

West Lothian tenants news

WINTER 2024

Informing and involving West Lothian's tenants

Modular Construction
Page 18



Your recycling service is changing

Page 8

Staying Safe This Winter

Page 9

Bonfire and Firework Safety

Page 12

TALKING TENANTS

Talking tenants

Become a Talking Tenant Expert through Social Media

3

The Next Generation of Tenant Participation

4

HOUSING



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

5

Antisocial behaviour and noise

6

Waste Management

7

Your recycling service is changing

NET ZERO

8

CUSTOMER

Staying Safe This Winter

9

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Winter safety advice

12

Universal Credit

14

16 DAYS OF ACTION

16

Winter Support

11

Bonfire & Firework Safety

13

We're here for you

15

Don't give COLD a chance...

17

BUILDING SERVICES

DEALING WITH CONDENSATION IN THE HOME

13

STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT

Modular Construction

14

New postcode look-up service

20

Surveying our homes

21

KID'S CORNER

22

Tenants Tasty Treats

23

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 Quality Development 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.



Payment Office Closures

A reminder that payment offices at the Jim Walker Partnership Centre (Bathgate) and Arrochar House (Livingston) are now closed. However customers continue to have a wide range of options available to make payments such as rent and council tax, and plenty of alternative options for receiving payments.

[More information](#)



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

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.

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

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



Antisocial behaviour and noise

It is good to be neighbourly. Let's look out for those less able. If neighbours can talk to one another, and get on better this may result in improved daily living, helping everyone's health and wellbeing.

Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) means a person(s) behaving in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm and distress to you or your community.

ASB includes noise disturbances, loud music, parties and shouting. Sometimes domestic noise can be antisocial and can include amplified noise, playing instruments, loud banging or sometimes DIY.

For anyone experiencing antisocial behaviour or noise related disturbances, contact 01506 280000. The Safer Neighbourhood Team are able to provide advice and assistance and have a noise witnessing service.

If you wish to report antisocial behaviour or seek advice or assistance, please contact The Safer Neighbourhood Team at: snt@westlothian.gov.uk

or call West Lothian Council on 01506 280000

More information about antisocial behaviour and FAQs

For matters that relate more to tenancy management issues such as right of access, waste disposal issues, communal door access or garden problems.

- Call West Lothian Council on 01506 280000 and choose option 2

For serious issues of antisocial behaviour or to report a crime or ongoing incident, including a Hate incident/crime or Domestic Abuse, you can also contact Police Scotland on 101 or in serious circumstances for ongoing disturbances; call 999, or you can report it anonymously via Crimestoppers on: 0800 555 111.

Waste management

Please be aware that Housing, Customer, and Building Services are not responsible for managing bin collections or any related processes, such as permits.

These matters are handled entirely by the Waste Management service which is part of Operational Services. If you have any questions or concerns regarding waste collection, please contact Waste Management directly by calling the call centre at 01506 280000.

However, Housing, Customer, and Building Services are here to support you with any issues related to the unsafe disposal of waste at council properties and communal areas.

We are committed to ensuring that our environments remain safe and clean for everyone. West Lothian Council urges tenants to dispose of household rubbish in the appropriate bins and not to gather 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.

Find out your bin collection date



Did you know you can purchase your brown-bin permit [Here?](#)



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).

West Lothian Council Housing tenants can choose to pay in the same way as they pay their rent, using existing administrative arrangements.

If you wish to make a payment towards your garden waste permit, you can do so on the [Garden Waste Payments for Council Tenants page](#).

Your recycling service is changing

West Lothian Council is making improvements to the waste and recycling service provided to flats. These changes mean you will receive the same recycling service as other properties in West Lothian, as well as aligning our recycling services with other councils across Scotland.

What's changing?

We are providing you with a new **green bin** for recycling **tins, cans, cartons, plastic bottles, pots, tubs** and **trays**.

Your blue bin should then only be used to recycle **paper, card** and **cardboard**. We are **upgrading your bin store area** to improve how it looks and make it easier to recycle- these changes will also discourage rubbish from being dumped.

Why the change?

By collecting paper, card and cardboard in a separate bin to tins, cans, cartons, plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays, we can achieve a better quality of recycling. This will also help to reduce recycling processing costs for the council.

Waste emissions are the second largest element of the council's carbon footprint. Recycling can help to reduce these emissions - it takes less energy to make recycled products than using raw materials.

These changes also support our contribution to Scotland's ambitious recycling targets, as well as our commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.



When are the changes happening?

The improvements to your bin store area and installation of your new green recycling bin will take place over the coming weeks.

What else can I do?

Please help us make this new service a success by recycling the right items in the right bins.

You should also make sure all items are **CLEAN, EMPTY** and **DRY** before they are recycled. There is no way of cleaning items at our recycling facility therefore if material arrives which is too dirty it will be sent to a landfill.

Unfortunately, not all residents are participating in the recycling service which is leading to rubbish accumulating.

Officers from the Local Area Offices are carrying out weekly checks to our flatted accommodation to ensure that the communal bins and areas surround are in a satisfactory state to allow the bins to be emptied.

Housing Services can take formal action to ensure that if there is an accumulation of rubbish that it is removed. West Lothian Council has legal powers to require the removal of rubbish that will rot or provide food for pests. If no action is taken by the resident, the council will arrange for removal of the rubbish by a private contractor and charge the residents the full costs involved. This is not something we wish to do and request resident's co-operation.

Staying Safe This Winter:

A Guide for West Lothian Council Tenants

As winter approaches, it's important to take extra precautions to keep yourself, your home, and your loved ones safe and warm. Here are some essential tips to help you stay safe and comfortable during the colder months.

1 Keep Your Home Warm

Maintaining a warm home is crucial during the winter. Aim to keep your living room temperature at least 18°C during the day, particularly if you have young children, are elderly, or have health conditions.

Ensure your heating system is working efficiently by checking your radiators, bleeding them if necessary, and reporting any faults immediately.

2 Be Energy Efficient

With energy costs rising, it's important to be mindful of your energy usage. Simple steps like closing curtains at dusk to retain heat, using draught excluders, and setting your thermostat to a lower but comfortable temperature can make a big difference.

You may also want to consider switching to energy-efficient bulbs and unplugging devices when not in use to reduce your electricity bill.

3 Stay Safe with Gas and Electrical Appliances

Make sure all gas appliances are serviced regularly and that you have a working carbon monoxide detector installed.

This silent killer is more common during the winter months, so ensure your home is protected. Also, avoid overloading electrical sockets, and use heaters safely by keeping them away from flammable materials.

4 Be Prepared for Bad Weather

Winter weather in West Lothian can be unpredictable, so it's wise to be prepared. Stock up on essentials such as non-perishable food, bottled water, and medications.

Keep a torch, batteries, and blankets handy in case of power cuts. It's also a good idea to have a snow shovel and salt available to clear pathways and prevent slips and falls.

5 Look After Your Pipes

Frozen pipes can burst and cause serious damage to your home. To prevent this, ensure your pipes are well-insulated and keep your home at a consistent temperature.

If you're going away during winter, leave your heating on low to prevent pipes from freezing. In the event of a burst pipe, turn off your water supply immediately and contact the council for assistance.

6 Stay Connected

Make sure you stay in touch with friends, family, and neighbours, especially during severe weather conditions.

if you have elderly or vulnerable neighbours, check in on them regularly to ensure they are safe and warm. If you need help or support, don't hesitate to contact West Lothian Council or other local services.

7 Health and Wellbeing

Cold weather can increase the risk of flu and other illnesses.

Make sure to get your flu vaccine if eligible and maintain a healthy diet to keep your immune system strong. If you're feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly. Staying active indoors with gentle exercises can also help keep you healthy during the winter months.

8 Stay Informed

Keep an eye on weather forecasts and any warnings issued by the Met Office.

Staying informed will help you prepare for any severe weather and avoid unnecessary travel during dangerous conditions. Also, follow West Lothian Council's updates for any changes to services due to the weather.

9 Emergency Contacts

Make sure you have a list of emergency contacts readily available, including the council's emergency repair line, your utility providers, and nearby friends or family who can help in an emergency.

Stay safe this winter with this handy check list

Keeping Warm

- Wear warm clothing** inside your house and outside
- Save fuel, fill a kettle, and keep hot drinks in a thermos flask
- It is a good idea to budget for winter fuel, plan ahead if you can
- Keep moving** - every now and then move around or do an activity/gentle exercise in the home to warm the body up naturally
- For financial and energy advice - contact the Advice shop**, Telephone: 01506 283000
Monday to Thursday: 8:30am to 5:00pm Friday: 8:30am to 4:00pm
Advice Shop - West Lothian Council

Home Safety

- Fire Safety** - for details about a Home Fire Safety Visit, click here: [Home fire safety visits | Scottish Fire and Rescue Service \(firescotland.gov.uk\)](#)
- Keep your valuables safe** - further information can be found here: [Your home - Police Scotland](#)
- Keep a bag of salt handy for your paths to help stop slips or pick up grit from the local pick-up points
[Grit Bins - West Lothian Council](#)
- Be neighbourly** - look out for anyone vulnerable needing assistance
- Prevent falls** - get deliveries to you if the weather is bad
- Home deliveries** - shopping / medication / heavy items of need
- Keep in touch** - use a telephone or maintain contact with others
- Keep Bogus Callers out** - Don't give unscheduled entry to your home
- For Domestic Abuse, information and support can be found here: [Domestic abuse - Police Scotland](#), or [West Lothian Domestic and Sexual Assault Team \(DASAT\) - Health and Well-being \(nhsinform.scot\)](#)
- We all like to have fun but we must remain neighbourly. To report excessive noise / Festive parties / ASB, contact the Safer Neighbourhood team on: [Email the Community Safety Unit](#)

Road Safety

- Make sure you know where your nearest grit bucket is for your road
- For winter road safety advice, click here: [Winter Road Safety - Police Scotland](#)

Nights Out

- Keep safe on a night out and make sure you can get home safely.** Let others know your route and expected time of arrival home. Further advice can be found here: [Safe nights out - Police Scotland](#)
- Make plans to get home safe and don't get into a vehicle if you know the driver has been drinking. Further information about drink driving can be found here: [D rink-driving penalties - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Keep your drinks safe and help prevent spiking.** Further information is here: [Spiking: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- When out and about, Women and Girls across West Lothian are letting others know if they feel unsafe by reporting issues (lighting/paths etc) to the council on the following form: www.westlothian.gov.uk/womenandgirls

Mental Health is like our physical health, we all have it and we all need to work to ensure we are happy with it. It is important to work together to find ways to self-manage our mental health and wellbeing and be able to support ourselves, our friends and family. Some people may require additional help and support to manage their mental health and wellbeing.

Winter Support

There are a range of payments and support available over winter.

If you are on a low income, or will struggle to meet your living costs you may be eligible for the following support:



Winter Fuel Payment

Due to changes made at Westminster, the Scottish Government has announced it is deferring the launch of its Pension Age Winter Heating Payment until 2025/26. This means those eligible in Scotland are affected by the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment.

The new rules mean that to qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment of either £200 or £300 a person must be born before 23rd September 1958 and also receive a means tested benefit such as Pension Credit or Universal Credit.

Warm Home Discount

Each winter, energy suppliers who take part launch their Warm Home Discount Scheme which is a one-off payment of £150 to help with fuel costs in the colder months.

In Scotland there are 2 eligible categories – the Core Group and the Broader Group

Those who are entitled to the Guarantee element of Pension Credit will have the payment made automatically and do not need to apply. Those who receive means tested benefits such as Universal Credit will need to contact their supplier and make an application.

All suppliers open their schemes at different times and may also have different eligibility if a person is not in the Core Group and automatically entitled to a payment.

Winter Heating Payment

This is a payment made to those in receipt of eligible benefits during the qualifying week 4th November to 10th November 2024.

It is a one off payment of £58.75 and will be automatically paid to anyone on Pension Credit from December 2024. It is also paid to those who receive income-related benefits and fall in specific categories.

None of these payments affect any other benefits or money you receive and Pension Credit can also act as a gateway benefit to help with other things such as dental and optician care.

Pension Credit

Based on the latest figures available there is currently £5.3million of unclaimed Pension Credit in West Lothian. Pension Credit is a top up benefit for low income pensioners. If you are over pension age and your weekly income is under £218.15 if you're single or if your joint weekly income is under £332.95 if you have a partner, you may be eligible for a top up. If your income is higher than the amounts specified

and you are in receipt of a benefit such as Attendance Allowance then you may still be entitled to Pension Credit as extra premiums may be payable due to you having a disability or health issue.

State Pension Project

Are you approaching State Pension age? Did you know you don't automatically receive your state pension, you have to claim it. The Advice Shop Pensioner Income Maximisation Team are encouraging anyone who is approaching retirement age to get a income maximisation check to ensure you don't miss out on benefits to top up your income. Depending on your circumstances you might qualify for Pension Credit or other income based benefits.

Carers Support Payment

Carers Support Payment is a new benefit paid by Social Security Scotland. This payment replaces Carers Allowance in Scotland. New claims can be made from early November 2024. If you already receive carers allowance your benefit will be transferred over to the new career support payment from Spring 2025.

It is now more important than ever to ensure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to and the Advice Shop is here to help. Advisors can complete a quick benefit check and provide support to fill in applications for additional income for those entitled.

To get in touch with the Advice Shop call 01506 283 000 (option 5) or use our online [referral form](#) We also have a number of advice sessions in the West Lothian area with more information on [our webpage](#)



The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has provided some Winter safety advice and tips:



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**
Working together for a safer Scotland

Cooking/Smoking/Drinking

- Cooking and smoking are the main causes of accidental fires in homes, the risk grows even higher when alcohol, smoking, or drugs are involved.
- Avoid cooking while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Don't smoke in bed and ensure cigarettes and smoking materials are properly extinguished.

Fuel Poverty/Home Heating

Many people may struggle to heat their homes in winter. We may also see greater numbers of people dealing with the additional expense of heating while working from home.

- Keep portable heaters away from furniture, bedding, or curtains. Don't sit too close and never use them for drying clothes.
- Unplug or switch off portable heaters when you go out or go to bed or leave the room.

- If your home has an open fire the type of fuel you burn will determine how often your chimney should be swept.

Home Fire Safety

- The festive period can create the perfect conditions for fire in the home.
- During the festive period, there is a heightened risk of fire and fire injury within the home due to decorations, unsafe use of candles or tea lights, faulty or poorly maintained heating appliances and/or solid fuel fires together with increased consumption of alcohol combined in particular with cooking or smoking.
- Be careful when heating up leftovers
- Becoming distracted while cooking can lead to fire – never leave your cooker unattended.

BONFIRE & FIREWORK SAFETY

If you are attending an organised bonfire or firework display, it is important to be aware of how to stay safe. Fire can cause devastating effects on people's lives, by reading this information it will help you stay safe and minimise any risk.

If you are aware of any illegal bonfires being organised in your local area, or have any concerns, please contact Police Scotland on 101 to make them aware of your concerns or alternatively call the anonymous Crimestoppers helpline on 0800 555 111.

BONFIRES

Advice from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is to only attend a safely organised bonfire and firework displays. Here are some top tips to stay safe:

- Never drink alcohol if you are attending a bonfire or setting off fireworks - remember it is an offence to consume alcohol in a public place.
- Never throw combustible materials on the bonfire. Untreated wood and paper based materials should be used.
- Never throw pressurised containers or sealed vessels on a bonfire - these will explode and could cause serious injury.
- Never throw fireworks on bonfires.
- Never use flammable liquids to ignite bonfires - only use proprietary fire lighters.
- Never endanger nearby property with sparks, flying embers or burning debris.
- Never leave a burning/smouldering bonfire unsupervised - make sure it is completely extinguished.

FIREWORKS

Watching fireworks can be great fun. However, figures show that over half of all firework injuries are sustained by children, including babies and toddlers. Firework injuries can be severe and can cause scars that will last

a lifetime. They may heal over time, but the trauma for them and their parents can last for years. It only takes one stray firework to have devastating effects on a young person's life, so Be safe and always follow the fireworks code!

The Fireworks Code in Scotland is designed to help people use fireworks safely and responsibly. Here are the key points:

- Plan your fireworks display in advance and make sure everyone involved knows what they're doing.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use them one at a time.
- Read the instructions carefully on each firework before using them, and follow the manufacturer's guidelines.
- Light fireworks at arm's length using a taper and stand well back.
- Never go back to a firework once it's been lit, even if it hasn't gone off. It could still explode.
- Never throw fireworks or put them in your pocket. This is dangerous and illegal.

Respect your neighbours – don't let off fireworks late at night or early in the morning, especially during weekdays.

- Keep pets indoors. Animals can be scared by the noise of fireworks.
- Consider others in your community who might be affected by fireworks, such as the elderly or those with health conditions.

- Be mindful of the law – it's illegal to set off fireworks between 11 pm and 7 am, except on certain nights like Bonfire Night, where the cut-off is midnight, and New Year's Eve, where it is 1 am.
- Dispose of fireworks safely by soaking them in water overnight before placing them in a bin.
- Only buy fireworks marked with a CE mark or UKCA mark, indicating they meet safety standards.

SPARKLER SAFELY

- Sparklers get five times hotter than cooking oil and should never be given to a child under the age of five.
- Always light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
- Never hold a baby or child if you have a sparkler in your hand.
- Plunge finished sparklers hot end down into a bucket of water as soon as they have burnt out. Remember, sparklers can stay hot for a long time.

Fire safety information



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 increased on the 1st of April 2024.

In the first week of 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 journal 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

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU



Macmillan's Improving the Cancer Journey Project is in its 3rd year of operation across Edinburgh and the Lothians, and aims to bring seamless, accessible and personal, non-clinical support for people affected by cancer. Referrals can be received from any partner agency, and self-referrals are also encouraged.

In the last 12 months, 336 people across West Lothian were referred to the service and offered holistic support with their concerns, which ranged from worry and anxiety, to social or family concerns, work or finances. Income was maximised for these customers and onward referrals were made to ensure support.

"I was referred by the Dermatology Clinical nurse specialist just before I had surgery. At the time I came to terms with both my diagnosis of cancer and a diagnosis of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). I was feeling depressed, overwhelmed and tired. I knew I had to have time off work with my surgery and was worried about that and my finances.

I hoped that the appointment would give me time to talk things through. My first appointment with the link worker was face-to-face, for me this made the appointment much easier, and I felt safe and more able to open up. The link worker was very kind and the appointment made me feel more optimistic – I had hope!

The Link worker signposted me to the BUPA counsellor – this gave me a place to share my worries and fears, as I felt unable to share them with my partner. Before being able to share these feelings, it was like having a weight inside – sharing these feelings made

me feel much better and helped my mood. During these sessions, the counsellor also suggested I try journaling – which I now use regularly as I find it helps me manage my emotions.

In the appointments the Link worker shared with me information about my rights at work, this helped me understand what I am entitled to and has made me more confident to ask. I am about to go back to work on a phased return. I do feel a bit apprehensive about returning to work, but I have had an opportunity to discuss this with the counsellor.

I was surprised that the appointment also gave me the opportunity to discuss my

recent diagnosis of PCOS and how this was impacting me. The Link worker did some research and found a group that I could link with for more support – I was pleasantly surprised that this came up in conversation and grateful that the link worker followed it up for me.

At my follow up appointment, the Link worker referred me for an XCITE gym membership – I hope that this will help me get the right advice on what exercises I can do post-surgery and get back into shape. I think the exercise will also make me feel mentally better.

The main thing from the appointments was I felt I wasn't alone and that there was help available."

If you would like more information, or to make a self-referral to the ICJ team, contact Macmillan Improving the Cancer Journey on:
loth.icj@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk or call 0131 537 1500

16 DAYS OF ACTION

25 NOVEMBER– 10 DECEMBER 2024

We are currently putting our local calendar of events together that will include awareness raising of gender based violence and we will have events available to residents, agencies and professionals across West Lothian.

We will be starting our local campaign with a planned march and rally in Livingston on 25th November.

Watch out for more information to come, and keep an eye on [West Lothian Councils Facebook Page!](#)

For more on all local activity taking place over the 16 Days, please visit [our website](#) >

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 your tank is in the loft, open the loft trap door on very cold days to let heat in.
- 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, should this happen, 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

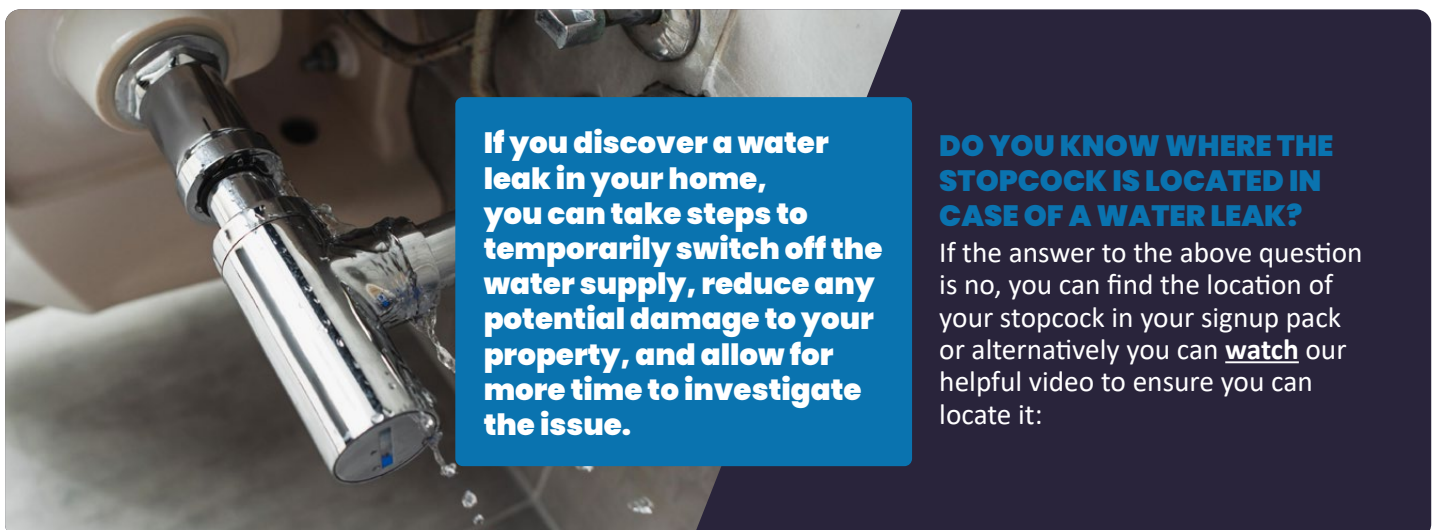
Don't try to knock large icicles off the gutters. Hitting icicles could cause more pressure on the guttering which in turn could cause them to collapse. Large icicles in particular are unpredictable when they fall and could cause injury or property damage.

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.

If you have a water storage container in your garden that collects rain water, ensure that these do not overflow with increased wet weather over the winter. You should carry out regular checks and if it is close to full you can empty some into a bucket to dispose of the water.

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 [visit our website](#).



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, you can find the location of your stopcock in your signup pack or alternatively you can [watch](#) our helpful video to ensure you can locate it:

[More information and advice on being 'Winter Ready'](#)

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 costs less than you think. Other tips on controlling ventilation can be found by clicking the link:

More information →

Modular Construction

Work has started on essential new housing facilities in the heart of Livingston where West Lothian Council are building Supported Housing for Young People alongside new Affordable Housing.

The construction work commenced in July 2024, with the project set to be completed in September 2025. The land was previously vacant and located next to the Tony Macaroni restaurant.

The houses will be built using “Offsite Modular Construction”, which is a method of building that involves manufacturing prefabricated modules in a controlled factory environment before transporting them to the site. West Lothian Council will be one of the few councils in the country to build housing of this scale of project utilising off-site construction methods.

There are many benefits to this modular construction method including; efficiencies in terms of programme, factory controlled processes which allow for more precise and consistent manufacturing, and better quality control than with traditional construction methods. Since much of the construction is completed off site and within a factory, inclement weather plays less of a role in the construction process.

The supported housing consists of 28 one-bedroom flats in total, with 16 flats designed to be flexible for future use as mainstream housing. Flexible office space will be provided for a maximum of ten staff members along with staff overnight accommodation to provide dedicated space and privacy, whilst still being on hand to assist and support the young people.

The affordable housing will provide an additional 20 units with a mix of two and three-bedroom houses, along with 2 three-bedroom flats.

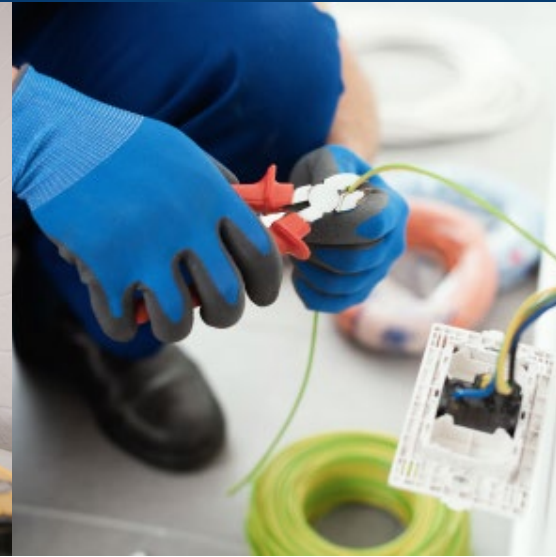
The demand for affordable housing for young people continues to grow. West Lothian has a high rate of youth homelessness in Scotland and has a history of significant numbers of homeless presentations by young people. In 2022/23 the percentage of homeless applications for those aged 16-25 is 25% compared to a national average of 22%, highlighting how important projects such as this are for local people.



New postcode look-up service launched for council tenants



West Lothian Council has launched a post-code look-up facility for council housing tenants where they can check when their home is scheduled for improvement and maintenance works.



This service enables council tenants to search for the proposed review year for Housing Capital Investment Programme work to be carried out in their homes.

Tenants can find out when a review is to be carried out for work to take place in their property by entering their postcode into the system before selecting their address from a drop-down menu. They'll then be presented with a table detailing when capital work reviews are due to take place for their property. Such works include:

- Kitchen and Bathroom renovations
- Windows and Doors replacements
- Central heating replacements
- Electrical periodic inspections
- Smoke and heat detector installations
- Cyclical Maintenance works
- Roof and Render upgrades

While the review itself will be conducted in the designated programme year, actual installation may occur in the subsequent year depending on lead-in times for specific elements.

It's important to note that the review date provided may at times be subject to change.

The system has been developed following engagement with council tenants with feedback indicating tenants sought more ways to find out when their home was due for capital work upgrades.

Further details on the Housing Capital Improvement Programme can be found [here](#).

[Access the new look-up system >](#)



Executive councillor for housing services
George Paul said:

“The council continues to prioritise the ongoing maintenance and improvement of its social housing stock to provide quality homes for council tenants. The council carries out regular engagement with our tenants, and their views are much valued in informing the work of the Housing service. Feedback from tenants indicated a desire for accessible information on capital programme works. We therefore hope the introduction of this new look-up system will help tenants feel better informed around capital programme works for their homes.”



Surveying our Homes

School Place, Broxburn

Housing, Customer and Building Services will be carrying out their Stock Condition Surveys on West Lothian Council homes this autumn/winter.

What is a stock condition survey?

A stock condition survey is a visual inspection of the inside and outside of your home, to help give us an accurate picture of the overall condition of our properties; it takes around one hour. The surveyor collects information on the condition of your home, looking specifically at two areas:

- **Stock Condition** – the surveyor will assess the age and condition of major elements in your home such as the kitchen, bathroom, windows, doors and roofs.
- **EPC Energy Survey** – the surveyor will carry out an energy survey, collecting information on features which allow us to calculate how energy efficient your home is.

The survey will involve a visual inspection of all of the key areas and building components in your property. As this is visual only, no items of furniture or any other items need to be moved and no special arrangements need to be made. As part of the survey the surveyor might need to ask you two or three questions.

This survey does not collect information on any outstanding repairs to your home.

If you need a repair, you can request this by telephoning the Customer Service Centre on **01506 280000** or online at **[Request a Repair](#)**.

Why are we carrying out this survey?

The data gathered from the surveys will be used to plan for repairs and future investment programmes. In the future, properties will be surveyed every 5 years.

You will be contacted by a member of the Housing Strategy Team to make an appointment for one of our in-house West Lothian Council surveyors to attend; the surveyor will have a West Lothian Council ID badge.

What happens after the survey?

Once we have completed all the surveys for the year, we will compile all the information together and create a report on the overall condition of the stock.

Please note that we only replace components when it is too expensive to repair them. Whilst we will have recommended re-inspection dates for elements of your home, based on recommended lifecycles, these dates are used to support financial planning only and are not a confirmed year of re-inspection or replacement dates.



Sparkly Icicles

Materials

- Tin Foil
- Blue Glitter
- Silver String
- Sellotape
- White Glue
- Thread

How To Make Sparkly Icicles

- 1 To make a sparkly icicle start by cutting or tearing a piece of tin foil a few centimetres longer than you want your icicle to be. Then tear off the lower corners to give a blunt triangle. This helps your icicle craft taper.
- 2 With the tin foil shiny side down fold over the top few centimetres of the flat edge.
- 3 Cut a section of silver String, tie it into a loop and glue it onto one end of the folded tin foil so it sticks out of the top. You can use glue or Sellotape.
- 4 To make the shape of your sparkly icicles loosely roll the tin foil up widthways, starting at the end with the hanging thread attached.
- 5 When you have a roll of tin foil gently squeeze along its length to make the shape of your icicle. You need to squeeze very gently at the top and very tightly at the bottom.
- 6 Once you are happy with the shape of your homemade icicles you can apply the white glue and start to apply some glitter!



Tenants Tasty Treats Snowball Bites

Ingredients

- 255g whole rolled oats
- 240g sweetened shredded coconut
- 110g unsalted butter
- 200g granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 32g cocoa powder
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Method

1. Place the oats and 80g of shredded coconut in a large bowl. Set aside. (Reserve the remaining coconut for step 3.)
2. Combine the butter, sugar, milk, cocoa, and salt together in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Whisk until the butter melts, then bring to a boil. Allow to boil for 1 minute without whisking. Remove from heat, stir in the vanilla extract, then pour over the oats/coconut. Stir until combined. Cover tightly with aluminium foil or plastic wrap and chill for at least 45 minutes.
3. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. And make sure there is enough room in your refrigerator for the baking sheets.
4. Using a tablespoon roll into balls. The mixture may get a little sticky as you work, but just form it into a ball as best you can. Roll balls in coconut and place on the baking sheets. Refrigerate for at least 30-60 minutes to “set”.

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