

Winter Warm Campaign

The seasons are quickly changing and its time to start preparing for the winter months. West Lothian Council Advice Shop has launched its Winter Warm campaign with a focus on energy help available during the colder months.



Help with Energy Costs

Fuel Grant

The Advice Shop is relaunching the Fuel Grant for winter 2023/24 to support as many households as possible who are experiencing fuel poverty with a cash grant to help with energy bills.

If you are struggling with energy prices and paying more than 10% of your household income to cover your energy costs, the Advice Shop may be able to provide a one-off payment of £100 to help keep your house warm this winter.

Fuel Vouchers

The Advice Shop also works with the Fuel Bank Foundation to help households with prepayment meters who are struggling to afford to top up their meters.

So far this year, we have supported households in West Lothian to redeem 1166 Fuel Bank vouchers of either £49 or £30 to help keep their gas and electric on.

If you are struggling to top up your prepayment meter due to a change in circumstance or unexpected cost then please get in touch.

Warm Home Discount



The Warm Home Discount scheme is a payment of £150 made by energy suppliers to vulnerable customers and paid into energy accounts by March 2024.

People who receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit on the qualifying date will automatically be paid the discount and do not need to apply.

Each supplier opens their scheme at different times and may have different criteria for those who do not automatically get the payment.

Households on a low income and classed as the 'Broader Group' will need to ensure they complete their supplier's application form. There is no automatic payment of the Warm Home Discount in Scotland for those in the Broader group.

Further information about the scheme as it is announced will be updated on the Government's website at www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

If you think you might be eligible and will not get the payment automatically, check the information on your suppliers' web page to find out when their Warm Home Discount scheme opens for applications.



Energy Debt

Many suppliers have hardship funds to help those who have fallen behind in their payments and are now struggling with energy debt.



How to apply and what information may be needed can be found on each suppliers' website. If your energy supplier does not have its own hardship fund then there may be alternative options or help from other Grants.

The Advice Shop's Energy advisors and Money Advice team can offer guidance and support with debt issues for anyone who is struggling.



Warm Welcome Locations

As we go into winter, there continues to be locations throughout West Lothian that provide local people with a place to visit, socialise, access services and receive support. Some of these places are provided by West Lothian Council and others are provided by voluntary organisation.



To find out your local Warm Welcome location access the interactive map by scanning the QR code or visit at www.westlothian.gov.uk/warm-welcome which details what support is available and opening hours



Help with White goods

Cooker not working? Struggling with a fridge that is no longer fit for purpose? Some organisations and energy suppliers have additional resources to help replace white goods.



Scan the QR code or visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/adviceshop to see if your supplier or another organisation may be able to help.



If you need Housing, Debt, Benefit or Energy support contact Advice Shop on 01506 283 000 (option 5)

tenantsnews

Information for WLC tenants

Get Involved with our Tenant Participation Facebook Page!

Don't have time to attend Tenant Participation meetings? Why not join our Facebook page?

Our Facebook page is there to allow us to consult and chat with our tenants – but not only that, it is a place where tenants can help each other. We post items relating to housing consultations, helpful hints and tips, survey feedback, and much, much more. We even have a regular segment to appoint a TP Mascot of the month, where you can get your furry friends involved. The Housing, Customer & Building Services and tenant experts run the Facebook page.

Search West Lothian Council Tenant Participation on Facebook, click join and remember to provide us with your address to verify you are a tenant!



If you discover a water leak in your home, you can take steps to temporarily switch off the water supply, reduce any potential damage to your property, and allow for more time to investigate the issue.

Do you know where the stopcock is located in case of a water leak?

If the answer to the above question is no, then please scan the QR code to our helpful video to ensure you can locate it:



Fight condensation in the home

Condensation is the most common form of dampness and occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces such as walls and ceilings.

When condensation appears wipe it dry to avoid a build-up of black mould growing on walls, curtains and woodwork. It's important you take steps to limit the moisture in the air.

For more advice, including a self-help video, scan the QR code:



Don't give COLD a chance

Protect yourself and your home



Inside your home:

Frozen Pipes:

- turn off the water supply (make sure you know where this is)
- turn off the stopcock in your cold water tank, if you have one
- protect everything around the frozen pipe to avoid damage if it bursts, place buckets, basins and towels around the area.

Thawing Out:

- open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen, so the water can flow through when it has melted

Thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer (taking care to keep it well away from any water). Start from the tap end and work back toward the cold water tank. NEVER use a heat gun or blowtorch – the pipe needs to be thawed out slowly and safely!

Try the following care tips:

If you're going on holiday and your home will be empty, contact your local housing office to make arrangements to drain down the water system in very cold weather, if you're going out for the day, or perhaps away for a couple of days over the Christmas period, keep your heating on, or set it to come on a couple of times a day.

Following this advice should minimise the risk of having a frozen or burst pipe. However, if you are a council tenant and this happens, please report it immediately to our Customer Service Centre on 01506 280000.

Outside your home:

In very severe cold spells, care should be taken outside your property due to the formation of icicles, which can become dangerous when they grow large, especially if they have a long distance to fall.

What you shouldn't do

Don't try to knock large icicles off the gutters. Hitting icicles could cause more pressure on the guttering which in turn could cause them to collapse. Large icicles in particular are unpredictable when they fall and could cause injury or property damage.

The best thing to do

Leave them alone and monitor them. If necessary cordon off or block the area where the icicles are hanging to prevent and deter anyone from walking directly below them.

At this time of year, it is especially important to ensure you have home contents insurance.

Check that you are covered against damaged personal items due to burst pipes.

Don't risk it, get insured today! For more information either call 01506 282020 or scan the QR code.



Having money worries or struggling to heat your home? Please refer to the advice shop see page 9

Council homes delivered at Wellhead



West Lothian Council's new build housing development at Wellhead Murieston is now complete providing a range of high-quality new build properties for social rent.

The project was developed in partnership with Bellway Homes and provides an additional 70 affordable homes - 42 of these being council homes and the remaining 28 delivered for mid-market rent for a local Registered Social Landlord (RSL). The development features a mix of two- and three-bedroom terraced family homes and a small number of one-bedroom cottage flats with tenants

now settled in.

West Lothian Council is to invest more than £157 million in to council housing over the next five years. While most of the budget is set against of existing stock, there is also significant resources which will continue to be invested in the development of new build houses and the purchasing of houses through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme (OMAS).

Executive councillor for housing services George Paul said: "These new homes are an excellent addition

to the social housing stock in West Lothian. The council recognises the value of working alongside developers such as Bellway Homes and RSLs to further expand the amount of available social housing in the area."

The council plans to deliver new homes across four new sites in the coming years, with indicative sites listed below (subject to further development):

Site name	Number of units	Estimated completion date
Houston Road, Livingston	30	2025/26
Almondvale Crescent, Livingston	37	2025/26
Mossend K, West Calder	19	2025/26
Simpson Parkway, Livingston	32	2026/27

Meet our people

Laura's main role is to support the council's services that prevent & respond to homelessness.

Laura Harris

Service development officer



Homelessness is a significant issue in West Lothian, and is one of the most complex and challenging issues that West Lothian Council deals with. Around 1,500 people are currently classed as homeless in West Lothian. Her team aim to develop and support services to help prevent homelessness occurring in the first instance and, if it does occur, help those affected find the best solution. They are responsible for building the Youth Homeless Service, and other supporting projects designed to help those with mental health issues, addictions and other complex needs who struggle to maintain any kind of home.

So how did Laura become the Service Development Officer?

"I completed a YTS before working for a housing association over 20 years ago. From early on, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in homelessness.

"The reality of homelessness is, however, that the demand for affordable social homes far outstrips what the council can provide and homelessness is about much more than just a house. So whilst the job is hugely rewarding at times, it is also fraught with challenges and you are trying to help people who are in very tough situations.

"However it's equally as rewarding for me as it is challenging knowing that you

can help make a difference to people's lives not just by developing and designing services to help people find a home but also services that make a real difference to people's health and overall wellbeing. Particularly young people who are most disproportionately affected by homelessness."

"And I'm very lucky to have a brilliant team of like-minded colleagues who I get to support and inspire. A team that no matter how challenging the job can become, they never stop trying to develop and improve the services we deliver to make a positive impact on people's lives and at the end of the day that's what it's all about."

Laura is part of a team that work to help prevent Youth Homelessness. Their work was recently highlighted as an area of best practice in Scotland. The team were named winners of the: Achieving Better Outcomes For The Most Vulnerable in Partnership category at the recent COSLA's 2023 Excellence Awards – which celebrates the celebrating the very best of Scottish Local Government.

You're hired!

New apprentices have joined West Lothian Council's Building Services team.

The seven trainees are all from West Lothian and are completing four-year apprenticeships across several trades. They began their training earlier this year.

Painter Adrian Kubacki	Plasterer Cameron McDougall
Joiner Blair Stewart	Electrician Paul Colquhoun
Joiner Ewen Lacey	Electrician Christopher Neilson
Joiner Arran Fowler	



New apprentices are also set to join the ranks later this year and will work across a range of services including Fleet Technicians, Gardeners and Tree and woodland operatives.

What should I do if I become homeless or think that I am likely to be made homeless?

You should either call the council on 01506 280000 or visit in person to any local office during office hours.

You will be interviewed in private to discuss your situation. You can bring a friend or advisor with you to the interview if you want to. You can also request an interview with someone of the same sex.

- 1,252 new homeless applications were made in 2022/23
- 672 homeless households secured social housing in 2022/23
- 94% of homeless applicants sustained their new home for more than a year in 2022/23
- 11% reduction in homeless applications from under 18s in 2022/23
- 296 people were supported in 2022/23 to avoid the homeless route