

East Lothian Council's Scheme of Assistance – *A Summary Guide*



East Lothian Council's Scheme of Assistance

INTRODUCTION

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 focuses on improving the condition of private sector housing in Scotland. Part 2 of the Act requires local authorities to have a Scheme of Assistance in place to assist homeowners, private landlords and private tenants to repair, maintain, improve and adapt their properties.

The Scheme of Assistance promotes increased responsibility among homeowners for the repair and maintenance of their homes.

This leaflet outlines the help and assistance East Lothian Council and key partners can provide to homeowners, private landlords and private tenants.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM

The Private Sector Housing Team is the first point of contact for any enquiries from homeowners, private landlords or private tenants relating to repairs, maintenance, improvements or adaptations.

Contact details for the Private Sector Housing Team are as follows:

Private Sector Housing Team
Community Housing and Property Management
Penston House

Macmerry Industrial Estate

Macmerry

EH33 1EX

**Telephone: 01620 827537 (Monday to Thursday 9am-5pm
and Friday 9am-4pm)**

Email: privatehousing@eastlothian.gov.uk

Website: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/privatehousing

It is recommended that an appointment is made before calling at the office to ensure the appropriate member of staff is available.

The Private Sector Housing Team works with a number of other Council departments and external organisations to ensure that a wide range of assistance is available. If you require specialist help, you may be referred to one of the following departments or organisations:

- Care and Repair East Lothian
- Changeworks
- Citizen's Advice Bureau (Haddington and Musselburgh branches)
- East Lothian Council Building Standards Team
- East Lothian Council Planning and Development Team
- East Lothian Council Environmental Protection Team
- East Lothian Council Occupational Therapy Service
- Energy Saving Scotland advice centre
- Ownership Options in Scotland

Information and advice

Information and advice is available to all homeowners, private landlords and private tenants and is provided by the Private Sector Housing Team. The team can be contacted by telephone, email, in writing or in person.

The Private Sector Housing Team provide a range of leaflets on a variety of issues relating to repairs, maintenance, and adaptations to private housing. These leaflets can be obtained directly from the Private Sector Housing Team or downloaded from the Council's website. They may also be found in Council offices, libraries, health centres, advice agencies and local estate agents and solicitors. The full list of leaflet topics includes:

- East Lothian Council's Scheme of Assistance - A Summary
- Checking your Building
- Organising Repairs to your Building
- Buying your Home? - Information for First Time Buyers and Right to Buy Purchasers
- Repairs and Maintenance in Private Rented Properties
- About Your Work Notice
- Home Adaptations for Older and Disabled People

A range of information sheets on how to deal with specific problems you may experience within your home are also available from the website or the Private Sector Housing Team. Topics include:

- Dampness and Condensation
- Home Safety
- Lead Pipes - identifying and replacing
- Plumbing Basics
- Door Entry Systems

Please visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/privatehousing or contact the Private Sector Housing Team for more information.

Practical assistance

Practical assistance is available to provide additional help in circumstances the Council considers a priority. This includes:

- Help for older and disabled residents
- Assistance to carry out common repairs
- Assistance to repair properties that fall below the tolerable standard or are in serious disrepair.

Practical assistance is available for older and disabled people to assist with repairs, maintenance and improvements. For homeowners and private tenants aged over 60, or aged over 50 and disabled, Care and Repair East Lothian provide this assistance. For disabled homeowners and private tenants under 50, assistance is provided by the Private Sector Housing Team. Practical assistance can include carrying out an inspection, providing an outline of repairs required and providing help with understanding quotes from contractors.



In situations where communal repair works are required, the Private Sector Housing Team can provide practical assistance to help identify defects to common parts of the building and give advice on how to progress work if all owners are not in agreement. This can include carrying out an inspection and providing an outline of repairs required.

The Private Sector Housing Team will also assist any owner whose property is below the tolerable standard or is in serious disrepair. Practical assistance could include carrying out an inspection and providing an outline of repairs required and providing help to understand quotes from contractors.

If the Council considers that the condition of a building is likely to affect the health or safety of the occupants or a member of the public, enforcement action may be taken to make sure that repairs are carried out. The Private Sector Housing Team will always encourage owners to carry out the work voluntarily before any enforcement action is taken.

For more information on the practical assistance available, please visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/privatehousing or contact the Private Sector Housing Team.

Financial assistance

As a homeowner you have a responsibility to repair and maintain your home, including budgeting for any work. However, the Private Sector Housing Team provide a small number of discretionary grants aimed at helping owners to pay for specific work. All grants are subject to available funding and are offered based on specific criteria. Grants may be available to help towards the cost of:

- Door entry and stair lighting improvements
- Replacing lead mains water pipes and electrical system upgrades
- Bringing empty properties into the private rented sector.

East Lothian Council also manages a small number of grants provided by Historic Scotland for the preservation of historic buildings and buildings in specific conservation areas.

Grants or loans may be available to carry out works to improve the energy efficiency of a property. These are provided by fuel companies, government programmes and private sector initiatives. The Energy Saving Scotland advice centre can provide information on availability and criteria for applying. Call **0800 512 012**, or text **WARMTH** to **81025** and someone will call you back.

For more information on the availability of financial assistance, please visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/privatehousing or contact the Private Sector Housing Team.





Meeting the needs of disabled people

East Lothian Council has a duty to assist disabled people to make sure their home is suitable for their needs. If you are a disabled homeowner or private tenant, we can help you to adapt your home. Before work can begin, an assessment of your needs must be carried out by an East Lothian Council Occupational Therapist. This ensures that the most suitable adaptation is carried out to address your current and future needs. The first point of contact for Occupational Therapy is through the Council's Access Service.

The Access Service can be contacted on **0845 603 1576 Monday to Thursday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am-4pm.**

Once it has been agreed that an adaptation is the best way to meet your needs, a referral will be made to Care and Repair East Lothian who can offer practical assistance. Assistance from Care and Repair is optional but can include organising architectural services and tendering for work, assistance to apply for a grant and/or charitable funding, help with paperwork and liaising with contractors. The level of support offered will vary depending on individual needs.

Funding adaptations

East Lothian Council is required to provide grant funding towards the cost of adaptations that have been recommended by an East Lothian Council Occupational Therapist. Grants of either 80% or 100% of the total cost of work are available.

A grant of 100% of the eligible costs will be available if you or a member of your household (spouse, civil partner or dependant), is in receipt of one of these qualifying benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Guaranteed Pension Credit
- Income Based Employment and Support Allowance

A grant of 80% of the eligible costs will be available in other circumstances.

The applicant will be required to pay the balance between the grant award and cost of the work.

The Private Sector Housing Team cannot give financial advice but can advise you of sources of specialist advice. In some cases, Care and Repair East Lothian may be able to help people access other sources of funding such as benevolent funds or charitable trusts.

Adapting privately rented properties

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 introduced the Right to Adapt for private tenants. If you are a private tenant, your landlord cannot unreasonably refuse permission for an adaptation that you need.

Before an adaptation can be carried out, you must first seek consent from your landlord to carry out the work. The landlord must make a decision within one month of receiving the application and cannot unreasonably withhold consent.

If you leave the property after an adaptation has been carried out, it is for the landlord to decide if it should remain. Most adaptations are very unobtrusive and can in fact improve the property by making it more attractive for future tenants. While landlords are encouraged to retain adaptations, the Council will provide assistance to reinstate the property if required.

For further information on adapting a privately rented property, contact the Private Sector Housing Team.

Complaints, comments and compliments

East Lothian Council operates a feedback policy, which can be used if:

- You can see a way for us to improve a service
- We have done something well
- You have received a poor service

An information leaflet on the feedback policy is available from any Council office or can be downloaded from the Council and Government section of the website www.eastlothian.gov.uk.

If an owner or private tenant is unhappy with the service they have received and would like to make a complaint, they should contact the Private Sector Housing Team in the first instance. They will try to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If the complaint remains unresolved then it can progress to step two of the feedback procedure (formal investigation), followed by step three (review by the Chief Executive).



Versions of this leaflet are available on request on audiotape, in Braille, large print or your own language.
☎ Phone 01620 827199

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www.eastlothian.gov.uk