

Empty Homes Grant Programme Criteria

Background

The City of Edinburgh Council (the Council) is committed to bringing as many empty homes as possible back into use. In order to do this, it has been agreed that empty home owners may apply to the Council for a grant to repair or upgrade a property. This is on the condition that the empty home owner must sign up to for a minimum period of three years for their property be used as temporary accommodation through the Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme.

The award of the Empty Homes Grant is entirely at the discretion of the Council and is subject to the availability of funding.

The Empty Home Owner

- Applicants will only be considered for the Grant if they own no more than two residential properties in Edinburgh (not including their principal residence).
- Applicants will be required to provide evidence of ownership acceptable to the Council.
- Empty home owners must sign a legally binding undertaking to the Council's Private Sector Leasing (PSL) scheme for a minimum period of three years before Grant funded works commence.
- If the property is withdrawn from the PSL scheme before the end of the agreed leasing period, the Grant will become repayable in full. The Council will secure the Grant by placing a standard security on the title of the property.
- Empty home owners must comply with all legal requirements necessary for landlord registration and must not have been removed from the Landlord Register at any time.
- If the empty home owner has a mortgage on the property, they will be required to obtain written consent from their lender to let the property and they must provide relevant proof to the Council.
- The empty home owner must be a UK tax resident.

The Property

The property must be empty for a minimum of 6 months in order for the Grant to be accessed. Eligible applications will be prioritised according to available funding and strategic priorities.

Factors may include:

- Length of time property has been empty,
- Number of bedrooms,
- Location,
- Local housing demand, and
- Deemed acceptable by PSL provider.

Works eligible for Grant funding

- The Grant may include approved repair works, decorative works and the provision of essential furniture where these are necessary to bring the property to a lettable standard suitable for the Council's PSL scheme.
- The owner must provide up to three quotes from contractors outlining the required works prior to a Grant offer being made.
- The quoted repair works must not exceed £20,000 or the owner must provide evidence satisfactory to the Council that they are able to fund any balance exceeding £20,000.
- Works must be completed by a suitably qualified and insured contractor who is registered with Trusted Traders.
- The Council reserves the right to inspect the property before, during and after the works.
- On completion of works the property must meet [Tolerable Standard](#) as defined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, comply with the [Repairing Standard](#) for private landlords as set out in the (Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, Chapter 4), satisfy any applicable statutory safety requirements, and meet the property standards specified by the Council for acceptance into the PSL scheme (Appendices 1 and 2).

Appendix 1: Condition of Private Sector Leasing Properties Procured

All properties procured for the PSL scheme shall meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards.¹

All properties shall be in good decorative order (inside and outside) with modern, high quality furnishings and fittings.

The Council shall expect properties procured by the Provider to be in the condition required by this Specification and for properties to be in designated locations as notified by the Council.

Minimum Habitable Standards

Any Property let to the Council must be "fit for human habitation". A Property is fit if:

- It is structurally stable and free from serious disrepair;
- It is free from dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupants (if any);
- It has adequate provision for lighting, heating, and ventilation and has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water;
- Accommodation meets any physical or sensory disability requirements of any members of the household;
- There are satisfactory facilities in the dwelling-house for the preparation and cooking of food, including a sink with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water;
- It has a suitably located WC for the exclusive use of occupants;
- It has, for the exclusive use of occupants, a suitably located fixed bath or shower and wash-hand basin each of which is provided with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water; and
- It has an effective system for draining foul, waste and surface water.
- For flats, there are requirements similar to the above for the "common" parts of the building outside the flat such as stairways, halls etc.

Amenities

- There should be a separate bath or shower-room and any WC should either be in this room or in another separate room. All should be accessible without leaving the building i.e. an outside toilet is not acceptable.
- The kitchen area should include a sink with draining board, adequate and hygienic work surfaces (normally at least 2M in length), adequate storage space including space for a refrigerator. If there is no built-in cooker, space for a free-standing cooker with appropriate power/gas connections should be supplied.

Services

- Gas and electric installations are described in more detail below.
- Replacement of pipework is required where lead levels are in excess of EU standards.

Insulation, Ventilation and Windows

- All main rooms must have windows providing opening spaces equivalent to one twentieth of the floor area of the room and the windows which are supposed to open must be fully operational.
- Windows that can be opened on first floor level and above with sill heights below 85cm (3') should be restricted to an opening of no less than 10cm (4") and should have child-proof locks and a safety rail.
- Bathrooms, toilets and kitchens without windows require adequate mechanical extraction (i.e. fans).

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-housing/improving-standards/>

Heating

- A fixed heating appliance or radiator is required in every room. Portable gas or electric heaters are not acceptable. If the heating appliance is an electric fire it can only be a wall-mounted convector heater and it must be connected to a fused spur, not plugged in.
- Properties should have gas-fired central heating. If not, there should normally be a combination of double-glazing and gas-fires or night-storage heating. The only exception would be a very small Property such as a studio flat.

Electric Installation

- The electrical system shall need to be safe and has to comply with the latest IEEE regulations. Before the Head Lease starts, you must provide an up-to-date Electrical Installation Condition Report from an NIC-registered electrician stating that no remedial works are needed. Amongst other things, there must be:
- No damage to electrical fittings (plugs, light switches etc)
- Proper sheathed cable to light pendants (not twisted-pair flexes)
- Adequate earth-bonding of pipe-work etc
- Enclosed light fittings in bathrooms (unless distant from baths/showers)
- A minimum of three double sockets or equivalent in the kitchen
- A minimum of one socket in each bedroom
- A minimum of two double sockets in the main living room
- Ring mains which are protected by RCD devices

Gas Installation

- The installation and any appliances must pass the GAS SAFE Gas Safety check.
- The Contractor must have a valid gas safety certificate on file and a procedure in place for carrying out further annual inspections
- It is also important that any system or appliances are working satisfactorily.

Smoke Detectors

- There should be at least one hard-wired smoke detector in each living area of the property and a heat detector in the kitchen. All detectors should be interlinked.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- All Properties must be equipped with an electric or sealed long-life span battery-operated carbon monoxide detection system.

Legionella Risk Assessment

- All properties must have a legionella risk assessment in place under the provision of Section 3(2) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA).

Fire blankets

- Fire blankets conforming to BS6575 1985 must be properly sited in the kitchen.

Polystyrene Ceiling Tiles

- These tiles are not acceptable because of the possible fire risk. They must to be removed from all rooms.

Hazardous Substances and Equipment

- All parts of the Properties including outbuildings must be cleared of any hazardous substances including paints, cleaning agents.
- In addition, equipment including DIY tools should be removed.

Floor Coverings

- These should be free from trip hazards, i.e. well secured and free from rips and tears. Kitchen and bathroom flooring must be non-slip, water resistant and washable i.e. vinyl, tiles, lino etc.

Safety Glazing

- Low level glazing should be safe and comply with BS6206. This states that glazing to doors and adjacent panels should be safety glass to a level not less than 1.5m above floor level. Other areas of glazing below 85cm to floor level, for example conservatories, should also be safety glazed.

These standards may be achieved by:

- replacing non-complying glass with safety glass;
- upgrading it by applying a safety film;
- removing the glass and replacing with 6mm ply/MDF, which must be secured and decorated.

Security

- Any lockable outside door must have a key, and the front door must be fitted with both a cylinder and mortice lock. BS3621 as a minimum standard. Certain types of door, such as UPVC, have special security locks.
- Accommodation and facilities to be accessible 24 hours a day, with access to mail and to personal possessions. There should be secure locks on individual household's doors, with an agreed notice period before a landlord can gain access to accommodation (such as 24 hours) written into the occupancy/tenancy agreement, with any exceptions also included.

External Boundaries

- Walls and fences to external areas of the Property must be continuous, secure and safe.

Yards and Gardens

- External areas within the Property boundary such as gardens and yards must be clear of rubbish or any other debris.
- Garden ponds must be emptied and filled in to make them safe.
- Greenhouses must be dismantled and removed.
- Paths and steps must not be uneven and must be free of slime.

Appendix 2: Specification for Private Sector Leasing Properties

Specification for Properties

Lounge

- A three-piece suite (or suitable equivalent)

Kitchen

- A cooker which includes an oven, grill and hob; all in working condition
- A fridge and freezer
- A washing machine
- Wall and base units
- A sink unit
- Kettle
- Crockery. Pots and pans. Cutlery.

Bedroom

- Suitable number of beds according to property size. For example:
- 1-bedroom property may have a single bed and a cot or a double bed
- 2-bedroom property may have a double bed and 1 or 2 single beds
- A Property to be used as a shared Property shall be set up as such
- Cot where applicable
- All beds must be compliant with appropriate legislation
- All mattresses and fabric bed bases must be clean and in a fit state for hygienic use.
- A wardrobe (suitable for the size of room)
- A set of drawers (suitable for the size of room)

Bathroom and toilet

- A bath or shower, wash-hand basin and toilet
- Bathroom storage area

General items

- Curtains or blinds for each window
- Floor covering in each room
- A vacuum cleaner
- Mop and bucket

If the Property has a Garden

- A lawnmower with a suitable extension lead and safety adapter
- Hedge trimmer
- A selection of garden tools

General Conditions

- All the items listed must be in good condition and working order to last the duration of the Head Lease.
- All the equipment and furniture must be in a suitable condition and well maintained and, where appropriate must comply with relevant safety regulations.
- All the furnishing must be clean, unstained and free from damage.