



TENANTS' courier

Spring 2025

The newsletter for
**City of Edinburgh
Council tenants**



•EDINBURGH•
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL



Councillor Lezley Marion Cameron
Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Convener

Welcome to the latest edition of the Tenants' Courier.

My name is Councillor Lezley Marion Cameron and in December 2024 I became the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Convener.

My priority since has been and is to work with my fellow members of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee and Council Officers to support you, our tenants, and to do everything we can to address our city's housing crisis. Everyone in Edinburgh needs and deserves to live in a warm, safe, and comfortable home.

With so many people wanting to live and work in Edinburgh, this is becoming increasingly difficult – but we are making progress, both by building hundreds of new affordable homes and by bringing empty council houses back into use.

Just as important are our plans to upgrade and repair the homes we already own. We are investing tens of millions of pounds over the next ten years into improving council homes across the city, bringing them up to modern standards, making them safe, comfortable, and far more energy efficient.

This work will take time, but I am confident it will make a huge and welcome difference to living conditions, while helping to bring energy bills down.

I am also committed to improving our effectiveness of communications with you and to responding quickly to your requests and feedback. This has been highlighted to me many times in the meetings I've attended with tenants and tenants' groups so far, so I hope you will start to see meaningful improvement in this area.

Our new Tenant Participation Strategy also aims to encourage tenants to engage with us and help shape and improve our services to tenants.

Finally, I well understand that coping with the cost of living continues to be stressful for countless Edinburgh people and families. Please do not hesitate to contact your Housing Officer for advice on what support is available. They will help to point you in the right direction.

Thank you for reading and I hope you enjoy this edition of the Tenants' Courier.





Welcome to the Tenants' Courier, your tenant newsletter. Did you know that this newsletter can be translated into other languages? Please contact its@edinburgh.gov.uk and quote reference number 25-0366 to request a free translation.

Witamy w Tenants Courier, biuletynie najemców. Czy wiesz, że ten newsletter może być tłumaczony na język polski i inne języki? Prosimy o kontakt z adresem its@edinburgh.gov.uk i podaj numer referencyjny 25-0366, aby poprosić o bezpłatne tłumaczenie.

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Ласкаво просимо до кур'єра орендарів, вашого бюллетеня орендарів. Чи знаєте ви, що цей бюллетень можна перекласти українською та іншими мовами? Будь ласка, зв'яжіться з its@edinburgh.gov.uk та вкажіть номер довідки 25-0366, щоб замовити безкоштовний переклад.

Bine ați venit la Tenants Courier, buletinul informativ al chiriașilor. Știați că acest buletin informativ poate fi tradus în română și în alte limbi? Vă rugăm să contactați its@edinburgh.gov.uk și să cotați numărul de referință 25-0366 pentru a solicita o traducere gratuită.

Bienvenido a Tenants Courier, su boletín informativo para inquilinos. ¿Sabía que este boletín se puede traducir al español y a otros idiomas? Póngase en contacto con its@edinburgh.gov.uk y cite el número de referencia 25-0366 para solicitar una traducción gratuita.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

You can get this document on audio CD, in Braille or large print if you ask us. Please contact Interpretation and Translation Service (ITS) by email at its@edinburgh.gov.uk and quote reference number 25-0366. ITS can also give information on community language translations.



Pausing council house adverts

In April, we made the difficult decision to temporarily pause advertising council properties through Key to Choice.

Housing and Homelessness services are currently under exceptional pressure which means we're not able to meet our statutory duties to accommodate people assessed as homeless.

By pausing adverts for council homes, it will allow us to temporarily prioritise available properties for people who:

- require temporary accommodation
- are assessed as homeless and who are currently in unsuitable temporary accommodation
- have Gold Priority
- have Urgent Gold Priority and assessed as a delayed discharge from hospital.

The pause in adverts does not affect adverts for Housing Association and Housing Co-op homes.

We're regularly reviewing the decision to pause adverts and appreciate this is a difficult time for tenants who want to move. Housing Associations and Housing Co-Ops still advertise available homes on a weekly basis on key to choice. You can also find other housing options that are available to you on the Edindex page on our website www.edindexhousing.co.uk/housing-options

If you are a council or housing association tenant and you want to move you can register with House Exchange to swap your tenancy with another tenant who is also looking to move. Information on registering and available homes can be seen at: www.houseexchange.org.uk

The big switch-off

At the end of June some energy meters will be permanently switched off across the UK. The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) uses a radio signal to tell some older electricity meters when to switch between peak and off-peak rates so that tenants who have it can make use of cheaper off-peak prices to charge up their heating and/or hot water systems overnight.

RTS is an old system, which is now becoming out of date and the equipment that produces the radio signal can't be

adequately maintained anymore. People who use it need to switch to a modern smart meter system.

We've written to council tenants with RTS meters to explain what they need to do before it's turned off. If you think you have an RTS meter and you have not heard from us, please contact your housing officer as soon as possible to let us know. You can find out more about the RTS shutdown online at <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/Teleswitch>



New stair cleaning service

Keep an eye out for Perfect Clean, our new stair cleaning contractor. They're a specialist cleaning service who are responsible for cleaning communal areas in blocks of flats.

They'll be providing regular and specialist emergency stair cleaning services and making sure stairs are clean, safe and hygienic.

Emilia Ferenc, Managing Director at Perfect Clean, said: "This contract represents a significant achievement for our company and reinforces our position as a trusted service provider in Edinburgh. We're committed to delivering exceptional service quality and maintaining safe and hygienic environments for Edinburgh tenants and other residents."

You can find out more about their services at www.perfectcleanltd.co.uk



The quickest way to report a repair

Did you know you can report common household repairs online? Issues such as plumbing, electrical faults, damp and mould, joinery, door faults, windows, and stair lighting can all be logged through our online system, available 24/7.

When you report a repair online, you can also choose an appointment time that suits you. Report your repairs at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councilhouserepairs

If you are unable to use our online from you can still report your repair by calling 0131 200 2345





News from Edinburgh Tenants' Federation

Tenant Resident Associations (TRA) updates

This Spring, our Development Officers have successfully assisted local resident groups to secure funding and have been helping others get set up for their first meeting.

- Osgangs (North) Community Association has been successfully awarded £5,600 from the Council for local activities.
- Hawkhill and Nisbet Court residents recently held their first meeting, featuring a productive discussion around solutions to local issues the community is facing.
- Westfield Court Residents Group has been working with councillors and council officers to conduct walkabouts, highlighting local litter and fly-tipping issues.

Events

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) staff have been involved in several events this Spring, covering a variety of topics from scrutiny to digital skills.

- Tenants have been attending a digital skills workshop run by ACE IT, learning about online literacy to help combat digital exclusion in the city.
- Members came along to a meeting regarding the new Tenant Scrutiny Project. This was led by staff from ETF and the Tenant Information Service (TIS), where the attendees learned the basics of running an effective Tenant Scrutiny Group.
- ETF staff also travelled to Glasgow to attend Scotland's Housing Festival. Organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing, staff heard talks from policy leaders about issues facing the housing sector in Scotland and how these can be combatted.





Council meetings

In a continuation of ETF's partnership with the Council, we met with council staff to discuss several different ongoing projects. We:

- met with councillors and council staff to advise on the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS).
- attended the council-led Housing Repairs Scrutiny Group at the City Chambers to discuss the structure of the Council's repairs team.
- attended a round table meeting at the City Chambers, where tenants had the opportunity to raise issues that are important to them.

If you're interested in getting involved or learning more about the work of ETF, you can get in touch on 0131 475 2509 or at info@edinburghtenants.org.uk

You can also stay up to date through ETF's Facebook page at facebook.com/EdinburghTenant and Bluesky at bsky.app/profile/edinburghtenants.bsky.social.





Universal Credit and Rent Changes

We wrote to you earlier this year to let you know that your rent and service charges would change on 7 April 2025.

Your rent pays for services such as repairs and contributes to improvements to your home and other council homes across the city.

If you claim Universal Credit you must pay your monthly rent in full. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will contact you through your online account journal to confirm your housing costs. Please make sure you confirm your fortnightly rent and service charges to the DWP using the details in your rent letter. They will need the following details:

1. Your eligible fortnightly rent and service charges (core and stair cleaning). Also, any non-eligible service charges (heating or insurance) as you will have to pay these separately.
2. Tell them how many bedrooms you have in your home
3. Tell them there are 0 rent free weeks. The charge is spread across the whole year.

Contact your Housing Officer if you're having difficulties paying your rent. They can advise you of any other help that may be available.



Thanks and Congratulations!

A big thank you to everyone who completed our annual rent survey and congratulations to Karen, the winner of the £100 gift voucher prize draw which was open to everyone who completed the survey

We received over 750 responses and after the survey had closed, your views on rent and how you would like it to be spent were shared with Councillors.

On 20 February, Councillors agreed to a 7% increase in rents for 2025/26, in line with the five-year plan agreed last year.



Estate walkabouts

Are you interested in taking part in an estate walkabout?

Walking around your local area with your housing officer provides you and your neighbours with an opportunity to raise local issues. This could include checking common areas, identifying repairs and keeping an eye on the local environment. Estate walkabouts also provide time to discuss ideas for local improvement projects.

If you would like information on how to take part in a walkabout, please contact your locality office – see back page for contact details.

If you don't want to take part, but there's something about your area that you want us to check, or you have an idea for a neighbourhood improvement, let us know and we'll report back to you.





A day in the life of... Jamie Gillies, Housing Officer

Jamie Gillies has been a housing officer for more than ten years. Here he tells us more about his role.



Tell us a little about your role

I manage over 200 council homes for tenants in a specific neighbourhood area, known as a 'patch'. I'm responsible for rent management, dealing with property related issues, providing advice, allocating homes and generally improving and maintaining council estates and the surrounding area.

What does your job involve?

Working with other services is a huge part of the job. This includes working with family and household support to combat anti-social behaviour and improve tenancy sustainment and the health and wellbeing of tenants.

Housing Officers also work closely with the Advice Shop and other support agencies to make sure tenants are getting all the benefits and grants they're entitled to.

We work on projects aimed at improving the local environment and try to involve tenants wherever possible.

What's the biggest challenge you face in your role?

Today I'd say the 'cost of living crisis' poses our biggest challenge. Many tenants are now facing the stark choice between heating and eating.

Homelessness, a lack of affordable housing citywide and managing mixed tenure housing are also massive challenges.

What motivates you to do your job?

Providing the best service possible and making a real difference.

What was your journey like to get where you are?

Interesting! After 20 years as a market trader, I decided to return to education. After six years at university I graduated with a first-class honours degree in sociology and social policy and a postgraduate diploma in housing.

I spent time working at a housing association and West Lothian and Falkirk Councils before joining here and I've never looked back.

What are you most proud of in your career?

Winning The Chartered Institute of Housing's Malcolm Smith award in 2013. I wrote a paper on housing and its devolved Scottish stance.



Could you save money with our free energy advice service?

The Energy Advice Service provides free, confidential and impartial support to council tenants to help them save money on their bills.

Last year, they helped over 1,700 tenants save £305,458 on their heat and electricity costs.

If you're a council tenant and struggling with the cost of keeping your home warm, or are worried about your heating and electricity costs, then get in touch with one of their advisors for free expert advice, information and support.

You can also speak to them if you're a tenant that is switching away from 'Heat with Rent'. If you have storage heaters and have historically paid for your heat with your rent, these changes will affect you.

Visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/hwrchanges for more information and call the Energy Advice Service if you need support with this transition.



Be fire safe with your E-Bike or E-Scooter

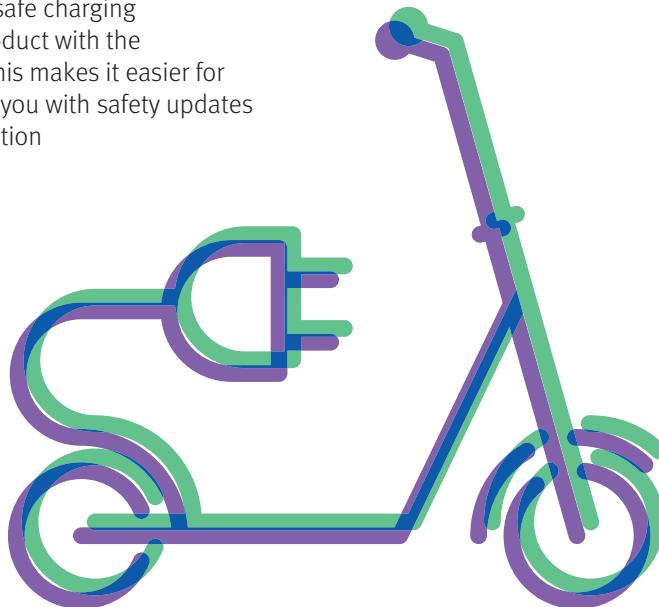
E-bikes and e-scooters are excellent ways to get around and can help reduce our carbon footprint. But we must be extra cautious with the lithium-ion batteries used to power them, as these batteries can overheat and ignite, posing a fire risk. Tragically, recent deaths in the UK have been linked to fires caused by e-bikes and e-scooters.

To stay safe:

- avoid storing or charging e-bikes and e-scooters in common areas or places where they could block escape routes
- store them safely in a cool, dark place, especially if they won't be used for an extended period. Extreme temperatures (hot or cold) can increase risk
- only purchase from reputable retailers, and ensure you receive proper instructions for safe charging
- register your product with the manufacturer. This makes it easier for them to contact you with safety updates or recall information

- always use the charger supplied by the manufacturer, and never leave your e-scooter or e-bike charging unattended
- regularly inspect your battery to ensure it isn't damaged. Do not use the battery if it shows any signs of damage
- if any part of your e-bike or e-scooter appears damaged (including the charger, cable, or socket), stop using it immediately.
- dispose of batteries properly; do not throw them out with household waste or regular recycling. Punctured or crushed batteries can cause fires

The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service provides useful guidance on their website at www.firescotland.gov.uk/at-home/e-bike-and-e-scooters/





Going green with nature estates

We're trying an innovative new way to help wildlife and plants thrive by changing the way we mow grass in some residential areas.

Mowing grass can often harm the wildlife that lives in and around it and has an impact on biodiversity. By reducing how often we mow grass it allows more native plants and flowers to grow which helps pollinators - like bees and other insects.

We began our trial in May 2024 in some urban areas with lots of buildings and fewer small green spaces. We also planted 50,000 bulbs, and sowed 8kg of Yellow Rattle to further boost biodiversity.

We've already started to see the benefits with:

- 14 additional species of flowering plants
- 6,364 more individual flowering plants
- A 4,167% increase in nectar availability for pollinators, with significant nectar resources in early spring
- Enhanced visual and structural diversity throughout the year

What's happening in 2025

- Continuing with weekly cuts in sports areas (e.g., football pitches)
- Mowing recreational spaces and areas directly next to homes every 2-3 weeks.
- Standard lower-flowering plant areas will be cut every 6 weeks.
- Plots with taller flowering species and diverse grasses will have a mowing frequency of 10-12 weeks.

Find out more at www.thrivinggreenspaces.scot



A plot containing lower flowering cuckoo flower and dandelion which will thrive under a 6 week cut.



A plot containing taller flowering ox-eye daisy and knapweed which will thrive under a 10-12 week cut.



A plot lacking in pollinator resources and habitat due to frequent mowing.



Your views on the Tenants' Courier

Thanks to everyone who took the time to send in their feedback on the Tenants Courier, and well done to Helen who won the prize draw.

Comments were overwhelmingly positive with most people (90%) of those who responded either very satisfied (41%) or satisfied (49%) with the newsletter overall.

Most of you (73%) preferred the newsletter to be delivered twice a year but a few wanted more frequent editions (mostly quarterly) (22%) and a minority wanted fewer (4%).

41% would like to see more digital copy and 12% would maybe like more. But 45% like the paper copy. A few tenants who responded are still not able to access the internet (4%).

Most people who responded were either very satisfied with the length of the newsletter (61%) or wanted more articles (35%).

The most popular topics identified were information and support, especially on things to do with people's tenancies, and local events and community stories.

Improvements suggested included, making the newsletter more informal and interesting, providing more information on Council performance, including when things are not going so well, including some jokes, using a larger font and having an adult quiz.

Oh, and most people who responded wanted to keep the Kid's Puzzle (84%) so here you go.





KID'S CORNER



Kid's Corner

For a chance to win a £20 shopping voucher, match up the questions and answers and email your answers to tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk by 30 June 2025. You must be under 16 and live

in a council tenancy. Please remember to provide your contact details (name, age, address). Well done to Lucy who won last edition's puzzle.

1 When will the RTS be switched off?	A Councillor Lezley Marion Cameron
2 Which is the quickest way to report a repair?	B edindexhousing.co.uk
3 Who is the new Housing Convenor	C 30 June 2025
4 What's the name of the new stair cleaning company?	D Visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councilhouserepairs
5 Where can you find out about your housing options?	E Perfect Clean
6 When did the council rent and service charges change?	F 7 April 2025



TENANTS' courier

Spring 2025

Useful contacts

Council House Repairs

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/

councilhouserepairs

repairsdirect@edinburgh.gov.uk

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South East Locality Office

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0131 529 5151

North East Locality Office

101 Niddrie Mains Road

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0131 529 3111

South West Locality Office

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0131 527 3800

North West Locality Office

8 West Pilton Gardens

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