn is the 2023 'Young Achiever of the Year'. Here's Robyn being presented with her well-deserved award by River City's Gary Lamont and East Ayrshire Federation chair, Davey Leggat. Well done Robyn on your remarkable achievement.



Free support for parents

Being a parent is never easy and most people need help at some point. If you have a family, there's parenting support if you need it.

The Parent and Carer Support team has a range of parenting programmes and courses for parents and carers of children aged 0 to 16 years. These include Incredible Years, Triple P, Teen Triple P, Raising Children with Confidence and Raising Teens with Confidence.

All courses are evidence-based and are free for parents and carers of children living or going to school in Edinburgh. These courses really can make a difference to your family life. Parents and carers have told us they see positive benefits for themselves, their parenting and their relationship with their children.

For more information email supportingparentsandcarers@edinburgh.gov.uk





Could you foster a child?

We urgently need foster carers for children of all ages who need permanent or temporary homes where they can achieve a sense of belonging and being loved. There are different ways of fostering to suit various family situations.

Who can foster with us?

Our foster carers come from all sorts of backgrounds and family situations. You can be single, married or living with a partner, not working, working, or retired. You can be a homeowner or a renter and applications are welcomed from people of all ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds regardless of sex or gender.

Ways you can foster

Fostering doesn't always have to be full-time. As a short-breaks carer you can foster alongside your regular job. For example, you could provide short breaks care to a child or young person at weekends.

How we support our foster carers

We offer a generous support package:

- full training and ongoing support to develop the skills and knowledge to be a foster carer
- financial support with a fostering fee to reflect the valuable service our carers provide, along with an allowance to cover the foster child's expenses
- payment for 28 days where there are times when our carers don't have a child living with them (full-time fostering 0-18 years only)
- up to 21 days paid holidays per year (full-time fostering 0-18 years only).

Want to chat things through?

To find out more you can request a call back on 0800 174 833 or email fosterchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk or visit www.edinburghfostering.org.uk



Be ready for the next UK general election

The next UK general election will be on Thursday 4 July 2024. To vote in UK general elections, you will now need a photo ID.

What's different about the next UK general election?

For the next UK general election, a new rule is in place - photo ID is now required when you vote at polling stations. Just to clarify, this only applies to UK general elections and not to future Scottish Parliament or local elections.

Chances are, you're already prepared

The good news is that many of you may already have acceptable forms of ID such as passports, driving licences, blue badges, national entitlement cards, and identity cards with a PASS mark, like the Young Scot card, are among those that are accepted. Even if your ID is out of date but the photo still looks like you, you

can use it. Check out the voter ID guide on our website for more information and examples of other acceptable forms of ID www.edinburgh.gov.uk/voterid

No ID?

If you don't have the required ID, there's no need to worry! You can easily apply for a free voter ID certificate on the UK Government website www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate

You can also apply for postal or proxy voting if you prefer not to show ID at a polling station www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk/absent-voting

You don't need a photo ID for postal or proxy voting, but the proxy will need to show their ID at the polling station.



KID'S CORNER



For a chance to win a £20 shopping voucher, find the secret message and send to Freepost HOUSING RESEARCH by 1 August 2024 or email tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk. You must be under 16 and live in a council tenancy. Please remember to provide your contact details (name, age, address). Well done to Conor who won last edition's puzzle.

Find the secret message

Each letter in the phrase has been replaced with a random letter or number. Try to decode the message.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
				25		16		11				
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
											26	

$\frac{E}{25}$ $\frac{I}{23}$ $\frac{I}{11}$ $\frac{I}{21}$ $\frac{I}{22}$ $\frac{I}{9}$ $\frac{G}{24}$ $\frac{G}{16}$ $\frac{I}{13}$ $\frac{I}{11}$ $\frac{I}{7}$ $\frac{I}{6}$

$\frac{G}{16}$ $\frac{E}{24}$ $\frac{E}{25}$ $\frac{E}{6}$ $\frac{E}{17}$ $\frac{I}{5}$ $\frac{I}{11}$ $\frac{Y}{17}$ $\frac{Y}{26}$





Useful contacts

Council House Repairs
[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/
councilhoureparements](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councilhoureparements)
repairsdirect@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 200 2345

South East Locality Office
40 Captain's Road Edinburgh
EH17 8QF
southeast.locality@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 5151

North East Locality Office
101 Niddrie Mains Road
EH16 4DS
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0131 529 3111

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10 Westside Plaza Edinburgh
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