

Housing Options **advice**



What is the Housing Options Service?

The Housing Options service is available to anyone aged 16 or over, who needs advice and assistance with finding or keeping their home. We can help you by discussing all of the available housing options in relation to your individual circumstances.

By supporting people who are either struggling to cope, or who are at risk of losing their home, we aim to provide advice and assistance at an early stage to help avoid housing crisis.

When should I contact the service?

You should approach the service at the first signs of any issue, which you think may affect your housing circumstances.

How do I get in touch to discuss my situation?

If you are a council tenant, contact your housing officer who can offer advice and support with issues affecting your tenancy. If you are living with someone else or are renting from a housing association or private landlord please contact customer services at a CIS office. You can also phone **01506 280000**, or email **customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk**

Can I bring a friend or my support worker?

Yes, you can also ask for a same sex interview

What do I need to bring?

You should bring information in relation to your housing circumstances. For example any tenancy agreement or notices issued by your landlord. If you

are unsure please contact us to discuss. The appointment is an opportunity to speak face to face with a Housing Options Advisor to discuss your situation.

Will the appointment be confidential?

The appointment will take place in a private room to ensure the conversation is confidential. We understand that it is often very difficult to discuss sensitive or complex situations. You will be treated with respect and in an non-judgemental way.

If English is not your first language, or you have a visual or hearing impairment, please let us know before your appointment so we can arrange to have the appropriate service available.

What will be discussed?

The advisor will discuss your individual circumstances with you in order to give you the best housing options advice. Options discussed will consider your ability to remain in your current housing. This may include advice on mediation, benefits or money advice, or the provision of housing support. If retaining

your current home is not possible, other options considered may include:

- Private renting including flat sharing
- renting from the Council or a housing association
- supported housing
- home ownership
- homeless application

What happens at the end of the interview?

By the end of the interview you should have been provided with advice to allow you to make a decision on your best course of action to secure housing. This may be to get assistance to remain in your current tenancy or help trying to find somewhere else to stay.

At the end of your interview you will be asked to participate in a short satisfaction survey. You can either do this in the office or take it away with you to complete and return. This information helps us improve the satisfaction levels of our service.

What if I am unable to stay in my home or it is not possible to find alternative housing?

It is important to understand that whilst you are working with the housing options service, this does not mean that you cannot go ahead and present yourself as homeless. You have the right to request a homeless application at any point. Your officer will help you to do this and in addition will continue to help you consider other options.

What happens after the interview?

The officer who carried out your housing options interview will continue to work with you to help find accommodation. If your circumstances change, this will be taken into account to ensure that you have the best chance of finding or retaining housing.

How many houses does the council have?

2016/17 figure is 13,464.

How many does the council have to let each year?

2016/17 figure is 891.

How many people does the council need to rehouse on the homeless group?

2016/17 figure is 986.

When can I expect to hear from my officer?

Your officer will keep in touch with you every two weeks until a decision is made on your case. After which they will then keep in contact every month until your case comes to an end.

Who is my case officer?

Name

Tel no:

What if I want to make a complaint about the service I have received?

You should call **01506 280000** so you can make a direct complaint which will be dealt with by the Housing Options Manager.