

West Lothian tenants news

Informing and involving West Lothian's tenants

SPRING 2024



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Become a **Talking Tenant Expert** through Social Media



Talking Tenants – Facebook Guidelines

'Talking Tenants' is a new role within the remit of Tenant Participation.

This is an entirely voluntary opportunity, but if you are interested in helping out our Customer Participation Officers on the running of the Facebook page and being an advocate for digital Tenant Participation, here is what we will do to support you and what the role of the Talking Tenant representative entails.

What We Will Do to Support You?

- ✓ We will make you a Group Expert.
- ✓ We will provide you with training on Facebook if required.
- ✓ We will be there to support, help and guide you.
- ✓ We will provide you with a Facebook page login (if you are not comfortable using your own).
- ✓ We will provide you with a unique profile picture and banner (if you wish to use it).

What the Talking Tenant Representatives role involves?

- ✓ You will provide recipes, positive quotes, and activities (quizzes) as a Facebook post.
 - We expect at least one of the above a week to help keep our tenant engagement levels high.
- ✓ You will be aware of special days worldwide that we may wish to post about, e.g. Christmas Day, Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day etc.
- ✓ You will use your own experience as a tenant representative to help encourage others to be more involved.

What does the role not involve?

- ✗ Deal with any enquiries or complaints from tenants; this is the responsibility of the Customer Participation Officer. If you see a post that requires our attention, please tag us.
- ✗ You will not approve people for the page. We need to check that they are a West Lothian Council tenant before approval.
- ✗ You will not be dealing with anything that impacts West Lothian Council or Housing, Customer, Building Services.

Facebook Admin

Hannah Grey - Quality Development Officer

Caitlin Howie - Quality Development Officer

If you are interested or require further information, please email TP@westlothian.gov.uk



If you find that you are struggling to pay your rent, we can help:

- ensure you maximise your income and check that you are claiming all benefits you may be entitled to
- you to prioritise debts to ensure the most important are paid first
- work out realistic repayment plans, taking into account your income and expenses.

If you do fall into rent arrears we will contact you in a variety of ways such as:


Text message


Telephone


Letter

It is important you address any rent arrears as soon as possible by contacting your Housing Officer on 01506 280000.

As a tenant of West Lothian Council, you are responsible for paying your rent and managing any arrears you may have. We can help you if you are struggling if you talk to us – don't struggle alone.

The Next Generation of Tenant Participation

CALLING ALL 16-25 YEAR OLD TENANTS

We are keen to recruit young and enthusiastic individuals to join our tenant participation team. This voluntary position will provide you with excellent life skills and work experience. Our meetings are held online, so you can take part wherever you are; however, you will be paid out-of-pocket expenses if travel is required.

Being part of the next generation tenant participation focus group, you will:

- Improve your professional writing skills through reports.
- Improve your communication skills.
- Develop an understanding of Housing, Customer and Building Services, which will help you with your tenancy or if you have an interest in working in housing.
- Gain experience in participating in meetings which will help build confidence.
- Have opportunities to assist in designing marketing materials such as Tenant's News.
- Become one of our social media experts.
- Have the opportunity to take part in day events such as inspections.
- Have your say on high-level policies and procedures.
- Most importantly, have your voice heard within the service and help shape tenant participation for the future.

If you are looking to develop life skills, have skills to offer, or are a budding graphic designer, marketing or business student, please contact TP@westlothian.gov.uk; our friendly team is excited to hear from you.

GET INVOLVED

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 Facebook page is run by the Housing, Customer & Building Services Customers team and tenant experts.

Search [West Lothian Council Tenant Participation](#) on Facebook

Click join and remember to provide us with your address to verify you are a tenant!



Direct debit is the easiest and most efficient way to pay your rent;

it ensures that you are up to date with your rent payments and removes the stress and inconvenience of paying by other methods. Payments made by direct debit are covered by the direct debit guarantee. This means that you are in control of your payments and your money is safe.

Payment dates are available on the 1st, 7th, 14th and 21st of the month.



There are other ways to pay your rent, however, these can take a bit longer. The table below shows how long payments can take to reach your account. If there is a delay in your payment reaching your account, and your account is put in arrears because of this, you may receive our system generated arrears communication.

Payment Method	Days to show on rent account
Direct Debit	Instant
Online or Telephone	2 days
Bank Transfer	2 days
Post Office / PayPoint	5 days

Did you know that your Housing Officer can take payments over the phone?

If you pay your rent in arrears you will receive our system generated arrears notifications. The only way to avoid this is to ensure you have a credit balance on your account; there are lots of ways to build a credit balance, such as;

- Slightly increasing your direct debit
- Making a one-off payment to the value of one weeks rent
- Contacting your Housing Officer to set up a separate small recurring payment over the phone,
- Making a payment through our Tenants Portal.

We have implemented a system called CallSecurePlus to enable Housing Officers to take rent payments over the phone, directly from tenants. This will make it easier for tenants to make quick and easy payments, and remain in control of their rent accounts. You can also set up recurring payments on the system, so it's a really simple and effective way to build a buffer of credit on your account.

It is important that you keep up to date with your rent payments; if you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact your Housing Office.

Armadale Ward	ArmadaleAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Bathgate Ward	BathgateAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Whitburn/Blackburn Ward	WhitburnAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Livingston Wards	LivingstonAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Broxburn/Linlithgow/ East Livingston Wards	BroxburnAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Breich Valley Ward	BreichValleyArea@westlothian.gov.uk

Keep us up to date

This article is a further update to remind tenants that it is really important that you inform your Housing Officer when someone else moves into live in your household, or when someone moves out of your household.

By not telling us, this can lead to difficulties at a later time should you wish to make a request to:

- Sublet all or part of your house to someone else
- Assign your tenancy (pass the tenancy on to someone else)
- Become a joint tenant with someone else, and:
- There has been a change around the rules to Succeed to the tenancy, i.e. take over the tenancy on the death of the tenant.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I sublet my tenancy to someone else?

This can only happen in the following circumstances:

- You must ask our permission
- The tenant must have been living in the tenancy for 12 months before making this request.

Can I pass my tenancy to someone else or can someone have the tenancy if the tenant passes away?

This can only happen in the following circumstances:

- The tenant has notified us in writing that someone has moved in and this has to have been their only and main home for the past 12 months

- If you are a spouse/civil partner/ the joint tenant living in the property at the time of the tenant's death then you will qualify to succeed to the tenancy
- The property must meet the persons housing need in line with our allocations policy and the property must not be under-occupied for an assignment.

Can I add/be a joint tenant on a council tenancy?

This can only happen in the following circumstances:

- The tenant has notified us in writing that someone has moved in and this has to have been their only and main home for the past 12 months.

If you have any questions or are unsure about any of the information in this article please contact your local Housing Officer on 01506 280000.

Reducing anti-social behaviour

West Lothian Council aims to promote good neighbour relations by asking tenants to be mindful of their neighbours. Antisocial behaviour is repeated action that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm or distress to at least one person from another household. This includes keeping noise disruptions to a minimum.

West Lothian Council Safer Neighbourhood Team investigate complaints of loud music and antisocial noise in accordance with the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004. Our duty times for witnessing loud music are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 9:30 am to midnight, Wednesday from 9:30am to 7pm, Friday and Saturday to 4am and Sunday to 8pm.

Enquiries to the SNT :

Email snt@westlothian.gov.uk - Enquiries will be prioritised based on the nature of the request, and the staff available at the time of your request. The team will make every attempt to respond to you within 2 working days.

Please report persistent noise issues to the contact centre on 01506 280000 or the police on 101.

Should you require more information regarding Anti-Social Behaviour please follow the link below.



[More information →](#)

Dogs

Owning a dog can positively influence a family, and people can reap many health benefits from being a dog owner. As well as the health of our pets and the added benefits to ourselves, West Lothian Council takes measures to ensure that family pets, such as dogs, are safe and cause no nuisance or danger to others.

This helps to ensure that neighbours and communities are safe and that having a dog as a pet is not causing noise, mess, anxiety or disruption to others.

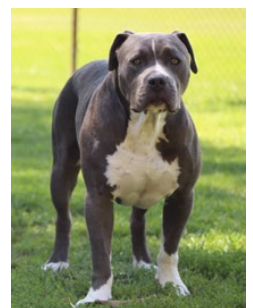
West Lothian Council has a process for tenants owning Pets in Council properties, and this is covered in the Council Tenants Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement that requires tenants to obtain written permission before keeping a pet. If permission is given, tenants will be asked to sign an agreement to comply with the tenancy conditions which relate to keeping a pet,

West Lothian Council provides information for dog owners and this can be found in the following links:

- [Advice for dog owners](#)
- [Out of Control Dogs](#)
- [Your responsibility as a tenant and owning a pet.](#)

XL Bully – Legislation Change

The Scottish Government have changed the rules on owning XL Bully dogs.



From 23rd February 2024, it is an offence to:

- have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle
- breed from an XL Bully dog
- sell an XL Bully dog
- abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray
- give away an XL Bully dog.

[More information →](#)

Homelessness

Frequently Asked Questions



What should I do if I become homeless or think that I am about to become homeless?

You should contact 01506 280000 to discuss your situation. Your enquiry will be passed to the Housing Options Team who will advise you on the next steps you need to take based on your personal circumstances.

What is the homeless process?

When you contact us to advise you are homeless, you may be asked to attend our drop-in service where a full homeless assessment interview will be performed. The purpose of this interview is to determine if the council has a statutory duty to provide you with permanent accommodation. During the interview, the Housing Options Team will explore your circumstances and the nature of your housing need to find a solution to the issues you are facing. We will discuss how you came to be homeless and the circumstances surrounding that, in order to identify the correct support suitable to you. We will ask questions regarding your previous address history, family details and your financial situation. We may suggest referring you to other advice agencies to provide you with holistic support. The Housing Options Officer has 28 days to make inquiries into your homelessness and obtain supporting evidence to decide on your case.

What if I need emergency accommodation?

If you need emergency accommodation, you must contact us right away on 01506 280000. Depending on availability, you may be offered a place at our assessment centre to determine your levels of support requirements, or depending on availability, a hotel or bed & breakfast in West Lothian where possible. There is a charge for temporary hotel and B&B accommodation which is currently £182 per week or £26 per day. You may be able to claim housing benefit to help cover the cost of this if you are on a low income. This will be discussed with you at the time you are offered this accommodation.

You will remain in hotel accommodation until a suitable temporary tenancy becomes available. Please be aware, any temporary

accommodation offered to you could be a sharing space or a placement in one of our homeless accommodation units. Temporary accommodation can be anywhere in West Lothian and there is no option to choose a particular area for emergency and temporary accommodation.

Do I need to stay in Temporary Emergency Accommodation to be classed as Homeless?

If you have no legal rights to any property, generally you can be classed as homeless depending on the outcome of your Homeless Assessment. You are able to self-accommodate with friends or family members while you are homeless and waiting on a permanent offer of accommodation. You do not need to be in emergency accommodation, i.e. a hotel, B&B or temporary tenancy to be classed as a homeless household.

I see lots of empty houses throughout West Lothian, can I register interest for one of them?

At the end of a tenancy, a property must go through a stringent Void process to ensure the property is of a lettable standard to the next tenant. We do not accept notes of interest in any properties as we operate a needs-based allocations policy. Many of the properties you see lying empty may not be owned by West Lothian Council and could either be privately owned or housing association properties, therefore it is unlikely we are able to provide updates on specific cases.

Can I choose where my temporary/emergency accommodation is?

Homeless legislation means that dealing with a persons lack of housing is the priority, and an offer can be made anywhere within the West Lothian area which is reasonable.

We will try our best to keep those with children in the school area but this is not always possible.

There are extreme pressures and a lack of all types of accommodation in West Lothian, which means you will be offered the first available placement available for you.

Do I have a choice of where my permanent homeless offer is?

It is the council's policy that you select a minimum of three wards in West Lothian for your permanent offer. If you aren't reached with an offer within 9 months of your homeless application, we will require you to open your area choices up to a minimum of 6 wards. Due to the pressures on housing stock and the lack of availability, especially in particular wards, we are unable to guarantee you will be housed in your preferred area. We will however, ensure that your offer is suitable to your needs.

Applicants should be aware restricting your area choices will impact how long you wait for an offer of permanent housing.

Do I need to be homeless to get a council house?

No. Social Housing is available to everyone and offers are made based on your circumstances. You are able to apply for social housing through the Council's common housing register as well as numerous other Housing Associations. Each housing provider has their own points structure. Speak to our Housing Options Team who can discuss your needs and determine if you have the correct number of points on your housing application.

More information



Spring Gardening Hints and Tips

Well maintained gardens look nice and can be a great source of enjoyment for you and your family. On the other hand, overgrown gardens don't look very nice and can cause problems for you and your neighbours.

As part of your tenancy agreement, you are expected to look after your home and garden, and you must carry out the following maintenance work to your garden area regularly:

- any grassed areas should be cut at least once every four weeks in the growing season
- hedges and shrubs should not be allowed to overhang footpaths or get excessively tall/wide
- clear away and dispose of any rubbish or dog fouling
- If you have any concerns about maintaining your garden, please contact your local housing office by calling **01506 280000**.

Where tenants are not maintaining their gardens to a reasonable

standard, action will be taken to address any issues with the tenant concerned. This could ultimately result in a charge being made to the tenant for any work the Council has to take to remedy the situation.

To help you maintain your garden, here are some spring gardening hints and tips.

Please be aware West Lothian Council will be implementing a £50 charge for uplift of brown bins in June.

Click [here](#) to view a list of organic material suitable for composting.

Top Tip: Make your own compost

Have you thought about making your own compost? If you haven't already, now's a great time to set up a compost area in your garden. This could be as simple as buying a ready-made compost bin, or you could build your own using spare wood.

A compost area provides somewhere to put all your organic waste. Once it has broken down, you'll get a lovely, rich compost your plants will thrive on. Make sure you have a good mixture of grass clippings, vegetable peelings and paper. To help the process along, you'll need to turn your compost with a garden fork each month to keep it aerated.



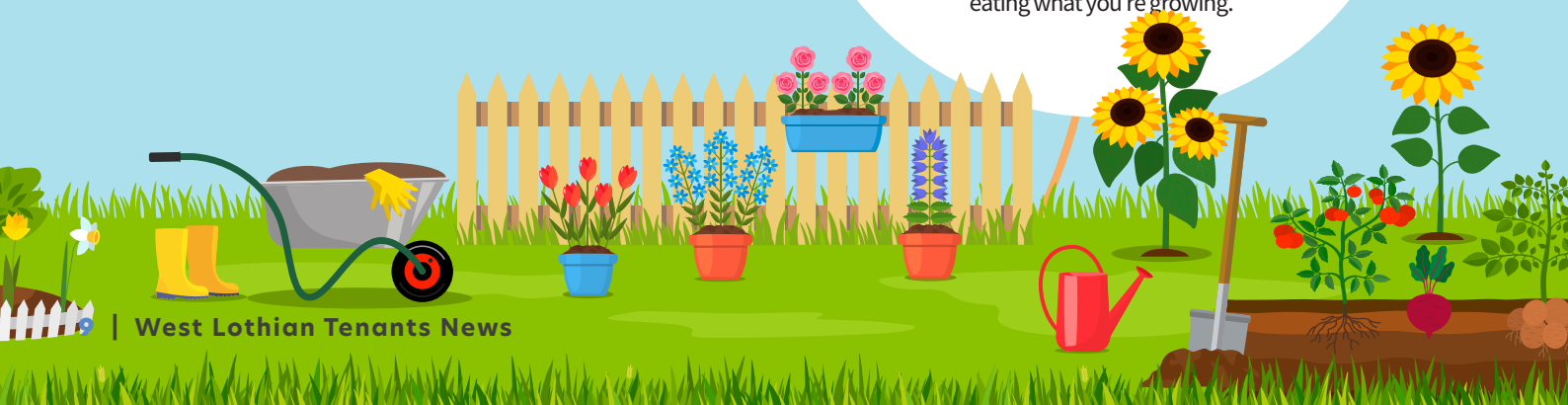
Top Tip: Add a little colour

Springtime is the start of the "growing season" in our gardens and a great time to introduce some colourful flowers in containers or pots. They are easy to maintain, and by using containers, you get the joy of having pretty flowers without the hard job of digging. Plus -they are great for attracting butterflies into your garden. It can be an inexpensive way to brighten even the smallest of gardens. Before you start with the containers, have a general tidy up remove dead leaves and other debris that's been blown into your garden over the winter. You can cut back the old dead growth of any plants you may already have now.

If you have borders and beds already, then clear them back to bare soil. Put the dead organic matter you've cleared away into your brown bin along with any weeds you can see.

Top Tip: Grow your own veg

Did you know you can grow vegetables in pots or containers? Vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, onions, lettuce, and even beetroot can be grown in pots very easily and provide fresh produce that you know hasn't been treated with pesticides. A brilliant way of getting children involved in your garden is to give them their own container to grow their favourite vegetable. Growing your own vegetables is as close to farm-to-table as it gets when you're eating what you're growing.



Top Tip: Looking after your grass

Grass is a plant and needs regular care and maintenance to keep it at its best. Grass/lawn care is important and can quickly become a difficult job if you allow it to become overgrown. Most people cut the grass for the first time of the year when the weather begins to get warmer, probably around March-April, as that is when the grass starts to grow.

The first cut of the grass growing season is probably the most important. But don't cut it too short at this first cut as it can damage the grass. You should aim to remove no more than one-third of the grass blade length. Grass that turns yellow or brown can be a tell-tale sign that the grass may have been cut too short.

Under normal Scottish weather conditions from March to June, you may only need to cut the grass once or twice a month.

As the weather gets warmer and it rains less, the grass will dry out, so if there is an extended period of dry weather, water the grass to keep it from drying out and dying. Water in the morning or evening to avoid drying out in the sun.

Top Tip: Drainage

During heavy and persistent rain, it is normal for water to pond on the grass, but this should drain away within a day. Aerating helps to relieve compaction and assists with drainage. Use a garden fork in spring and autumn to spike your lawn, as this can help to relieve compaction and assist drainage.

Top Tip: Dealing with moss

If you have moss in your lawn, you will need to scarify it to allow the grass to grow. Scarify (or scrape) your grass using a rake; this helps reduce the build-up of thatch and allows water and air to penetrate the soil.

Top Tip: Dog Waste

To prevent the burning of the grass, pour a bucket of water on the grass after your pet has urinated.

Enjoy your garden, and remember gardening isn't just about making your house look good. Caring for plants can also do wonders for your wellbeing and improve your mood and mental health.

Waste Management

West Lothian Council urge tenants to dispose of household rubbish in the appropriate bins and not to collate bags and discarded items in garden areas.

This will reduce the health and safety risk that these items can cause by vermin or accidents occurring and reduces the risk of deliberate fire setting. Safe waste disposal also reduces tenancy management breaches.

More information →




Whitburn Partnership Centre, **one year on**

Whitburn Partnership Centre celebrated its first anniversary in November 2023, and the day was marked with a celebratory open day, which was very well received by all who attended.

The Partnership Centre is situated in the heart of Whitburn on Armadale Road and offers a wide range of services including The Ian Tennant Library, Public Access Computers, Customer Information Service (by appointment), Whitburn Area Housing Office, Social Work (Adult & Children's Services), Access 2 Employment (Employability Service), Skills Development Scotland, Community Connections and Museum.

Free community events are held regularly in the building, facilitated by Customer & Community Services staff in partnership with Whitburn Partnership Centre Service User Group. Our next free community event is scheduled for late Spring 2024, further details will be published soon on WLC social media and [Whitburn Partnership Centre](#).



The building plays host to a variety of clubs and groups in the community spaces, which have a capacity of up to 120 people and are also available to book for functions and events.

For more information please call: 01506 284900, email: laura.redmond@westlothian.gov.uk, visit our webpage by clicking the link below or pop in and speak to us.

[More information](#)



Tea n' Blether – Reminiscence sessions in West Lothian Libraries

West Lothian Council Library Service in partnership with the Museums Service are hosting reminiscence sessions in libraries across the county.

If you fancy a blether whilst enjoying a warm drink and biscuits and the chance to look at some lovely photos and items from days gone by, courtesy of West Lothian Museums Service, then please join us in your local library.

The sessions are open to everyone and no booking is required.



Please visit your local library's webpage monthly activity programme section for more information please visit: [Your Library](#) or contact the library you wish to visit.

ADULT LEARNING *It's about you*

What Could You Do With Maths?

With improved maths skills, you can...

- Budget better
- Problem-solve puzzles
- Help with homework
- Access employment
- Cook with confidence

Here at Adult Learning, we offer fun, free, and friendly numeracy classes – tailored to you! They're based on real life scenarios where you need maths.

For more information, email adultlearning@westlothian.gov.uk, call 08007311831 or visit the link below:

More information



Delivering Joy

During the holiday season, the Customer Service Centre spread some cheer to the residents of West Lothian.

Vicky McIllduff, a CSC Adviser, discovered the "Delivering Joy" Christmas tree while shopping at Dunelm. The tree featured numerous tags, each detailing a gift idea for someone in need, such as a 93-year-old man who enjoys jigsaws and chocolate, or a 3-year-old who loves playdoh and cozy pyjamas.

Inspired by this campaign, Vicky shared the idea with the Customer Service Centre, and the team enthusiastically embraced it. Together, they donated a total of 43 bags filled with gifts to local communities. Vicky looks forward to the possibility of the Customer Service Centre's donation drive being just as successful next year as it was in December 2023.



Trading Standards Officers are issuing caution for Tenants when receiving 'Cold Callers' offering Repair Policies for 'white goods'.

The fees for the worthless plans are costing victims between £200-£500 and officers are advising people not to be persuaded by the scammers. The consumers are believed to have been targeted multiple times and by a variety of similar callers offering unwanted or worthless cover plans.

Victims were 'cold called' via the telephone. Some people were already registered with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS). This would usually deter these types of callers but apparently it has made no difference as they have not been put off.

DO NOT FALL FOUL TO THE SCAMMERS, FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, visit: [Scams and Advice](#)

Check if something might be a scam - [Citizens Advice](#)

If you need advice or wish to make a complaint about any goods and services you have bought please contact Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or visit Home - [Consumeradvice](#)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

has reinvigorated the Make the Call campaign which targets those who are over 50 and smoke and who also either have mobility issues, live alone or use medical oxygen in the property.

More information



#MAKE THE
CALL
HELP SAVE A LIFE
0800 0731 999

BOOK A FREE **HOME FIRE SAFETY VISIT**
Text "**FIRE**" to **80800** from your mobile phone
or fill out our online booking form

71% OF WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME FORM OF **SEXUAL HARASSMENT** IN A PUBLIC SPACE

Contact West Lothian Council to report any area where the environment makes you feel unsafe. Tell us why and the Community Safety Partnership will try to help:

Women and Girls Public Safety Reporting Form >

Safe Walking Routes >

West Lothian's Core Paths Plan >

Report a faulty street light >

WE'RE LISTENING

Tell us how safe you feel & access advice and support @ westlothian.gov.uk/womenandgirls



Managed Migration



The Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) have started to invite people on legacy benefits to claim Universal Credit (UC) - It is important to get in touch if you have received a managed migration letter. The Advice Shop can help, they have a dedicated advisor who will answer your questions or concerns.

The Department of Work and Pensions is contacting Universal Credit claimants on legacy benefits which include Tax Credits, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, and Housing Benefits to migrate over to Universal Credit.

Contact is being made in phases so don't worry if you haven't yet received a letter as this process is likely to continue over the next few years.

If you have received a letter (also referred to as a Migration Notice) it is important to seek advice about when you should claim and how your payments are likely to be impacted moving forward. There are also deadlines to make claims depending on when the notice is issued and legacy benefits will be stopped if the claim is not made in time.

The most frequently asked questions are about:

■ Transitional element

included in some circumstances as a top up payment for those moving from older legacy benefits to Universal Credit

■ Timing of claim

you must make a claim three months from the date the managed migration letter was sent out

■ Deadline day

is the day specified in the migration notice by which a UC claim must be made. If a UC claim is not made by that date, legacy benefits will be stopped



We are currently running a face-to-face Universal Credit Migration advice session by appointment at the Jim Walker Partnership Centre in Bathgate every Monday morning for anyone affected - If you have received a migration notice letter and would like advice please contact The Advice Shop on 01506 283000 and select option 4 or you can fill in our [online referral form](#) for an advisor to call you back.

Better £ff
West Lothian

West Lothian
Council

Your Garden Waste service is changing



From 1 June 2024 you must display a permit if you want to continue with your garden waste collection. If you don't purchase and display a permit, only food waste will be collected.

Please purchase your permit from 8 April, 2024.

From 8 April, you can purchase your permit at: www.westlothian.gov.uk/brownbins or scan the QR code or call 01506 280000.

- Once your permit arrives, please follow the instructions provided and attach it to your brown bin.
- A permit costs £50 per household (maximum two brown bins per household).

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION

All permits are valid from 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025.



Are you on Universal Credit and in receipt of housing costs?



Do you receive Universal Credit Housing Costs? If you do, you'll need to let the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) know that your rent has increased from the 1st of April 2024. You must provide this information to the DWP before the end of your Universal Credit assessment period for April 2024. If you don't the DWP might end up paying the incorrect rent.

By the first week in April 2024, the DWP will have sent you a notification via your "To Do" section on your online account. It will ask you to "Confirm your housing costs" making the process easy to follow - as per the step by step guidance below.

Step one:

Select 'Yes' and **continue**.

Confirm your housing costs

Date of change

Did your housing costs change on 1 April 2024?

Check the letter from your landlord for the date of the change.

Yes

No

[Continue](#)

[Back](#)

Step two:

Select 'Yes' and **insert the new rental charge**, and **continue**.

Changes to your rent

You previously told us the total rent for your property is £150.00 per week

Your landlord should have written recently with details of changes to rent or eligible service charges.

Are you still charged weekly for your rent?

Yes

No

How much is your new rent per week?
Do not include any service charges or rent arrears.

£

[Continue](#)

[Back](#)

Step three:

Select 'Yes' or 'No' only select 'Yes' if you have a services charge associated with property and press **continue**.

Confirm your housing costs

Changes to your service charges

You previously told us the total eligible service charges for your property are £5.00 per week

Your landlord should have written recently with details of changes to rent or eligible service charges.

Are you still charged weekly for your service charges?

Yes

No

How much are your new eligible service charges per week?
Only include 'eligible' service charges. They will be listed separately on the letter from your landlord.

£

[Continue](#)

[Back](#)

Once you have answered all the questions, you will continue to a summary section. This will allow you to review the information you have provided and change any mistakes you may have made.

If you're happy with the information provided, please select "confirm". This will then remove this task from your portal and your rent increase has been reported for this year.

For those tenants who are in receipt of Housing Benefit, your entitlement will be automatically updated. You do not need to do anything.

If you need support when updating your housing costs, please contact your Community Housing Officer on 01506 280000 - option 2 who will be happy to provide assistance.

Don't miss out on your full benefit entitlement for 2024/25

Financial Support and Advice



The cost of living has had a significant impact on finances and many are struggling to meet essential living costs. The Advice Shop has a range of services available which may be able to help. We can provide advice on:

Benefits – by carrying out an income maximisation check to ensure you are getting everything you should be and help you with any claims identified.

We can also support you in resolving any problems with your benefits, including appealing any unfavourable decisions such as unsuccessful disability benefit claims. The Advice Shop offers a wide range of tailored support services to meet individual needs, including:

- The Pathways Project offers one-to-one support for people in work, or with barriers to employment to work toward better financial security. The Pathways Project also includes a short volunteering course, to allow people to have a taste of what it is like to be a volunteer. Placements with 3rd sector partners form part of the course, along with some classroom-based training.
- Our Families and Young People's Advice team provides advice and support for families and young people to make sure income is maximised.
- The Macmillan and Older People Team provides a dedicated service for anyone over the age of 60 or living with a long-term health condition such as dementia or cancer.

Our specialist advisors can help you by working out what financial help you may be entitled to and how to access it.

- Macmillan Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) offers everyone affected by cancer (including families and carers) the chance to have a conversation with a dedicated ICJ practitioner to discuss your needs and help you access tailored information and support. You can talk to us about how you feel, get help with housing or money worries, or help at home - whatever matters most to you.

Debts – Our money advice team offers help and support for anyone in West Lothian struggling to manage problem levels of debt. We can help with budgeting, income maximisation, creditor negotiation, debt options, and solutions. There are more debt options than you may know about and we offer advice on which option is best suited to individual circumstances. The options include bankruptcy (minimal asset or full administration), Debt Arrangement Scheme (DAS), Protected Trust Deed, debt payment plan, token offers, and write off or settlement offers. Your dedicated advisor will work with you throughout the

process and can negotiate on your behalf to make sure your debt solution is both affordable and sustainable.

Energy – Our specialist energy advisors offer a wide range of advice and assistance to help you fully understand your energy issues and become more energy efficient. Anyone can access our service, regardless of your heating system or meter type. The Energy team can help you understand your bills, assist in resolving issues with suppliers, and look at options available for financial assistance with energy costs or help with energy debt.

Housing – The Advice Shop offers advice and support to prevent homelessness and resolve issues with rent arrears. Early engagement is key to this process and the earlier you ask for help, the more options you will have available. The team also offers advice and court representation to anyone facing eviction for rent and mortgage arrears. Advice is given on what to expect at court, help to negotiate with landlords and lenders, and support to deal with debt and income maximisation.

All advice is free and confidential and can be accessed by phone, email, or face to face.

For further information including our referral form please visit the Advice Shop



DEALING WITH CONDENSATION IN THE HOME

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

Moisture builds during everyday living, including when you cook, dry clothes and shower. 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.

There are a number of ways you can reduce condensation. Try implementing this advice at home:

- Keep ventilation vents free from obstruction.
- Where possible, use your heating system efficiently and effectively. It's more effective to have heating on a low setting for longer to maintain a minimum temperature rather than heating to high temperatures at short bursts.
- Open windows a little when cooking and showering.
- Make sure tumble dryers are vented outside.

Visit [Dampness in Homes](#) for more information.

There has been an increase in the number homes reporting issues with condensation and mould growth. Some of these may be linked to tenants turning off the electrical ventilation systems due to perceived cost of running the systems.

Sometimes we can't help making lots of moisture in the air - cooking, taking a shower, airing/drying

clothes etc. Stop the water spreading to other parts of the house by shutting the door and opening a window in the room to let the wet air escape. You should also use your extractor fans where they are fitted.

Extractor fans are used to control indoor air quality. A well-ventilated house can reduce or eliminate

surface condensation altogether by replacing humid stagnant air with fresh air.

Extractor fans works by mechanically drawing the damp air out of the building and replacing it with fresh air from outside the building.

Based on the manufacturer's literature and the average electricity price 28.62p per kWh (current average price for customers on a standard variable tariff), the running costs for bathroom and kitchen fans are as follows:

	Bathroom	Kitchen
Background Trickle	22 hours per day	22 hours per day
Boost Ventilation	2 hours per day	2 hours per day
Electricity Price	28.6p per kilowatt hour	28.6p per kilowatt hour
Annual Power	13.14kW	27.01kW
Total Annual Running Cost	£3.76	£7.72

This gives an annual running cost of only £11.48 based a two hour 'boost' per day for a typical house with 1 kitchen and 1 bathroom/shower room.

If you have an extractor fan in a wet area use it every time you bathe or shower. It cost less than you think. Other tips on controlling ventilation can be found by clicking the link:

[More information](#) →

The Importance of Gas Safety Checks



West Lothian Council as your landlord, are bound under The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out an annual safety check on all gas fittings provided in its properties.

Our responsibilities as a Landlord. We will:

- Arrange for a Gas Safe Registered engineer to carry out a gas safety check every 12 months.
- Ensure a Gas Safe Registered engineer carries out all gas maintenance works.
- Maintain the gas appliances, pipework and flues provided in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep a record of each annual safety check and service.

Your responsibilities as a Tenant. You will:

- Co-operate with your landlord and make sure you allow the Gas Safety Engineer access to the property, so they can carry out the annual safety checks.
- Have any gas appliances in the property installed by a Gas Safety Engineer.
- Never tamper with or remove gas fittings.
- Not block air ventilation grills.
- Keep flue terminals clear.
- Turn off any faulty appliance and contact your local area housing office for advice.
- Never cover a gas appliance.

Failure to give reasonable access to your home to allow us to complete the Annual Gas Safety check is dangerous for you, your family and your neighbours. It is also a breach of your tenancy agreement. The Council is legally entitled to force entry to any properties to carry out the appropriate annual safety checks.

For advice on gas safety checks, you can contact our Customer Service Centre on 01506 280000

GAS LEAKS

If you think you can smell gas or fumes, you should call the Gas Emergency Services on 0800 111 999. You should then:

- Turn off the gas at the meter.
- Open windows and doors.
- Put out any naked flames e.g. your hob or candles. Don't smoke, strike matches or do anything that could cause ignition.
- Don't use electrical switches, including your TV, computer, oven etc.

Householders have choices when disposing of their household waste

If your household waste can't go in your household bin, you have a choice.

Book a Bulky Uplift



Take items to a Recycling Centre (either in a car or van)



Use a licenced private contractor to dispose of the items



Make the **c**orrect choice



FLY TIPPING is never the correct choice It spoils your community, it's illegal and it's ALWAYS the wrong choice.

Look after West Lothian's amazing natural environment by ensuring you dispose of all your waste responsibly. Fly-tipping is illegal and dangerous. Anyone caught could be fined up to £40,000 or face a jail sentence.

Report FlyTipping



LOVE WestLothian



West Lothian Council

DIY Tin Planters

Equipment

- Tin can
- Craft paint
- Arts and craft supplies (stickers, pens, water proof sealant (optional))
- Hammer
- Nail
- Top soil
- Seeds

Instructions

Important: You'll also want to make sure the tin can you choose does not have any rough edges and that the can opener used did not leave any sharp points that could cut little fingers while handling.

- 1 Clean a tin can with soap and water and remove any labels from the can.
- 2 Dry the tin can.
- 3 Use a hammer and a nail to make a small drainage hole at the bottom of the can (an adult must do this!).
- 4 Use your paint to decorate your planter.
- 5 Add some stickers or drawings if you want too.
- 6 Let your tin planter dry off for a few hours.
- 7 Add your topsoil and seeds of choice- we recommend cacti seeds as they need little TLC.
- 8 Look after your little seedlings by watering them and giving them access to light.



Tenants Tasty Treats

Leek and potato soup

Preparation time

less than 30 mins

Cooking time

10 to 30 mins

Serves

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 medium potato, cubed
- 2 medium leeks, sliced
- 1.2 litres/2 pints vegetable stock
- 150ml/5fl oz double cream or crème fraîche
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and add the onions, potatoes and leeks. Cook for 3–4 minutes over a medium heat until starting to soften.
2. Add the vegetable stock and bring to the boil. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes until the vegetables are tender.
3. Whizz with a hand blender or in a blender until smooth. Reheat in a clean pan, stir in the cream or crème fraîche. Heat through and serve.

Contact West Lothian Council

The council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) lines are open from Monday to Friday, 8am to 10:30pm. Thereafter, a number of staff are on site to deal with emergency calls.

The CSC lines are also open from 10:30pm on Friday to 8am on Monday for emergency calls relating to noise, homelessness, repairs to council houses, roads, street lighting and environmental health.

MyWestLothian (Report It, Request It, Pay For It, Tenant Self Service)	my.westlothian.gov.uk
Contact us	www.westlothian.gov.uk/contactus
Homelessness	0800 0323 450
Housing, Repairs and Gas Servicing	01506 280000, select option 1
Council Tax and Benefits	01506 280000, select option 2
Customer Service Centre	01506 280000
Antisocial Behaviour	01506 282000 or the Police on 101
NETS and Land Services	0800 616 446
West Lothian Advice Shop	01506 283000 Advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop

Information is available in Braille, tape, large print and community languages.

For interpretation and translation services please telephone our Customer Service Centre on 01506 280000. We also use Browsealoud text speak software on our website