

A GUIDE TO HOUSING OPTIONS IN WEST LOTHIAN

Updated September 2011

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1 How to use the Housing Options Guide

The West Lothian Housing Options Guide is broken down into sections. Each section covers one of the main types of housing solution that is potentially available in West Lothian. If you already have a clear idea of the particular housing solution you want to find out more about then the Contents list will help you find the right section or sub-section. If you would like to discuss your housing options or need housing related advice please contact West Lothian Council on 01506 280000, or one of the Housing Information and Advice Providers listed in section 12.

2 PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING

2.1 The Size And Nature Of The Local Private Rented Housing Market

The local privately rented sector is buoyant, particularly in the larger settlements around West Lothian, but there are opportunities in most of the smaller towns and villages. Letting agencies are based throughout West Lothian and advertise extensively in the local press with properties across West Lothian.

2.2 Locations And Costs Of Private Rented Housing

Privately rented Housing is available in most parts of West Lothian, from the rural villages across West Lothian, to the larger urban centres in Livingston, Bathgate and Linlithgow. The costs of renting privately vary from area to area and depending on the size of property. For further information on the private rented sector see local press, search the West Lothian Home Choice online accommodation service <http://westlothianlocalpad.com/Accommodation-Search.asp>, or contact the Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre on 0131 624 8000. <http://www.espc.com/UniversalPages/RentalDetailedSearchCriteria1.html>

2.3 How To Find Out About Private Rented Accommodation

Try searching the West Lothian Home Choice online accommodation service <http://westlothianlocalpad.com/Accommodation-Search.asp>, or read the adverts in the local papers, West Lothian Courier and the Herald & Post or put an advert in yourself. You could also try contacting the local solicitors Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre accommodation agencies and estate agents, or use their web search <http://www.espc.com/UniversalPages/RentalDetailedSearchCriteria1.html>

- If you're looking at renting with a letting agent check to see if they are members of a regulatory body like ARLA (Association of Residential Letting Agents) or NALS (National Approved Letting Scheme). This means that they have trained staff, have a good knowledge of tenancy law and they have a complaints procedure. They should have a good local knowledge and will have a choice of property in the area you want.
- In West Lothian check for agents who are a member of Landlord Accreditation Scotland. Tenants of landlords who are accredited will benefit from:
 - guarantee that their landlord meets a code of standards
 - confidence that their landlord is professional and reputable
 - clear information on their own and their landlords rights and responsibilities.
- Look out for small adverts that appear, for example, on the supermarket notice boards or in the windows of some shops and post offices.
- You should check whether a property is registered before you consider any property. Visit www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk to search the register of landlords. If you can't find the landlord or the property you are looking for, just phone or email Landlord Registration for further advice.
- NOTE that it is an offence -
 - for accommodation or letting agencies to charge to put your name on a list; and
 - for landlords in Scotland to levy any form of premium on the rent

2.4 References

When you've seen a property that's right for you call the landlord or the letting agent to let them know that you want to rent the property. Follow this up with a letter expressing your interest.

It is likely you will be asked for the name and address of a former landlord or housing provider who would be able to tell your prospective landlord how your last tenancy was. Landlords also want to know about your ability to pay. They will usually run a credit check on you and may contact your employer or wish to see proof of your entitlements to benefits. Agents may want to charge fees to cover the cost of checking references. If you are unhappy with their proposed charges seek advice.

2.5 Energy Performance Certificates

You must be given a copy of an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for a property you are considering renting. The EPC tells you how energy efficient the property is and should be given to you when you view a property and certainly before you sign a tenancy agreement.

2.6 Housing Benefit Entitlement

People on low incomes with high rental costs are usually entitled to receive Housing Benefit to help them pay the rent.

It is important, however, to remember that there is no automatic entitlement - Housing Benefit will only be paid to someone who has gone through the application process properly and satisfies the statutory requirements for the payment of Benefit. Moreover, the level of Housing Benefit awarded may not pay the rent in full.

It is very important, therefore, that anyone who may be relying on Housing Benefit to make a private rented opportunity affordable should contact the Housing Benefit advisers at the Council, Citizens' Advice or other advice agency **before** they accept the tenancy. It is advisable to obtain a pre-tenancy determination (PTD) from the Housing Benefit office in advance of signing a tenancy agreement to ensure it is affordable. **(See Section 7 for further details on Housing Benefit).**

2.7 SmartMove & Flatmates

SmartMove has been set up to help those on a low income to access accommodation in the private rented sector by providing a written guarantee for landlords in lieu of a deposit. The guarantee provides the landlord with security and allows the tenant time to pay the deposit in manageable instalments.

What we do for tenants:

- Provide the opportunity to access private rented accommodation
- Negotiation with private landlords
- Support with setting up and sustaining a private tenancy

What we do for landlords:

- Support with finding the right tenant
- Support to set up and manage a private tenancy
- Liaise with tenants

People aged between 16 and 25 years and claiming housing benefit are only entitled to 'shared accommodation' rate of housing benefit and therefore SmartMove has a Flatmates project which supports people to find a suitable person to share with.

Access to SmartMove is by referral and if you are interested in the service please contact your local Council Information Service in person or telephone 01506 280000 to make an appointment to discuss your housing options. More information can be found at www.cyrenians.org.uk or by phoning the Cyrenians on tel: 01506 205412. Alternatively you can Email: SmartMoveWL@cyrenians.org.uk for more information.

2.8 Checklist

2.8.1 Viewing

- Let someone know where you are
- Let someone know when you will be back
- Take a mobile phone with you
- Consider carrying a personal alarm
- Check online to see if the property is registered

- Check for HMO license if appropriate

2.8.2 Will you have enough –

- Money to pay the rent
- Money to pay the utilities
- Money for a deposit
- Room for everyone
- Space for your furniture
- Cooking facilities
- Heating, lighting and ventilation
- Electric Sockets

2.8.3 Is the property safe? – Check for

- Gas Safety Certificate
- Smoke detectors
- Carbon monoxide detector
- Safe upholstery (check the labels)
- Working door entry system
- Well lit access/stair lighting

2.8.4 Watch out for

- Smell of damp
- Stains/soot on gas appliances
- Bare electrical wiring
- Draughts
- Pest droppings mould and damp patches

2.8.5 Does everything work?

- Windows
- Heating
- Hot water
- Toilet and shower
- Cooker
- Fridge
- Vacuum cleaner

2.8.6 Ask!

- Who is the landlord?
- Is the landlord registered?
- Does the property have an HMO licence?
- What type of lease will you have?
- How long is the lease for?
- How much is the rent?
- Are there any other charges?
- Do you need to pay a deposit?
- To see a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- About the school catchment areas

2.8.7 Find out who is responsible for

- Utility bills
- Council Tax
- Repairs
- Cleaning communal areas i.e. stair
- Looking after the garden the garden

3 SHARED EQUITY AND SHARED OWNERSHIP

3.1 Shared Equity Scheme - LIFT

Shared Equity is a way of buying a share in a property for people who want to be homeowners but whose incomes and resources are insufficient to meet their needs because of high local housing market prices. A key target group is first-time buyers. This includes new households but also people affected by marital breakdown and people currently renting either privately or from a housing association or council. The scheme is designed flexibly so that it can be used, for example, to assist disabled people and older people access more suitable housing.

There are two types of shared equity that are supported by the Government:

- Open Market Shared Equity
- New Supply Shared Equity

Since 2005 around 400 households in West Lothian have bought their homes through Open Market Shared Equity Purchase (OMSEP), and around 45 through New Supply Shared Equity.

3.1.1 Open Market Shared Equity

This scheme allows people to buy homes that are for sale on the open market. Currently, due to funding limitations, only existing applicants or those who asked for an application form can be considered for the scheme. However, more funding may be provided again in the future.

The scheme helps to support people who want to buy homes but require assistance. There are no fixed maximum income levels, and eligibility is based on the level of mortgage buyers can secure and afford.

The scheme is administered by Link Homes in the Lothians. Under this scheme, Link Housing Association will fund part of the price of the house, using a LIFT grant from the Scottish Government. Therefore, if Link housing association funds, say, 20% of the price, then it will hold a 20% 'equity stake' in the house, which allows the home-owner to put their resources into the remaining 80%. Link is aimed at households on low incomes, so your income will be assessed to see if you qualify.

A LIFT owner will pay for their share of the price of a house in the usual way, along with legal and survey fees. No rent or any other kind of occupancy payment is made to Link housing association. A LIFT owner will be responsible for all maintenance and repair cost and for insuring the property.

Normally a LIFT owner will have to own at least 70% of their property. The maximum amount that a LIFT owner can initially buy is 90%. It will not be possible for a LIFT owner to reduce their stake in the property. If a LIFT owner wishes to move, when the house is sold they will get their percentage stake; if they own 80% they will get 80% of the sale price, and the remaining 20% will go to Link Housing Association.

Link Housing Association will expect single buyers to borrow 3x their household income and couples to borrow 2.5x their joint income. All lenders who provide mortgages to the scheme require a deposit – usually 5%.

If you would like more information on LIFT, or an information pack, please ring Link Housing Association on 0845 155 0019, or email lift@linkhaltd.co.uk and they will send you further information.

3.1.2 New Supply Shared Equity

This is similar to Open Market Shared Equity (see 3.1.1), but it is new houses that have been built by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) in West Lothian that can be bought. In West Lothian these include Almond HA, Dunedin Canmore HA, and Places for People HA.

The scheme is aimed at low income households and buyers will be means tested by the RSL to see if they qualify. The buyer must be able to show that they could not buy a property without the help of the scheme.

The following people may qualify:

- First time buyers
- People in social housing
- People in the armed forces, veterans, widows, widowers and other partners of service personnel

- People with a change in their household circumstances
- People with a disability where their house no longer meets their needs

The conditions include:

- The property purchased must be the buyer's only home.
- The buyer can purchase a property with 2 bed spaces more than the number of people in the household.
- The amount contributed must be the maximum mortgage that can reasonably be obtained plus any personal contribution
- The RSL will give information on income multipliers (e.g. 2.5 or 3x salary) it uses when considering the level of mortgage finance to be raised
- The equity stake must be no less than 51%
- In the majority of cases buyers will have the option to increase their stake after 2 years up to 100%

The purchaser is responsible for:

- All maintenance and repair costs (including common repairs and maintenance)
- Insurance costs
- Mortgage repayments

All prospective purchasers of shared equity property are advised to seek independent financial and legal advice

3.2 Shared Ownership

'Shared Ownership' is a cross between renting and owning a house, where the occupier purchases a share (typically 25% or 50%) in the ownership of the property but pays a reduced rent on the remainder. The rent goes to the housing association or private developer and the mortgage contribution to the building society, bank or other lender.

Shared ownership housing is aimed mainly at people who cannot afford to buy a house outright on the housing market, but are still keen and financially able to make a start on the home ownership ladder and invest some of their money in their property. The occupier's housing costs can vary according to the type of mortgage and the size of the ownership share (e.g. 25%, 50% or more).

Shared ownership occupiers have the right to increase their percentage of ownership over time, up to and including 100%, which means that they then become the sole owners of the houses.

Even though shared equity and shared ownership can help with the up front cost of the property, you will still need to get a mortgage and have money for a deposit and solicitor fees. Consider finding out from your bank or mortgage lender early on what kind of loan you could get.

There is no one place where information about properties available for shared ownership or shared equity is available so you will need to do some research. Start by visiting the ESPC website <http://www.espc.com/UniversalPages/AffordableHomesHome.html> where a number of shared ownership and shared equity properties are advertised

At present, Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association operate shared ownership schemes in both Broxburn and Bathgate. Dunedin Canmore Housing Association also operate shared ownership schemes in selected communities in West Lothian. There are no new shared ownership developments currently planned for West Lothian.

3.2.1 How To Apply For Shared Ownership Housing And The Eligibility Criteria

- Anyone can apply for shared ownership property by completing and returning a shared ownership application form (this is a separate form from the one used to apply for the association's rented accommodation).
- Associations normally give priority to applicants who are living in public rented sector housing (i.e. associations or council tenants) because the effect of a successful allocation to one of these applicants is to free up an affordable rented unit for another household in housing need.
- Associations are also expected to give priority to applicants who have never owned or part-owned a home before and who are seeking to step onto the home ownership ladder for the first time. Consideration will, however, be given to applicants who have previously been owner-occupiers, where the personal circumstances warrant it (e.g. significant deterioration in the applicant's financial circumstances or a relationship breakdown).

- Applicants who can afford to buy a house outright on the open market are not eligible for shared ownership housing, nor are those who could not properly afford to purchase a 25% or 50% share of the equity. Applicants normally need an income of £15,000 a year or more to be eligible.
- The procedure associations use for considering shared ownership applications, therefore, includes a careful assessment of the applicant's financial circumstances, which requires verification from the applicant's bank or building society that he/she can truly afford and sustain all the costs involved.

For further details Contact:

- Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association, Telephone 0131 657 0600
- Dunedin Canmore Housing Association, Telephone 0131 478 8888

4 BUYING OR BUILDING A HOUSE WITHOUT ANY GRANT ASSISTANCE

4.1 Introduction

West Lothian has experienced a great deal of House Building in the recent past. West Lothian is a popular place to buy a home with most areas having easy access to a variety of amenities and equally good access to transport links.

4.2 Buying A House

4.2.1 Where To Get Information

There are a variety of places to get information on buying a house in West Lothian. The Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre has an extensive portfolio for West Lothian and can be contacted on 0131 624 8000 <http://www.espc.com/UniversalPages/DetailedSearchCriteria1.html>. In addition, there are numerous Estate Agents throughout West Lothian offering properties in a variety of locations.

4.3 Buying Sheltered Or Retirement Housing

Sheltered or retirement housing is a development of purpose-built homes with certain amenities. A development could be a block of flats, or could consist of individual or linked bungalows. Some developments contain both. Amenities could include communal facilities such as a lounge, laundry and guest bedroom (s). In most developments there will be an emergency alarm system and or the services of a warden who may or may not be resident. The warden may be given a different name, such as social or residents' secretary. The main duties of a warden are to act as good neighbours, to summon help in an emergency and to ensure that the common areas are looked after. Provision will be made for the cleaning, maintenance and insurance of the communal parts. All the services and amenities will be paid for by a service charge.

INNIS is a housing advice service provided by Age Concern and funded by the Scottish Executive. INNIS offers free independent advice and information to older people on all issues relating to private sheltered and retirement housing in Scotland.

You can contact INNIS on 0845 8330250 or by writing to Age Concern Scotland, INNIS, 113 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3DT.

4.4 Buying a more suitable house using benefit income

Disabled people without an income may be able to gain a mortgage if they need to move to a more suitable property and rely on state benefits for all, or the significant majority, of their income. In such cases much of the cost of buying can be met from the following qualifying benefits, in particular from:

Income Support

- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (IBJSA)
- Pension Credit - guarantee credit only

A disabled person, or someone whose household includes a disabled person, who is eligible for one of the means-tested benefits above and needs to buy a property more suited to a disabled person's needs may qualify for help with buying a house. This help comes in the form of additional benefits to cover the interest paid on a mortgage. The extra benefit is commonly known as 'housing costs' or 'Income Support Mortgage Interest' (ISMI) payments.

ISMI payments are normally a safety net for people who have an existing mortgage and who become unable to pay it when on means-tested benefits. When a need exists for a house more suited to a disabled person, however, a benefit claimant may be able to take out a new mortgage and receive assistance with the interest payable.

The source of this right to assistance is the Social Security (Income Support and Claims and Payments) Amendment Regulations 1995. Schedule 3 specifies the following:

S4 (7) ...housing costs shall be met in any case where a claimant satisfies any of the conditions specified in sub-paragraphs (8) to (11) below

S4 (9) ..The condition specified in this sub-paragraph is that the loan was taken out, or an existing loan increased, to acquire alternative accommodation more suited to the special needs of a disabled person than the accommodation which was occupied before the acquisition by the claimant.

It is important to note the following points:

S4 (7) states that housing costs 'shall' be met, rather than 'may' or 'can' be met. This means that a claimant who meets the terms of (9) has a legal right to such assistance.

The rule only applies where 'alternative accommodation' is being purchased. It cannot, therefore, be used by a disabled family member to buy their family home from another household member and continue to live in it.

A property does not have to be more physically accessible to be 'more suited' to the needs of a disabled person. It may be more suitable for reasons of proximity to friends, family or support, or because it offers an opportunity for independent living or an opportunity to access education or employment.

The new house must specifically be more suitable for the 'special needs of a disabled person'. Problems can occur with a benefit claim when the new house is more suited to the needs of the whole family, rather than just the disabled person, and this resulted in a more expensive house being purchased.

It is important to bear in mind that whilst a benefits-based mortgage based on the above rule can be a great option for many disabled people, the following issues should be noted:

The claimant will usually only receive assistance with the first £100,000 of any mortgage, unless adaptations have been made. If the house is deemed to be in excess of need, or unreasonably expensive, this may be limited further.

Where a large mortgage is taken out, a claimant may be unable to take paid employment at a later date if their employment income would not cover the mortgage costs previously covered by their benefits.

It is only the interest on a mortgage that is covered. It is therefore important that the claimant can either take out an interest-only mortgage or has the means to pay the capital repayment element of the mortgage.

The claimant may have to wait up to 39 weeks for the interest on their mortgage to be repaid if they were not previously in receipt of the qualifying benefits

For more information or advice contact :

Ownership Options
The John Cotton Centre,
10 Sunnyside,
Edinburgh
EH7 5RA
Telephone: 0131 661 3400

4.5 Building A House

4.5.1 Acquiring A Site

Local knowledge is a considerable asset in finding and purchasing suitable sites on which to build. These will be advertised in local newspapers, the Solicitors' Property Centre, estate agents, solicitors and possibly in the Council itself. Some will have outline planning consent for housing, some will be serviced with water, electricity and gas, some will have neither planning consent nor services. **Do not purchase until, at the very least, outline planning consent for housing has been obtained.**

4.5.2 Taking The Next Steps And Getting Good Professional Advice

Anyone wanting to build a house has to overcome a number of official hurdles before they are allowed to proceed to the bricks and mortar building stage. Even before a potential house site has been identified, but if not as soon as possible afterwards, professional advice should be sought about the following essentials:

4.5.3 Planning Regulations And Procedures

Planning officials are more than happy to help anyone who is thinking of building a house with specific advice on the requirements of the planning system and more general advice on other aspects of the building process. They have

much useful experience and would far rather share it as early as possible to help the potential house-builder to avoid some of the pitfalls and delays that can arise from ignorance of what is needed to get planning consent.

Locally the planning officials are situated at County Buildings, HighStreet, Linlithgow, telephone 01506 282456.

The planning officials will explain the Council's policies on the siting and design and location of any new house to be built in its area. They will advise on the requirements for drainage from the house site, road access and water supplies and they will provide assistance with, as well as advice on, preparing applications for outline and/or full planning permission and for a building warrant. <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/1210/161/>

4.5.4 Legal Advice

Good legal advice from a qualified solicitor should also be sought at an early stage, particularly by those who have not yet acquired legal title to the house site.

4.5.5 Designing And Building The House

Both the planning office and local solicitors can provide names and addresses of architects and building contractors. The "Yellow Pages" Directory also gives names of the manufacturers and suppliers of 'kit houses'. Some building contractors and all kit suppliers also provide a choice of house designs which, if suitable, may avoid or reduce the requirement to employ an architect. On the other hand an experienced architect will also greatly reduce the amount of time and effort that would otherwise be spent by the client on overcoming some or all of the hurdles involved in building a new house.

5 MORTGAGE TO RENT/SHARED EQUITY SCHEMES

5.1 Buy Back Of A Former Council House

In situations of financial hardship or particular medical circumstances the Council can offer to repurchase ex Council houses from owners who were the original purchasers. The owner would then become a secure tenant of the Council again. The purpose of this policy is to provide a safety net where families got into serious difficulties.

In deciding if an applicant is eligible for the scheme, the Council would carry out an assessment of the applicant's circumstances and a technical survey of the property. The Council would also undertake a formal valuation. The offer price would then be the lesser of the original selling price or 80% of the current market value. In addition, where the three year discount liability period applies (i.e. three years or less from the date of the original sale), given that the owner needs to sell back the property to the council, the council would not seek to implement this requirement. Any previous discount which an owner has obtained, however, would still be taken account of in any future right-to-buy purchase in terms of the legislation.

If you are interested in the Council buying back your ex Council house, contact your local Council Information Service in person or telephone 01506 280000 to make an appointment to discuss your housing options.

5.2 National Mortgage To Rent Scheme

The Scottish Government's National Mortgage to Rent Scheme may be able to help you if you are an owner occupier in mortgage difficulties and you are in danger of having your home repossessed.

They can arrange for a social landlord such as a housing association or local authority to buy your home and for you to continue to live there as a tenant.

Before applying you must obtain advice about your financial situation. Details of sources of advice and more information about the scheme are available in a leaflet from: www.scotland.gov.uk or by e-mailing mortgagetorent@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can call on 0845 279 9999 or write to: Mortgage to Rent, The Scottish Government, Highlander House, 58 Waterloo Street, Glasgow, G2 7DA

5.3 Mortgage To Shared Equity Scheme

This is a national scheme. It is sometimes called Home Owner's Support Fund.

5.3.1 Eligibility

The main criteria to be met by any application to the Mortgage to Shared Equity scheme are:

- Home owners will need to have taken appropriate money advice and show that they have explored all options available to them, including discussing their situation with their secured lender(s), before applying to the scheme.
- Home owners will normally be at least three months in arrears on their mortgage and be unable to agree an alternative repayment schedule with their secured lender, but their secured lender must be willing to maintain a smaller level of credit should the application to the Mortgage to Shared Equity scheme be successful.
- Home owners should have at least 25% equity in their property.
- There will be a maximum value of properties that will be considered eligible for the scheme;
- Properties must be above the tolerable standard.
- Home owners will only be available for assistance through the Mortgage to Shared Equity scheme once – they cannot repeatedly apply to the scheme.
- Home owners will be able to buy back the Scottish Ministers' equity stake (in part or in whole) at some point in the future.
- When the property is sold, the Scottish Government will receive its share of the sale price.
- The home owner must live in the property as their main residence, and it must be adequately insured and maintained.

5.3.2 Application Process

A home owner in arrears contacts an advice agency (such as their local Citizens Advice Bureau) and their lender to discuss their financial situation. If they cannot manage their monthly finances, and their lender is unwilling to consider a payment holiday or alternative payment schedule, then – subject to meeting the eligibility criteria - an application can be submitted to the Scottish Government along with relevant supporting documentation.

The Scottish Government verifies Step 1 above, commissions a property valuation and establishes the level of secured debt. If the home owner has at least 25% equity in their property they may be eligible for consideration under the Mortgage to Shared Equity scheme and their application will be passed to a financial adviser acting on behalf of the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government-appointed financial adviser calculates the level of equity that Scottish Ministers should offer to take in the property to reduce the home owner's secured debt to a 'manageable' level. (this will vary from case to case, but will take into account applicant's income and expenditure to assess what is affordable to the home owner).

The Scottish Government makes an offer to the home owner who has to decide if it is sufficient to manage their debt, through discussion with their independent money and legal advisers and secured lender(s). If either the lender or home owner feels the offer is insufficient, the home owner would be eligible to follow the Mortgage to Rent route or seek to sell their house on open market.

If the home owner accepts the Scottish Government's offer, lawyers will draw up the necessary legal documentation to allow the Scottish Ministers to take an equity stake in the property. (The home owner and lender must deal with remortgaging documentation separately.)

6 REPAIRING AND IMPROVING OCCUPIED PRIVATE HOUSING

6.1 Council Scheme of Assistance

The Council operates a Scheme of Assistance to help people living in owner-occupied or privately rented housing to meet the costs of having their homes repaired, improved or adapted. Other schemes, operated by *Warm Deal* offers home insulation and draught proofing grants and *Horizon Housing Association* runs the local care and repair project primarily aimed at disabled and older owner occupiers on low incomes.

Homeowners have the main responsibility for maintaining and improving their homes. The Council will provide advice and assistance to owners to help them with this responsibility. This statement sets out the ways in which the Council will provide assistance to home owners to help them maintain, repair and improve their own homes and help older people and people with disabilities to continue to live independently.

6.1.1 Grants for Adaptations

Grants will generally only be available for the provision of internal adaptations and works to meet the needs of people with disabilities. These works may also include standard amenities i.e. toilet and washing facilities and to provide access to and from a property. Adaptations will be carried out where reasonably practical. To assess eligibility an initial assessment will be carried out by the Council's Occupational Therapy Service.

6.1.2 Information and Advice

The Council will provide information and advice to enable owners to organise the work themselves. The Council provides a variety of leaflets to assist owners. Information on sources of advice and practical assistance to help owners with repair and maintenance of property are available as downloadable documents from <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/1028/> . Leaflets include:-

- Checking your building,
- Paying for Building Repairs and Maintenance,
- Organising Common Repairs,
- Building Maintenance, its your responsibility,
- Identifying and Preventing Dampness and Condensation,
- How to read your Title Deeds,
- The role and remit of property managers,
- Home Security for Pensioners

If an owner feels their home may require an adaptation or the installation of equipment, they should contact Social Work (01506 280000) http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/social_health/ . An assessment of their needs will be carried out.

The leaflets are available in CIS offices, libraries, Partnership Centres, housing offices and Social Work Centres, and from the website <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/1028/> .

The Council provides general housing advice, advice on benefits and energy efficiency at the Advice Shop (01506 283000). Environmental Health can provide information on common repairs and addressing housing disrepair. The Council cannot give financial or legal advice but can signpost people to where this advice is available (01506 280000).

6.1.3 Disabled Equipment and Adaptations

West Lothian Council is committed to helping people remain in their own homes and in their own communities for as long as possible. For people with disabilities the Council can offer the following assistance;

6.1.3.1 Small Adaptations

Some small adaptations can be provided free without an assessment e.g. handrails and banisters. This is provided through the Occupational Therapy (OT) self selection service for small adaptations. <http://www.westlothianchcp.org.uk/what/adults/ot/>

6.1.3.2 Assessment Process for Larger Adaptations

A detailed assessment will be carried out by a member of the Occupational Therapy staff. Options and alternatives will be considered to meet the clients' needs. This will be governed by the West Lothian Council's Occupational Therapy criteria and practice guidelines. The Client will receive a copy of this assessment. If the adaptation requires grant

funding the OT will seek authorisation for this request and make a recommendation to the Grants section. The client will be given a copy of this letter of recommendation.

6.1.4 Grant Process

The Grant section will process the application. They will require documentation to prove ownership of the property together with an Occupational Therapist's letter of recommendation. If the Occupational Therapist recommends an adaptation, the Council will fund 80% of the costs of the adaptation or provision of a standard amenity. Income or savings will not be taken into consideration. If you are in receipt of any of the income replacement benefits, noted below and where this is the only income, then the Council will fund 100% of the costs of the adaptation.

Relevant Income;

- Income Support
- Income based jobseeker's allowance
- Pension credit (Guarantee element)
- Employment support allowance (income related)

The grant assistance will therefore be either 80% or 100% of the cost of the recommended adaptation depending on an individual's circumstances.

Further advice may be available from Citizens Advice Bureau or the Council's Advice Shop (01506 283000). If the client is over 60 years old Care & Repair West Lothian can manage the grant application on their behalf. (see Section 6.1.8). The Grants section can also provide advice and assistance.

On completion of the agreed work the Grants department will advise the Occupational Therapist who will check that the work meets the client's assessed need and may provide additional equipment to use with the adaptation.

6.1.5 Private Tenants

People living in private rented property that require an adaptation to the property should contact Occupational Therapy (01506 280000) in the first instance for advice and an assessment as necessary. Thereafter the tenant should contact their landlord to seek formal permission for the adaptation. The Landlord cannot unreasonably withhold permission for the adaptation. Information and advice will be provided to private tenants or their landlords to assist in the reinstatement of any property that has previously been adapted. Tenants of Housing Associations should contact their landlord if they require adaptation to their home.

6.1.6 Additional Living Accommodation

There is generally no grant available to provide additional living accommodation e.g. to provide an additional downstairs bedroom. If it is agreed that the best way to meet assessed needs of the disabled person is to provide additional living accommodation, the Council will provide information, advice and practical assistance to help the applicant carry out the work themselves or to try and find suitable alternative accommodation. The Head of Social Policy may in exceptional cases where it can be clearly established that the cost of providing additional living space is clearly more economic than all other options agree to offer limited assistance with funding.

6.1.7 Alternative Accommodation

Families may feel that it is preferable to move to accommodation which is more suitable for their needs. For home owners, Ownership Options can provide advice and information on the choices available to people and help with the practical arrangements.

For more information or advice contact :

Ownership Options
The John Cotton Centre,
10 Sunnyside,
Edinburgh
EH7 5RA
Telephone: 0131 247 1400

6.1.8 Care and Repair West Lothian/Small Repairs Service

Care and Repair West Lothian is based at Horizon Housing Association. It offers independent advice and assistance to help people repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety at home in their own community. Care and repair assist people over 60 and disabled people. This is how they can help:-

- Obtaining prices from approved contractors
- Applying for grants or loans which may be available for the works
- Organising the works through to completion
- Approaching other agencies who may be able to help
- Providing details of reputable contractors
- Provide a handyman service for small repairs

This service is free but there may be a charge for materials.

Care & Repair West Lothian is located at:

Leving House,
Fairbairn Place,
Livingston,
EH54 6TN,
telephone 01506 424148.

For details about Care and Repair projects, including target householders, range of work undertaken, size of grants offered, other assistance provided to householders check with Care and Repair Forum, 236 Clyde Street, Glasgow, G1 4JH, telephone 0141 221 9879 <http://www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk/>

6.1.9 Energy and Heating Advice

The Energy Saving Scotland advice centre can make it easier for you to use less energy. Funded by the Scottish Government, they can offer free impartial energy saving advice, including advice on:

- Energy advice on how to make homes as energy efficient as possible
- Grants and offers that are available to make it easier to install energy saving measures (such as cavity wall insulation and loft insulation)
- Sustainable transport and eco-driving
- Small scale renewables and the Energy Saving Scotland Home Renewables grants
- The new Energy Assistance Package

The new Energy Assistance Package offers a range of measures and advice to eligible people, including:

- Benefit and tax credit checks, to help applicants find out if they are entitled to more money through benefits or tax credits
- Access to the lowest-cost energy tariffs for those eligible
- Loft or cavity wall insulation from an energy supplier
- Enhanced energy efficiency measures – which may include central heating, renewable heating systems and insulation.

For more information call 0800 512 012 or visit: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Energy advice and information on energy conservation can also be obtained from the Council's Housing Advice Shop (01506 283000). Free advice can also be obtained from Changeworks and from Environmental Health.

6.1.10 Financial Assistance and Loans

Currently there are no special or subsidised loans available through West Lothian Council. People should contact their lenders, other financial institutions or a financial adviser for help and advice. A scheme to offer limited assistance to owners to in carrying out essential maintenance or improvement or repair work is being prepared by the Council and further details will be available in due course.

6.1.11 Assistance for Common Repairs

In a situation where a group of owners has to carry out repairs the Council can help with advice. If a repair is a joint responsibility then it is simplest if the responsible owners can agree between themselves how to proceed. In certain circumstances the Council can offer to provide further practical help. This would be in relation to:

- Common works relating to the Council's own Investment Programme in relation to council houses and where an owners property would logically be part of a council proposed project.
- Common works where the property is in severe disrepair or presents a danger to the public or other immediate properties and where a Statutory Notice has been served.

Depending on the availability of funding, the Council may agree to contribute to an owner's share of the costs of communal repair work or pay a share of a "missing" owner. The Council will only contribute to the cost of the works where all other sources of funding have been explored and the owner does not have the means to meet their responsibilities. A financial assessment will be carried out to determine the owner's ability to pay. The Council may then meet the costs for the necessary works to be done, subject to the repairs being done to a standard acceptable to the Council. The Council will then recover all expenses incurred in carrying out this work from the owner. This may include the use of a repayment charge secured against the Title Deeds of the property. Charges will include an administration fee and will be at the council's standard rate of interest.

6.1.12 Enforcement Powers

The Council will only use enforcement powers when it is necessary and informal and voluntary approaches have failed to ensure the required improvements are made. Where a house is substandard, the Council will contact the owners to make them aware of the condition of the house and remind them of their responsibilities in relation to repair and maintenance and try to reach agreement to have the work undertaken. If the owner does not take action to rectify and carry out the necessary repairs then enforcement action may be used and a Statutory Notice may be served. Owners can appeal against the serving of a Statutory Notice.

6.1.13 Monitoring Arrangements

Monitoring of the Scheme of Assistance will be carried out on a regular basis. All service requests and applications for assistance will be recorded and reports developed.

The key areas for monitoring will include

- Amount and Type of assistance required
- Private housing stock condition information
- Barriers to carrying out repair

6.2 RIGHT TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS OF RENTED HOME

6.2.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) introduced a reasonable adjustment duty for premises and this came into force on 4 December 2006. This duty applies to those who let or manage premises and the duty is owed to a disabled tenant, prospective tenant or lawful occupier.

The duty on those who let or manage premises to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the letting of premises comprises a series of duties falling into three areas:

- providing auxiliary aids or services
- changing practices, policies or procedures
- changing a term of an existing tenancy.

Examples of these three areas are as follows:

6.2.2 Providing auxiliary aids or services

An auxiliary aid or service could include the following:

- information in large print or on tape
- provision of a sign language interpreter
- provision of a portable ramp
- replacement or provision of any signs or notices
- replacement of any taps or door handles.

6.2.3 Changing practices, policies or procedures

For example: a landlord is considering the introduction of a new parking policy for residents, which will limit the ability of tenants to park on the premises. A disabled resident with a mobility impairment, who is dependent on her car for her mobility, contacts the landlord and explains the problems that she will experience under the new policy. The landlord agrees to reconsider the parking policy or, if it is introduced, to waive any term that would prevent her from parking on the premises.

6.2.4 Changing a term of an existing tenancy

For example: a tenant develops a hearing impairment and wishes to have an assistance dog. A term of her tenancy agreement states that tenants cannot keep animals on the premises. The tenant raises this term with her landlord who agrees to change it so that she can keep an assistance dog on the premises. This is likely to be a reasonable step for the landlord to have to take.

6.2.5 Physical features

There is **no duty** on the landlord to take any steps which would involve the removal or alteration of a physical feature (alteration means making a permanent change to a physical feature, e.g. installing a concrete ramp, as opposed to attaching something to the wall with a screw).

Physical features are defined in the regulations as:

- any feature arising from the design or construction of the premises
- any feature of any approach to, exit from or access to the premises
- any fixtures in or on the premises
- any other physical element or quality of any land comprised in the premises.

The following are not classed as physical features:

- any furniture, furnishings, material, equipment or other chattels in or on the premises
- the replacement or provision of any signs or notices
- the replacement of any taps or door handles
- the replacement, provision or adaptation of any door bell, or door entry system (for example, so that a deaf person knows that someone is at the door)
- changes to the colour of any surface (such as a wall or a door, for example).

Although there is no duty under the DDA for a landlord to make any adjustments to physical features, the obligation under the reasonable adjustments provisions to change a term of a letting in certain circumstances may also operate to permit the making of a disability-related improvement.

For example, a person with increasing mobility problems is unable to get to the upper floor of her rented house. She asks her landlord for permission to install a stairlift, at her own expense. Although there is a term in her lease prohibiting alterations from being made, the landlord changes the term to allow her to install the stairlift. This is likely to be a reasonable step for the landlord to have to take.

Funding may be available - see Section 6.1 for information about the Council's Scheme of Assistance.

7 HOUSING BENEFIT

7.1 Housing Benefit Scheme

Most people who rent their homes, and are on incomes which are significantly below average, are entitled to receive the largely Government funded Housing Benefit.

The Housing Benefit scheme is administered by experienced staff of the Council's Revenues Unit, St David's House, South Bridge Street, Bathgate, telephone 01506 776800.

It is particularly important that anyone interested in claiming Housing Benefit entitlement should contact the relevant Housing Benefit staff **as soon as possible**, because there is a risk that the claimant may not be entitled to receive Housing Benefit for any rent paid before the Council was informed of the claim.

7.2 Housing Benefit Claim Procedure

Every Housing Benefit claimant must submit and sign a detailed application form, which Council staff are happy to help applicants understand and complete.

Verification of the applicant's financial resources is essential, so evidence of both income and capital will be required to support the answers given in the application form. This means that payslips, bank statements, benefit books and so on must be made available for inspection by Council staff. But as long as the application form is submitted the claim can be made payable in full from the submission date, even though the evidence on the applicant's resources may take some time to produce and be verified. It is also worth noting that a single application form is used to claim Council Tax Benefit as well as Housing Benefit, which means that the end result of the application process could result in the applicant receiving **both** benefits.

The Council staff then work out how much Housing Benefit is due according to the answers to the following four questions:

- how much money the applicant has coming in from his or her earnings and any other income **and** from his or her partner's earnings and income;
- how much money the applicant and, where applicable, partner have saved or invested (no Housing Benefit will be paid where savings amount to £16,000 or more and it will usually be reduced on a sliding scale if savings are over £3,000);
- the applicant's personal circumstances (e.g. the numbers of dependants living in the same household, whether the applicant is disabled etc); and
- the **maximum rent level** which the Housing Benefit system will support (see below for explanation).

7.3 Maximum Rent Level

If the applicant is a Council or housing association tenant then the rent can be met in full by Housing Benefit. If, however, the applicant is a private tenant and the rent charged is considered by the Council to be too high then the Housing Benefit paid out will be **less** than the rent charged.

7.4 Renting Privately

It is particularly important, therefore, that those who are thinking of renting a private property should contact the Council's housing benefit staff to find out what level of rent is likely to be met by Housing Benefit. Staff can either make an informal calculation on the basis of their indicative rent levels for similar properties or they can give a precise 'pre-tenancy determination' (PTD). However, the determination, which usually takes three days to reach, can only be given where the landlord has given written consent. Both the informal and formal advice given by Council staff will give the applicant a clear idea of whether he or she will be able to afford the rent asked, after any contribution from Housing Benefit has been allowed for.

7.5 Restrictions On Housing Benefit For Single People Under 25

It is important to note the restrictions that have been imposed by Government on the amount of housing benefit which can be given to single people under 25 years old renting privately. At the moment, the rate used to calculate the housing benefit for most people under 25 who live alone is the 'single room with shared facilities' Local Housing Allowance rate, although the government has announced that the age limit will rise to under-35s in the coming years. The Local Housing Allowance rates are adjusted each month – check <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/592/?srid=1908307> for the current rates. At July 2011 the rates were £57.69/week for EH postcodes, £69.23/week for ML7 postcodes, and £58.85/week for FK1 postcodes, irrespective of the actual rent charged.

Young single people on low incomes are therefore advised to speak to advice agency or Housing Benefit staff before accepting any offer of rented accommodation.

7.6 Further Information

Detailed information and advice on all the assessment procedures for Housing Benefit will be willingly given by local advice agencies and the Council's trained staff at The Advice Shop, Bathgate Partnership Centre, South Bridge St, Bathgate, EH48 1TS telephone 01506 283000. <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/592/?srid=1852840&apid=1852840>

7.7 Right To Appeal

Any Housing Benefit applicant has a right to ask the Council to review their decision, if the applicant is not satisfied with it.

8 COUNCIL HOUSING

8.1 Introduction

People in housing need may be housed by the Council, by joining the Council's general needs waiting list and then waiting for the offer of a permanent Council house or by being officially assessed and declared as homeless as defined by part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 in which case the Council has to make either temporary or permanent accommodation available.

Local position: The Council has a waiting list of about 9,000, which includes general needs, transfer, special case and homeless applicants. Around 960 permanent Council house tenancies were let in 2010-11, as and when they become vacant. Annually there are approximately 1,200 households in West Lothian who are officially assessed as being "homeless", and for whom temporary accommodation is arranged by the Council.

It is very important therefore to know how the Council assesses someone's housing needs and why they give greater priority to some needs than to others. The details are given in the Allocations Policy and Points System sections.

8.2 Council Housing For Waiting List Applicants

At March 2011 West Lothian Council had 12816 general needs properties and 109 units of sheltered housing designed for people who need a housing support worker or (warden) support.

The Council, however, still owns and manages around 17.5% of all the housing stock in West Lothian and remains the biggest local provider of social rented housing. West Lothian Council houses are well distributed throughout the area, with concentrations in Livingston, Whitburn, Armadale, Bathgate and Broxburn.

The table at 8.2.1 shows the location and sizes of general needs Council housing in each of the **letting areas**. The table at 8.2.2 shows the location and size of Council sheltered housing. As of March 2011, the total applicants on the Council's waiting list were made up of the following categories:

Main categories of need	No.
General needs applicants	7,110
Forces & Tied Tenancies	86
Local authority transfer applicants	1,258
Homeless applicants	428
Housing with Care	64
Total	8,946

There is no limit on the number of communities you can choose. You can also state your preference for a particular estate.

If you choose more than one community, or choose a particular estate you will not be able to rank your choice. This means that you may be offered housing, as it becomes available, in any of your chosen communities or estates.

When a house becomes available for letting, it is matched to the person with the highest number of points. When two or more people have the same number of points, priority is given to the person who has been on the housing list longest.

An applicant's chance of being offered a Council property is influenced by how often a vacancy occurs in any one of the selected lettings areas, as well as the number of points the applicant has been awarded in comparison with other applicants who have chosen the same lettings area. NOTE: in some areas there is a lengthy waiting list with few properties being allocated (see table 8.2.4).

8.2.1 Locations And Sizes Of Council Housing (March 2011)

Letting area	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	Total
ADDIEWELL	16	123	144	12		295
ARMADALE	143	646	432	27	1	1249
BATHGATE	169	458	246	23		896
BELLSQUARRY	1	3				4

BLACKBURN	91	426	279	17	3	816
BLACKRIDGE	29	92	100	2		223
BOGHALL	30	459	153	3	1	646
BREICH	3	33	25	6		67
BRIDGEND	16	147	43	19		225
BROXBURN	137	307	197	14		655
CRAIGSHILL	8		1			9
DEANS	140	174	215	67	8	604
DECHMONT		17	11			28
DEDRIDGE	208	216	278	24	30	756
EAST CALDER	19	124	96	9		248
EAST WHITBURN	8	18	21	1		48
ECCLESMACHAN			3			3
ELIBURN KIRKTON	52	66	24	4	6	152
FAULHOUSE	71	347	175	4		597
HARTHILL	16	31	55	5		107
HOWDEN			2			2
KIRKNEWTON	7	24	9	1		41
KNIGHTSRIDGE	102	113	217	26	50	508
LADYWELL	87	151	253	79	6	576
LINLITHGOW	80	165	106	6		357
LINLITHGOWBRIDGE	13	45	16			74
LONGRIDGE	13	34	48			95
MID CALDER	6	28	3	2		39
NEWTON	1	5	7			13
PHILPSTOUN	6	8	7			21
POLBETH	50	136	127	17		330
PUMPHERSTON	23	107	42	8		180
SEAFIELD	23	46	42	1		112
STONEYPURN	24	181	96	5		306
THE RIGGS	39	39	31	17	23	149
THREEMILETOWN		6				6
TORPHICHEN	8	11	9			28
UPHALL	59	89	65	9		222
UPHALL STATION	28	29	38			95
WEST CALDER	35	87	30	3		155
WESTER INCH	21	47	15	4	2	87
WESTFIELD	12	20	37	2		71
WHITBURN	241	824	301	31	2	1397
WHITESIDE	9	27	8			44
WILKIESTON		2	4			6
WINCHBURGH	40	137	88	9		274
TOTAL	2084	6048	4099	453	132	12816

8.2.2 Locations And Sizes Of Council Sheltered Housing (March 2011)

* includes Council owned Housing with Care properties – see section 10.4

Letting area	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Bathgate	34	0	0	0	0	34
Boghall	25	0	0	0	0	25
Mid Calder	20*	0	0	0	0	20*
Whitburn	21*	0	0	0	0	21*
TOTALS	109*	0	0	0	0	109*

8.2.3 Waiting List By Letting Area And Bedrooms Required (March 2011)

Note – applicants can select as many letting areas as they choose.

Letting area	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	Total
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Addiewell	610	1062	84	55	24	1835
Armadale	1086	1853	216	96	29	3280
Bathgate	1749	3158	495	209	69	5680
Bellsquarry	856	1732	210	98	30	2926
Blackburn	868	1530	178	87	38	2701
Blackridge	634	1072	94	52	20	1872
Boghall	1007	1789	229	102	41	3168
Briech	611	1051	92	56	23	1833
Bridgend	657	1142	105	58	20	1982
Broxburn	1240	2196	284	128	39	3887
Craigshill	1245	2208	258	140	54	3905
Deans	1386	2499	369	171	64	4489
Dechmont	1075	1977	245	111	37	3445
Dedridge	1352	2492	366	166	62	4438
East Calder	1109	2005	248	125	37	3524
East Whitburn	882	1623	177	90	35	2807
Ecclesmachan	820	1464	184	80	29	2577
Eliburn Kirkton	1635	3113	489	231	81	5549
Fauldhouse	710	1304	134	68	24	2240
Harthill	625	1090	91	63	22	1891
Howden	1460	2699	426	186	66	4837
Kirknewton	836	1532	183	93	28	2672
Knightsridge	1034	1884	233	127	47	3325
Ladywell	1322	2432	349	164	63	4330
Linlithgow	1019	1799	223	113	30	3184
Linlithgow Bridge	841	1523	175	89	25	2653
Longridge	648	1132	98	54	23	1955
Mid Calder	1232	2288	316	143	38	4017
Newton	661	1167	110	63	24	2025
Philpstoun	693	1225	122	67	24	2131
Polbeth	765	1334	135	69	23	2326
Pumpherstoun	1149	2063	248	113	40	3613
Seafield	853	1495	156	73	25	2602
Stoneyburn	672	1176	107	57	22	2034
The Riggs	1067	1957	284	144	56	3508
Threemiletown	719	1292	132	71	25	2239
Torphichen	775	1401	159	83	24	2442
Uphall	1254	2200	270	118	35	3877
Uphall Station	1167	2087	241	112	38	3645
West Calder	1021	1798	206	98	27	3150
Westfield	626	1066	96	55	20	1863
Whitburn	1128	1970	256	106	50	3510
Whiteside	993	1848	260	114	29	3244
Wilkieston	743	1337	138	69	24	2311
Winchburgh	802	1401	138	71	27	2439
Totals	43637	78466	9609	4638	1611	137961

8.2.4 General Needs Applications And Re-Lets By Letting Area

Letting Area	Number of general needs Council Properties March 11	Number of Council lets in 10-11 (including new build)	Waiting list Numbers March 2011
Addiewell	295	21	1835
Armadale	1249	100	3280
Bathgate (including Wester Inch)	983	117	5680
Bellsquarry	4	0	2926

Blackburn	816	63	2701
Blackridge	223	18	1872
Boghall	646	67	3168
Briech	67	3	1833
Bridgend	225	22	1982
Broxburn	655	40	3887
Craigshill	**Nomination Agreement with Almond HA		3905
Deans	604	23	4489
Dechmont	28		3445
Dedridge	756	27	4438
East Calder	248	14	3524
East Whitburn	48	3	2807
Ecclesmachan	3	1	2577
Eliburn Kirkton	152	14	5549
Fauldhouse	597	52	2240
Harthill	107	5	1891
Howden	**Nomination Agreement with Almond HA		4837
Kirknewton	41	1	2672
Knightsridge	508	11	3325
Ladywell	576	20	4330
Linlithgow	357	14	3184
Linlithgow Bridge	74	4	2653
Longridge	95	4	1955
Mid Calder	39	3	4017
Newton	13	1	2025
Philpstoun	21	1	2131
Polbeth	330	21	2326
Pumpherston	180	13	3613
Seafield	112	6	2602
Stoneyburn	306	14	2034
The Riggs	149	3	3508
Threemiletown	6	0	2239
Torphichen	28	1	2442
Uphall	222	16	3877
Uphall Station	95	7	3645
West Calder	155	13	3150
Westfield	71	4	1863
Whitburn	1397	182	3510
Whiteside	44	2	3244
Wilkieston	6	0	2311
Winchburgh	274	22	2439
TOTALS	12895	953	137961

*This figure represents 8946 applicants having selected an average of 15 lettings areas each.

- **Nomination Agreements are described in 9.3.1

8.3 Who Can Apply For Council Housing In West Lothian?

Anyone aged 16 years or over is eligible for admission to the West Lothian Housing Register provided they are not prevented from doing so by immigration or other legislation. Once an application has been admitted to the list, the housing need will be assessed and the application prioritised in accordance to each partner landlords' allocations policy.

The right to be admitted to the list is not the same as a right to be allocated a house.

8.4 Where And How To Apply For Council Housing

Anyone who wishes to become a Council house tenant must first fill in a straightforward application form. The form can be obtained by writing to, phoning (telephone 01506 280000) or visiting any Customer Information Centre, or from the website (<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/925/981/>).

All applicants will be given a booklet, which explains the application system, allocations policy and system. Applicants would be well advised to study the assessment system carefully before filling in their application form.

8.4.1 West Lothian Housing Register

There are three partners in the West Lothian Housing Register: Almond Housing Association, Weslo Housing Management and West Lothian Council. The West Lothian Housing Register aims to provide applicants with a simple way of applying for social housing in the West Lothian. When you fill in a West Lothian Housing Register application form you will be registered on the housing lists of Almond Housing Association, Weslo Housing Management and West Lothian Council. You will not need to apply for these landlords individually - you fill in one form instead of three different ones.

If you were on the waiting lists of any of the three partners prior to the launch of the West Lothian Housing Register, your information has been automatically transferred into the new West Lothian Housing Register. This will mean for example that your application for West Lothian Council has not been affected and you will remain on West Lothian Councils housing list. If however you wish to be considered for all three partners in the West Lothian Housing Register and you are not a new applicant, you should fill in an amendment form available at any customer service centre or by phoning (telephone 01506 280000), or from the website (<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/925/981/> -).

8.5 West Lothian Council's Housing Allocations Policy

The Council aims to provide affordable, quality housing based on a clear framework that gives priority to those applicants who are in most need of housing.

This policy places customers at the centre of all activity and ensures responsiveness to customer needs and aspirations.

The policy aims to create and maintain inclusive, balanced, sustainable communities throughout West Lothian while giving applicants as much choice and control as possible over where they live. The policy also aims to ensure that available housing stock is allocated in a way that is responsive to the needs and demands of the community.

The Council aims to offer housing applicants as much choice as possible whilst also ensuring that available stock is used to its best potential in terms of meeting housing need within the local area.

The Council, as far as possible, aims to provide long term housing solutions for applicants requiring social rented housing.

8.5.1 Housing Stock

West Lothian Council has approximately 12,900 properties (as at March 2011) comprising of:

- Cottage type
- 4 in a Block,
- Flats
- Maisonettes.
- Sheltered Housing
- Very Sheltered
- Housing with Care

West Lothian Council work in partnership with other housing providers through the process of nominations which results in approximate 500 lets per year.

8.5.2 Council Stock Availability

Armadale Area		Bathgate Area		Livingston North Area	
Armadale	▲	Ballencrieff	■	Deans	■
Blackridge	●	Bathgate	●	Eliburn/Livingston Village	■
Torphichen	■	Boghall/Kirkton	▲	Eliburn Tenant Co-op	■
Westfield	■	Whiteside/Birniehill	■	Knightsridge	●

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The Riggs ■

Broxburn Area		Linlithgow Area		Livingston East Area	
Broxburn	●	Bridgend	●	Craigshill	▲
Dechmont	■	Linlithgow	●	East Calder	■
Ecclesmachan	■	Linlithgow Bridge	■	Kirknewton	■
Uphall	■	Newton	■	Mid Calder	■
Winchburgh	▲	Philipstoun	■	Pumpherston	■
		Threemiletown	■	Uphall Station	■
				Wilkieston	■
Breith Valley		Whitburn Area		Livingston South Area	
Addiewell	●	Blackburn	▲	Bellsquarry	■
Breich	■	East Whitburn	■	Dedridge	●
Fauldhouse	▲	Greenrigg	■	Howden	■
Longridge	■	Seafield	■	Ladywell	●
Polbeth	●	Whitburn	▲		
Stoneyburn	▲				
West Calder	■				

■ – Lower availability area

● – Medium availability area

▲ – Higher availability area

8.5.3 Admission To The Housing List

Anyone aged 16 years or over is eligible for admission to the West Lothian Housing Register provided they are not prevented from doing so by immigration or other legislation. Once an application has been admitted to the list, the housing need will be assessed and the application prioritised in accordance to each partner landlords' allocations policy.

The right to be admitted to the list is not the same as a right to be allocated a house.

Applicants who fall into any of the categories below will be accepted onto the housing list but will not be offered permanent accommodation until all relevant checks confirming residency are carried out and relevant documents provided as evidence.

8.5.3.1 Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers who have received a positive decision from the Immigration Nationality Directorate and have been given either indefinite or exceptional (2 to 4 years) leave to remain in the United Kingdom, and become refugees, can apply to the West Lothian Housing Register for housing and will receive equality of access with all applicants to the West Lothian Housing Register.

8.5.3.2 A2 Member States

Citizens from Bulgaria and Romania who enter the UK will have a right of residence for the first three months on an unrestricted basis. These citizens will be able to remain after three months providing they are exercising a "treaty right" (application for registration certificate) i.e. as:

- A student
- Self employed person
- Self sufficient person

They will not have the right to reside in the UK as a worker unless they have "obtained a permission to work" (an accession worker card) or are exempt (exercise a treaty right).

8.5.4 Tenancies

Partners of the West Lothian Housing Register offer Scottish Secure Tenancies or Short Scottish Secure Tenancies.

Short Scottish Secure Tenancies can be offered instead of a full Scottish Secure Tenancy in certain circumstances where it is not appropriate to grant a full Scottish Secure Tenancy, and as a tool in tackling anti-social behaviour (where relevant). A Short Scottish Secure Tenancy will only be offered if an appropriate assessment has been carried out.

8.5.5 Assessment Of Need

Based on the application, the applicant will fall into one of the following categories:

- Homeless
- Transfer
- Applicant

The applicant's housing need will be assessed and points awarded. Homeless points are fixed, and general needs points are a total of all points awarded. These are described in Section 8.5.5.17.

These categories take into account the reasonable preference criteria set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended by the 2001 Act).

8.5.5.1 Size Of House

Applicants may choose a maximum of two house sizes to suit family circumstances. If more than one house size is chosen the applicant may be offered housing of either size, whichever becomes available first and meets their needs.

8.5.5.2 Areas Of Selection

There is no limit on the number of communities that can be selected. However, estate level selection may be considered only where an applicant's particular circumstances justify. If there are no reasons to apply a restriction to a particular estate the applicant will be listed for the whole community.

8.5.5.3 Effective Date Of Application

The effective date of the application is the date and time of receipt, by the Council or Partner Landlord, of a completed application.

Where an applicant's circumstances change and their points have increased as a result, their effective date of application will be amended to reflect the date of change. This will ensure that priority is given to those who have had the greatest housing need for the longest period of time.

8.5.5.4 Service Veterans

Ex-Service personnel who have been seriously injured in action are given a high priority for adapted homes. This will be achieved through assessment of medical and other applicable housing needs.

Employment/residence connected to service will be considered in the same way as civilian employment/residence. This ensures service leavers can choose to apply as homeless in the area in which they have served, and where their families may have become settled.

Forces applicants may choose to advise when they are available for offer. This will prevent offers of housing being made before they receive notice of their discharge date.

8.5.5.5 Room Allocation

A bedroom can be allocated to each person in the permanent household aged eight (8) years or over, with the exception of couples who are living together and who wish to share a bedroom.

Two children under eight (8) years of age will normally be expected to share a bedroom but can be listed for an additional bedroom if the applicant wishes. Two children under the age of eight (8) sharing a bedroom will not be considered overcrowded.

Where the applicant is the parent of a child and is separated/divorced, and has shared residency or parental responsibilities for the child, the property allocated will meet the needs of the household, as assessed by West Lothian Council.

Where the applicant is a parent and shares the care and upbringing of a child, and has parental responsibilities and rights, he/she will be entitled to be considered for a house with sufficient bedrooms to accommodate him/herself and the child/children, as assessed by West Lothian Council. Each case will be examined individually.

Note: The applicant retains full responsibilities and rights even if separated from the mother of that child where the applicant is a parent who has obtained parental responsibilities and rights for a child by virtue of having: -
Been married to the mother of the child, provided the child is a child of the relationship, or
Obtained a court order for parental responsibilities and rights relating to the child, or
Acquired parental responsibilities and rights with the agreement of the child's mother under section 4 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995
Adopted the child
(Only a court may remove such responsibilities and rights.)

8.5.5.6 Supporting Information

To fully assess a Housing Application the Council may request additional supporting information from the Applicant.

8.5.5.7 Homelessness

Homeless points may be awarded if applicants are statutorily homeless and/or threatened with homelessness (See Section 11). Points awarded within the homeless category are non-cumulative.

Homeless applicants will be allowed two (2) offers of housing of any type with any type of heating and in **any** community in the county.

The two (2) offers will be per application; therefore if an applicant has an active application when they are accepted as homeless, then this will be the application that will be considered through the homeless process. This means that where an applicant already has an active application at the time of homeless presentation and they have already had one offer of accommodation, then they will have one offer remaining. Where the applicant is applying for the first time then their application will have two (2) offers. The policy of two (2) offers of housing is per application not per change in circumstances. Account will be taken of any Health, Support or Housing Need recommendations.

8.5.5.8 Transitional Points

Transitional tenancies will be utilised to assist previously looked after young people develop independent living skills and to prevent homelessness by improving sustainability. Tenants will be awarded "transitional points" when it is identified, through review, that they are ready for a move to permanent accommodation

8.5.5.9 Property Needs Assessment (Medical Points)

Points will be awarded where the property does not meet the applicant's needs but they have access to amenities such as toilet and washing facilities. An assessment of their property may be carried out to determine whether their property can be adapted to meet their needs or if the property cannot be adapted and is deemed unsuitable, a move to another property is required.

If an applicant resides in West Lothian and requires their property to be assessed, a West Lothian Council Occupational Therapist will visit and carry out a full assessment of how they manage within their property.

If an applicant resides outwith West Lothian, a WLC Occupational Therapist will not visit. The applicant would be expected to provide a report on an assessment of their current property: this can be done by contacting their local Occupational Therapist team who will visit them and assess how they manage within their property.

If an applicant is successful they will be awarded 200 (Medical A) or 150 (Medical B) points as appropriate and a property type which meets their functional needs will be recommended.

The processing time for Property Needs Assessment can be 6 to 8 Weeks.

8.5.5.10 Overcrowding

Applicants will receive points if their present accommodation does not meet the living standard set by West Lothian Council which is one bedroom for either:

A couple/single person

Up to two children under eight (8) years

Anyone over eight (8) years of age and who does not choose to share a bedroom.

Overcrowding points in the low needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that one additional bedroom is required.

Overcrowding points in the medium needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that two additional bedrooms are required.

Overcrowding points in the high needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that three or more additional bedrooms are required.

Points will be awarded based on the actual number of additional bedrooms required.

8.5.5.11 Sharing

Sharing points will be awarded based on the Applicant's household and the number of people who share facilities. Applicants will receive points where they share one or more of the following facilities with anyone other than those included in their application.

- Living room
- Kitchen
- Toilet
- Bathroom

Sharing points in the low needs category will be awarded when any of the facilities listed above are shared with 1 person other than those included in the application.

Sharing points in the medium needs category will be awarded when any of the facilities listed above are shared with 2 people other than those included in the application.

Sharing points in the high needs category will be awarded when any of the facilities listed above are shared with 3 or more people other than those included in the application.

8.5.5.12 Unsuitable Accommodation

Applicants who live in upper flats, maisonette-flats and 4-in-a-block type properties, with a common stairwell, are considered to be living in unsuitable accommodation if:

- The person or partner has reached pensionable age (60 years)
- Another member of the person's household has reached pensionable age (60 years)
- There is at least one child, younger than eight (8) years old, in the household

Points will not be awarded to applicants who are prepared to accept an offer of the same type of accommodation.

8.5.5.12.1 Families in flats

Families living in common access flats, first floor and above, who require to move to different accommodation will be awarded points for every child aged under eight (8) years.

8.5.5.13 Social Support

See categories below:

8.5.5.13.1 Victims of harassment

Applicants will be awarded points, in the high or medium needs category, if they claim that they are suffering from harassment regardless if any doubt exists. Further investigations will be performed and, if these prove that the claim is unfounded the points will be removed.

Points in the high needs category will be awarded if the harassment is on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, age, disability or beliefs, violence or unprovoked assault.

Points in the medium needs category will be awarded if the harassment is on the grounds of extreme behaviour including drug-dealing, threatening and abusive behaviour, frequent serious disturbances or vandalism

8.5.5.13.2 Victims of domestic abuse

An applicant will be awarded points, in the medium needs category, for domestic abuse, regardless of any doubt.

Definition:- Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threat, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends). Domestic abuse is most commonly perpetrated by men against women. (National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan)

Points in the high needs category will be awarded where applicants claim that they are living with a violent partner.

Points in the medium needs category will be awarded where applicants claim that they have been forced to move because of violence and that they continue to be pursued.

8.5.5.13.3 Social support

Points in the low needs category will be awarded to applicants leaving care, joint applicants forced to live apart and applicants who require to give or receive support.

A Single Shared Assessment will be carried out to capture applicants' needs, including Housing Support. The package of assistance will be tailored to the individual's needs and assist in ensuring sustainability.

8.5.5.14 Insecurity

Where the applicants existing tenure is insecure and they meet West Lothian Council's definition of insecurity of tenure they will be awarded insecurity points.

West Lothian Council's definition of insecurity of tenure is:

- Private let applicant been given notice to quit
- Owner Occupier forced to sell property e.g. (property re-possessed/marital breakdown)
- Tied Tenant (forced to leave)
- Leaving HM Forces

These points will only be awarded upon receipt of written evidence from employer, solicitor, landlord or mortgage lender.

8.5.5.15 Family Living Apart/New Forming Families

In accordance with Homeless legislation, households with dependant children, which are forced to live apart, and want to live together, will be regarded as one household. In these cases the children must live with the parents on a permanent basis.

8.5.5.16 Under Occupation

Applicants will be awarded non-housing needs points for accommodation that is under-occupied. The same bedroom requirement assumptions are made for under-occupation as over-crowding. This will ensure that best use of resources is made while still meeting housing need.

For example where an applicant lives in a three-bedroom property and requests a two bedroom property they will be awarded points based on one-bedroom of under occupation. Similarly, where an applicant lives in a four-bedroom property and requests a two-bedroom they will be awarded points based on two-bedrooms of under occupation.

Minimum living standard is one bedroom for either:

- a couple/single person

- up to two children under eight (8) years
- no person over eight (8) years of age should be expected to share a bedroom, unless they choose to

These non-needs points will be awarded based on the degree of under occupation i.e. the number of bedrooms not used. Additionally, to ensure best use of resources, points will only be awarded to existing WLC and RSL tenants.

8.5.5.17 The Points Framework

The table below shows the points awarded in each category.

Category	Description	Points
Homeless	Homeless	400
Transitional	Previously looked after by a Local Authority and as part of planned transition into own tenancy	400
Housing Needs		
Housing Needs HIGH	Medical grade A	200
	Overcrowding 3+	
	Sharing 3+	
	Housing below tolerable standard	
	Social Support (Harassment and Victims of domestic abuse) 1	
Housing Needs MEDIUM	Medical grade B	150
	Overcrowding 2	
	Sharing 2	
	Social Support (Harassment and Victims of domestic abuse)2	
Housing Needs LOW	Overcrowding 1	100
	Unsuitable accommodation	
	Sharing 1	
	Insecurity	
	Social Support (applicants leaving care, and to give or receive support)	
	Family living apart/New Forming Families	
	Families in flats (per child under 8 years)	
Non-Needs		
Attained points	The use of waiting time points has been removed in line with legislative requirements. These points have been re-defined for existing applicants and will be treated as a protected points award effective from the introduction of the Allocation Policy.	Varied
Under-occupation	Points awarded per room under-occupied. i.e. If under-occupied by one room two rooms three rooms Where two applicants qualify for an offer priority will be given to the applicant with the greater number of Needs points, then by date of application.	100 150 200

8.5.6 Tenancy References

Tenancy references will be obtained for anyone on the application who currently hold, or have previously held tenancies with any social landlord during the last three years.

8.5.7 Application Checks

The Council will take reasonable steps to verify information provided in support of an application for a tenancy.

Before a property can be offered we will in particular:

- Confirm the applicant's present housing circumstances are recorded correctly
- Check the condition of house and garden if the applicant is a tenant
- Establish the current state of the applicant's rent account

If we find that circumstances have changed in such a way as to affect points or the property type the applicant could be considered for, or that the applicant is in breach of tenancy agreement, the offer may be withheld and the application bypassed. If this is due to the condition of their tenancy, the applicant will be given a timescale during which the tenancy must be brought to standard.

If it comes to our attention that the applicants has provided false information about family circumstances in order to secure a tenancy, the tenancy will be terminated.

8.5.8 Factors Not Taken Into Account

Factors which will not be taken into account by the West Lothian Housing Register when considering Applications are:

- Outstanding liability (such as rent arrears) attributable to a house of which you were not the tenant
- Any rent or other arrears accrued by you on a previous tenancy which are no longer outstanding
- Any rent or other arrears which are outstanding but where:
 - The amount outstanding is not more than 1/12th of the annual amount payable (or which was payable) by you to the landlord in respect of the tenancy (this refers to gross rent and not net rent)
 - You have agreed arrangements with the landlord for paying the outstanding liability and have kept this arrangement for a minimum of three months and are continuing to do so
 - Any outstanding debts, which are not rent arrears or service charges

8.5.9 Bypass

Applicants may be bypassed for an offer of housing for then following reasons:

Age restriction	Applicants for sheltered housing who have not reached 60 years.
Awaiting information	Council still awaiting information relating to applicants
Current arrears/ former debt	Where applicant has current/former arrears of more than 1/12th of the annual rental amount.
Already on DTL offered	Where applicants already on Difficult To Let list
Forces/tied tenancy	Where applicant remains in forces with no notice of discharge date.
Nominated to housing association	Where applicant has been nominated to a Housing Association and is likely to be given an offer (Central Allocations will always contact the Housing Association to determine the stage of nomination).
Household composition	Where bedroom sizes in the vacant property do not meet the requirement of the applicant household.
On holiday	Where applicant has advised they will not be available for offer.
Lesser date of application	Where more than one applicant qualifies for an offer with the same points level In these circumstances the offer will go to the applicant with the earlier date of application and applicants with the later date of application will be by-passed.
Managers decision	Where in extreme circumstances manager requests by-pass.
Medical reason	Where offer does not meet applicants medical need.
Not eligible	Where applicant qualifies for an offer that does not meet their needs i.e. where a couple have been asked to be considered for a one bedroom property and are matched against a property that is designated for only single applicants e.g. single

	person one bedroom property.
Not within selection	Where property selected does not meet applicants selection.
Previously offered	Where applicant has already been on offer and refused property.
Support needs	Applicant with support needs not ready to move.
Schedule one offender	where applicant has been assessed in accordance with multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).
Tenancy conditions	Upon advice of CBHO that applicant's tenancy is poor and not suitable for offer.
Wrong points	Where applicant's circumstances have changed which alters points total and means they no longer qualify for offer.
Arrangement in place	Where applicant has an arrangement in place regarding rent arrears and is paying but the arrangement has been in place for less than three months.
Serious breach of your tenancy agreement or eviction as a result of a serious breach -	Examples: Current or former debt (see Factors not to be taken in to account for more detail); Current or former house and garden in kept in poor condition; Causing a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours; Convicted of a serious crime, such as supply of illegal drugs;

The bypass will remain in place until:

- An arrangement is made to clear outstanding debt;
- The house/garden is up to an acceptable standard;
- Proof of satisfactory conduct/ability to manage your current tenancy for a minimum of six months.

If bypassed for either the reason of debt or condition of tenancy, the applicant will be notified in writing from Central Allocations.

8.5.10 Restrictions

Situations can occur where an applicant requires a "restriction" in area or house type, for example where:-

Medical evidence/assessment identifies the need for a certain house type. Applicants will be assessed and a Property Needs Assessment form completed where they meet the criteria. Note that Homeless applicants who are successful in house type restriction will not be awarded additional points if homeless points already awarded.

The applicant has high support needs and must reside in a particular area to ensure continuity of support. This would include where a family member identified as main carer provides support. (Evidence may be from Health, Social Work, Housing, and Education and or in some instances proof of receipt of carer's allowance. Criteria will link in with Support criteria)

The applicant cannot live in a particular area as a result of harassment, assault etc. (Supporting evidence in form of police reports, incident with Safer Neighbourhood Team, Neighbourhood Response Team etc must be provided).

The applicant requires to be administered medication direct from the hospital within a limited period of time and thus requires to be accommodated within that area. (Applicants will be required to provide appropriate supportive evidence from a Consultant).

The applicant will be placed at a significant disadvantage in relation to their social networks & ability to sustain accommodation in a new area. e.g. "The strength of a homeless person's social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement." (Scottish Executive 2001)

All requests for "restrictions" must be fully evidenced. Each case will be assessed and approved, or otherwise, by a panel of Housing Need Managers.

8.5.11 Removal Of Application From Housing List

In accordance with legislation an application will only be removed from the housing list in the following circumstances:

- Where the applicant has requested this in writing
- Following the death of the applicant
- Where the applicant fails to respond to a review of the housing list or repeatedly fails to respond to correspondence.

- Where the applicant's needs have been met through being housed by WLC or other Local Authority or RSL
- Where an applicant's need has been met through any of
 - Assigantion
 - Succession
 - Mutual Exchange

West Lothian Council will inform you in writing when your application has been removed from the housing list.

8.5.12 Applications Not Considered

Applicants in the HM Forces, HM Prison or Tied Tenants, will not be considered for an offer of housing until they indicate their availability.

West Lothian Council will contact these applicants on a six monthly basis to determine if there has been any change to their circumstances which may affect their position.

8.5.13 Exceptional Circumstances

Situations can occur which cannot be dealt with adequately under the current allocation policy and for which General Needs Points cannot be granted. These will be addressed through an Assisted Move process and examples where this may apply are:

- Extreme neighbour problems where the only solution is to move one party;
- An extreme situation where the current property is not suitable or adaptable as determined by the Occupational Therapist and current points do not give swift access to the type of property required
- Serious Harassment not covered under the General Needs Policy
- Care in the Community
- Witness Protection
- Regeneration e.g. major improvements/demolitions
- Overcrowding when space standards have been exceeded. This would be in extreme circumstances and would need appropriate evidence

The list of examples given is exhaustive and it should be noted that **each case will be assessed individually**.

8.5.14 Local Lettings Initiatives

There are occasions where a Local letting Initiative is required in order to achieve the Scottish Government objectives for communities which are:-

- Delivering good quality, sustainable and affordable housing for everyone
- Regenerating our communities
- Building safer communities by tackling anti-social behaviour
- Tackling poverty and helping vulnerable people
- Promoting equal opportunities and active citizenship

A Local letting Initiative is where we have a separate Allocations system for a specific geographical area and is:-

- Specific to a limited area
- Time bounded for a period of 12-18 months
- Monitored on a monthly basis

This approach can only be achieved through working in partnership with communities and customers. Customers' involvement in this process is essential to ensure successful, balanced and sustained communities.

The use of Local Lettings Initiatives will ensure:

- Open/improved access to affordable rented housing within communities
- Promote stability and sustainability within communities
- Maximisation of resources including working in partnership with others through review of allocation policies and nomination agreements to ensure compatibility and optimum choice for applicants
- Assessment of the needs of people, communities and local priorities
- Co-ordination of West Lothian Council's supporting peoples' strategy with the provision and management of particular needs and to identify how best housing support needs can be met and used more effectively

8.5.15 Allocation of New Build Housing

To promote turnover of properties available to let and increased permanent outcomes for more applicants on the Housing list the allocation of new-build will be "Transfer-Led".

In the first instance, new-build houses will be offered to West Lothian Council tenants on the Transfer List. However when the Transfer List is exhausted lets will be in accordance with the needs framework described at Section 8.5.5.17 of this document.

All re-lets will be allocated in accordance with the needs framework.

8.5.16 Property Matching

Vacant houses, other than new-build, will be matched to the person with the highest number of points requesting that type of property within the specific geographic area.

If a property has major adaptations the Allocations Team, prior to Short-listing, will ensure that the property can be matched to applicants with specific needs. Where an adapted property cannot be matched to an applicant with specific needs it will be allocated in accordance with mainstream policy.

Where two (or more) applicants have the same number of points, priority will be given to the applicant who has the earliest list date and time of application. The only exception will be where an applicant has been awarded non-needs points (i.e. under-occupation or attained points): in this instance only, where two or more applicants have the same total points, the non-needs points will not be taken into account and the applicant with the highest number of cumulative needs points will receive the offer.

8.5.17 Circumstances Check Prior To Offer

Prior to offer of a property we will contact the applicant:

- To confirm the applicant's present housing circumstances are recorded correctly
- To check the condition of house and garden if the applicants is a tenant
- To establish the current status of the applicant's rent account

If the applicant's circumstances have changed in such a way as to affect the points awarded, or the property type, or that they are in breach of tenancy agreement, the offer may be withdrawn.

8.5.18 Offers Of Housing

An offer of housing may be made as soon as Allocations receive notification that a property is becoming available to let. Where possible properties will be pre-let and in some instances viewing can be arranged before the previous tenant moves out.

Offers may be issued in advance of minor repairs being carried out to the vacant property.

Applicants will be given 24 hours to reply to West Lothian Council. If the applicant fails to reply the Council will assume the applicant is not interested in the property and this will be treated as a refusal of offer of accommodation. This will be regardless of whether it is an offer of a West Lothian Council property or that of another Housing Provider.

The Council will take into account situations where the applicant may find it difficult to respond within the 24-hour timescale. Each case will be looked at individually.

We will carry out accompanied viewing with all prospective tenants.

8.5.19 Number Of Offers

Applicants are entitled to two offers of housing that correspond with their needs. In the event of a refusal the reasons will be established and taken into account before making a further offer.

If two reasonable offers are refused, the applicant will remain on the Housing List following a review of their circumstances. The Applicant will be bypassed for offers of accommodation in accordance with West Lothian Council's bypassing rules (see Section 8.5.9).

Failure to respond within the given timescale will mean that the Council will assume the Applicant is no longer interested in housing and the application may be cancelled on the grounds of failing to respond to correspondence.

In certain circumstances, and in accordance with West Lothian Council's bypassing rules (see Section 8.5.9), an offer of housing may be withdrawn or made without penalty.

8.5.20 Cancellation

If an application is cancelled the Applicant has six months from the date of cancellation to contact the Council to request re-instatement to its original status.

Any request to have your application re-instated must be received in writing. Any request outside the six-month timescale will be refused

8.5.21 Acceptance Of Offer

Once an offer of accommodation has been made, accepted and the Applicant(s) signed up, the tenant's needs will be considered met.

All new tenancies will be in joint names unless otherwise requested.

8.5.22 Referrals

Unless expressed otherwise Applicants may be nominated for Housing to a Registered Social Landlord.

In accordance with Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, and to assist in meeting demand, Homeless Applicants will be referred to Registered Social Landlord. This will take account of needs preferences and availability of housing.

The Council will work with other services and agencies such as social work and health services, to make sure that housing needs are linked to your wider needs (for example, if it would be beneficial to your health or if it would improve your situation as a result of your health if you moved). Other agencies and council services sometimes refer people to us for housing.

8.5.23 Care In The Community

West Lothian Council works closely with Lothian Health Board, West Lothian Community Health and Care Partnership, housing providers, housing support providers and voluntary agencies to help meet the housing, care and support needs of vulnerable young people and adults living in West Lothian including:

- People with physical disabilities
- People with learning disabilities including Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- People with mental health problems
- People with drug and alcohol addictions
- People with AIDS and those who are HIV positive

The Council will allocate a number of vacant houses to people in these Community Care Groups. These allocations will be in agreement with Social Policy and are outwith the General Needs policy (See Section 10).

8.5.24 Successions

In the event of the death of a tenant, someone who was living in the house as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death may be qualified by law to inherit the tenancy. This is called Succession. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced the right to a second round of succession i.e. when a succeeding tenant dies the property can be inherited again by a qualifying person.

Succession will result in removal of any active application from the Housing List.

8.5.25 Exchanges

Tenants have the right to exchange their house for another house that is the subject of a Scottish Secure Tenancy, but ONLY with the written consent of the landlord and, if different, the landlord of the other house.

The Council participates in “Homeswapper” (www.homeswapper.co.uk/). This service is available to all council tenants.

Mutual exchange will result in removal of any active application from the Housing List.

8.5.26 Assignment

A tenant has the right to request to assign the tenancy to a person who has been living in the house as their only or principal home for at least 6 months, with the written consent of the landlord. Grounds for refusal must be reasonable.

Assignment will result in removal of any active application from the Housing List.

8.5.27 Sub-letting

A tenant has the right to request to sublet their home. Grounds for refusal of such a request must be reasonable.

8.5.28 Lodgers

A tenant has the right to request to take lodgers into their home. Grounds for refusal of such a request must be reasonable.

8.5.29 Applicants In Prison

Applicants in HM Prison are entitled to suspend their housing application to prevent being made an offer of Housing.

To bring ex-prisoners and offenders back into the community, protocols have been developed to make communities safe allow the individual circumstances of each ex-prisoner who applies for housing to be considered.

8.5.30 Difficult To Let (DTL)/Promotional Properties

Some housing has been identified as promotional properties. These will be flatted properties, in common access blocks, which are higher than 2 storeys and where no major refurbishments have been carried out.

A difficult to let property is one where property has been offered and refused 4 times.

8.5.31 Housing Options Advice (HOA)

Advice and assistance about housing options may be offered to customers through a HOA Interview. These may be offered to:

a) New applicants for housing and specifically those who are awarded less than 300 points and whose stated reason(s) for applying is:

- Experiencing domestic abuse
- Current accommodation too small or too large
- Homelessness

b) Homeless customers

8.5.32 Re-Location Grant

As an incentive to relocate to a smaller property and free up a larger Council home a grant of £1000 or equivalent in removal or decoration costs is available in certain circumstances.

The Relocation grant is for West Lothian Council tenants who are moving to

- A property that is at least two bedroom sizes smaller than their previous property.
- Sheltered, residential, housing with care or amenity housing. In this instance, tenants can move from any size of property.

The grant is £1000.00. West Lothian Council is entitled to deduct any money owed to the Council, such as rent arrears or other charges outstanding at the time of termination of tenancy from the grant awarded.

Where the tenant is over the age of 60 years they qualify for the grant of £1000 plus removal and redecoration costs.

There is a limited budget for the scheme therefore the payment of the grant will be subject to the availability of funds.

The grant will not be awarded for Mutual Exchanges.

8.5.33 Review of Housing Applications

Where there has been no recent contact the Council will contact applicants in review of their application. Failure to respond to this review within the given timescale will result in the application being cancelled. Any further application will be considered as being new and will be re-assessed taking into account any new circumstances.

8.5.34 Re-Let Standard

West Lothian Council will ensure that new tenants will be offered a house to the following re-let standard.

- Decoration intact and clean.
- Floor coverings removed (Not Temporary Tenancies).
- Doors and Woodwork clean and operational.
- Windows clean and operational.
- Furnishings clean and in position (Temporary Tenancies only)

Kitchen:

- Decoration intact and clean.
- Kitchen fitments clean and operational, white goods clean and acceptable for use and equipment in place per inventory (Temporary Tenancies only)
- Doors and Woodwork clean and operational.
- Floors clean.
- Windows clean and operational.

Bathroom;

- All sanitary ware clean and acceptable for use.
- Floors clean. Floor coverings in place (Temporary Tenancies only)
- Doors and Woodwork clean and operational.
- Windows clean and operational.
- Decoration intact and clean.

Bedrooms;

- Decoration intact and clean.
- Floor coverings intact and clean (Temporary Tenancies only).
- Windows clean and operational.
- Doors and Woodwork clean and operational.
- Furnishings in place as per inventory (Temporary Tenancies only).

Front/Rear Doors;

- Locks Operational/Secure and all keys returned from previous tenant.

Services;

- Gas and electric supplier details will be made available and meter readings taken.
- Safety checks will have been carried out for Gas and Electrical fitments.
- Drain Down of Water supplies information.
- Heating and Water services operational.

Decoration;

- Decoration intact and clean. Where decoration is found to be poor, decoration allowance will be issued. Decoration work will be undertaken as necessary in Temporary Tenancies.

Internal Fixtures and Fittings;

- All fitments clean and operational; this includes pass doors, windows, kitchen fitments, sanitary ware, flooring and woodwork.

Furnishings (temporary tenancies only);

- Furnishings in useable condition and correctly positioned in correct position.

External;

- Garden Areas maintained and free of Rubbish.

There should be no personal belongings or rubbish left from previous tenant. Temporary Tenancies should contain only inventory items.

8.6 Rent Levels In Council Housing

8.6.1 General Needs Housing

The average rent for a West Lothian Council house in 2011/2012 is £59.99 a week. Rents vary according to the size of the property, where it is situated and whether or not it has central heating and double-glazing.

8.6.2 Sheltered Housing

The rents for sheltered housing units tend to be a little higher and depend upon the landlord as the way in which rents are calculated varies between the local authority and housing association providers.

8.6.3 Housing Benefit

Anyone on a low income and paying rent for accommodation - whether from the Council, a housing association or co-operative or any other public or private landlord - may be entitled to receive Housing Benefit. This can be enough to pay all or some of the rent due, depending on a verified assessment of the applicant's income sources and levels. 58% of West Lothian Council's tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit. (See Section 7 on Housing Benefit for details of the application process and assessment procedures.)

8.7 Rights And Responsibilities Of Council Tenants

Every Council tenant is given a copy of the Tenants' Handbook, which provides much useful and easy-to-follow information on both the rights and responsibilities of Council tenants and the services that the Council provides for them.

Throughout West Lothian there are Tenants & Residents Groups who provide assistance and support to West Lothian Council tenants. For details of your local Tenant & Residents Group Contact West Lothian Council, Telephone 01506 280000.

8.7.1 Repairs And Maintenance

The responsibility for repairs to Council houses is shared between the Council and the tenant. In essence, the Council is responsible for maintaining the property and the tenant is responsible for internal decoration, furnishings and removable fittings like clothes lines, TV aerials, curtain rails and so on. Specific conditions will apply to furnished and partially furnished tenancies; these will be included in the tenancy agreement.

Repairs are categorised by the Council as emergency, priority or routine and dealt with accordingly. Planned maintenance - to replace and/or upgrade parts of the building fabric take place according to priorities and a programme set by the Council after consultation with local tenants' associations.

8.7.2 Adaptations And Additional Housing Support

The Council ensures that support is available to help people to continue living comfortably and independently in their own homes. Funding is available to adapt Council houses to meet the care needs of a Council tenant. Typical adaptations carried out include putting in showers, extra heating, handrails and ramps.

Requests for adaptations should be made in writing to West Lothian Council Housing & Customer Services. An occupational therapist's assessment may be required. For more information, telephone 01506 280000

8.7.3 Buying Your Council House Under The 'Right to Buy' Scheme

Council tenants have a statutory right to buy their houses after two years' residence if they were tenants before September 2002. For new tenants after 30th September 2002 and tenants who transfer after September 2002 the 'Modernised Right to Buy' may apply; the qualifying residence period is 5 years in a Council house (which does not necessarily have to be the same Council house as the one they want to buy). Under the Modernised Right to Buy the minimum discount is 20% of the valuation price, rising to a 35% discount after 15 years' residence. There is a maximum discount of £15,000. Most new tenants will have no right to buy.

There is the possibility that tenants will not be able to exercise the right to buy if that right has been suspended either for rent or council tax arrears, or the Council has served a notice of recovery of possession on the tenant.

Prospective 'Right to Buy' applicants should ask the Council's housing staff at any local Customer Service Centre for the relevant application form and accompanying booklet.

The sale of the property can only take place after its value has been officially assessed by the District Valuer (DV), a government official, who visits the area regularly. There is no right of appeal against the DV's valuation.

Once the valuation has been received by the Council, the council house sales unit will make the applicant an offer of purchase. It is very important at this stage that the applicant has the services of a solicitor to help them complete the legal transaction properly. The whole Right to Buy transaction - from the date of application to the point of legal completion of the purchase - takes no more than 9 months.

8.7.4 Transfers And Mutual Exchanges

Any Council tenant can apply for a transfer or to join a mutual exchange scheme. Most transfers and mutual exchanges take place locally although there are also opportunities (but a lot fewer of them) for Council tenants to swap their houses for public sector houses in other parts of the UK.

Applications for transfers within the Council area are assessed and pointed in accordance with Council's Allocation Policy. A property is then allocated in the same way to a transfer applicant as to a general needs applicant.

The mutual exchange scheme is designed to help tenants who want to move within the Council area and anyone renting a house from the Council or a local housing association. If two tenants agree that they would like to swap houses, each must request this in writing and not move until Housing Services has given its written consent for this to go ahead. www.homeswapper.co.uk/

9 HOUSING ASSOCIATION RENTED HOUSING

9.1 Introduction

There are around 200 housing associations and housing co-operatives in Scotland registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator, with several local and national housing providers offering a range of accommodation in the Council area. Their names, addresses and contacts etc. are listed at the end of this section.

Registered housing associations (sometimes referred to as Registered Social Landlords, or RSLs) are non-profit making friendly societies, with a few exceptions, run by professional staff, but controlled by voluntary management committees. Housing associations get grants from the Scottish Government towards the costs of building homes for rent or shared ownership. It is important to recognise that housing associations are the main providers of new and affordable housing opportunities for local people in housing need, although the Council has also recently been able to start to build new homes for rent again.

There are a number of different housing providers who have properties throughout West Lothian. Some housing providers specialise in particular client groups. Some of the properties are especially built or adapted to meet the needs of applicants with disabilities and Community Care needs.

9.2 Housing Providers In West Lothian

In West Lothian there are 15 Housing Providers who offer a variety of accommodation throughout the whole of West Lothian. Of the 15 Housing Providers operating in West Lothian 12 provide general needs housing for families and 8 who provide general needs housing for single occupation. In addition, 11 of the 15 Housing providers offer accommodation designed for the elderly and 8 offer accommodation specifically designed for those with a physical disability.

9.2.1 Names And Addresses Of Housing Providers In West Lothian

Name and Address	Areas	Family General needs	Single	Elderly and/or amenity	Wheel Chair
Abbeyfield Scotland Ltd Ashley Hall Linlithgow EH49 7DN (01506) 203584	Linlithgow			√	
Almond Housing Association Shiel House, Craigshill Livingston EH54 5EH (01506) 439291	Craigshill, Eliburn, Howden, Ladywell, Whitburn	√	√	√	√
Ark Housing Association The Priory, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG (0131) 447 9027	Linlithgow, Uphall	√	√		
Barony Housing Association Ltd Canal Court 40 Craiglockhart Avenue Edinburgh EH14 1LT 0845 140 7777	Armadale, Bathgate, Broxburn, Polbeth	√	√	√	√
Bield Housing Association Ltd 79 Hopetoun Street Edinburgh EH7 4QF (0131) 273 4000	Armadale, Bathgate, Blackburn, Broxburn, Fauldhouse, Livingston, Linlithgow, Uphall, W. Calder, Whitburn, Winchburgh		√ minimum age 55 yrs	√	√
Cairn Housing Association 64A Leven Rd, Townhead	Bathgate, East Whitburn	√		√	

Coatbridge, ML5 2LT (01236) 441850					
Dunedin Canmore Housing Association 8 Newmart Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1RL (0131) 478 8888	Armadale, Bathgate, Blackburn, Blackridge, Craigshill, Knightsridge, Polbeth, Stoneyburn, Torphichen, Uphall, West Calder, Whitburn* (*100% WLC Nominations)	√	√	√	√
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association 1 Hay Avenue, Edinburgh EH16 4RW (0131) 657 0600	Armadale, Bathgate, Blackridge, Broxburn, Deans, Dedridge, Eliburn, Fauldhouse, Uphall, Carmondean, Knightsridge, West Calder, Winchburgh	√	√	√	√
Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association Ltd 95 McDonald Road Edinburgh EH7 4NS (0131) 557 0598	Armadale, Bathgate, Broxburn, Livingston Village Whitburn			√	
Horizon Housing Association Ltd Leving Hse, Fairbairn Pl, Livingston EH54 6TN (01506) 424140	Blackburn, Fauldhouse, Livingston, Whitburn, Winchburgh	√	√	√	√
Trust Housing Association 2 Newmart Road, Edinburgh (0131) 225 7246	Blackridge, Dedridge, East Calder, Winchburgh	√		√	
Link Housing Association Watling House Callendar Business Park Falkirk FK1 1XR 0845 1400100	Addiewell, Bathgate, Breich, Linlithgow Bridge, Uphall, West Calder	√	√	√	
Margaret Blackwood Housing Association 77 Craigmount Brae Edinburgh EH12 8XF	Armadale, Broxburn, Deans, Mid Calder, West Calder	√	√		√
Weslo Housing Management 66 North Bridge St Bathgate EH48 4PP (01506) 634060	Addiewell, Addiebrowhill, Armadale, Bathgate, Blackburn, Broxburn, East Calder, Fauldhouse, Kirknewton, Linlithgow, Livingston, Mid Calder, Polbeth, Pumpherston, Stoneyburn, Uphall, West Calder, Whitburn, Winchburgh	√			
West Lothian Housing Partnership 3 Michaelson Square, Kirkton Campus Livingston EH54 7DP (01506) 416438	Blackburn, Bathage, Boghall, Broxburn, Craigshill, Stoneyburn, West Calder	√		√	√

9.2.2 Locations, Numbers And Types Of West Lothian Housing Providers Rented Housing

(at April 2011)

Housing Association	Location	No. of properties	House type(s)	For special needs *
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Abbeyfield Scotland Ltd	Linlithgow	8	Amenity	VSH
Almond Housing Association	Craigshill Eliburn Howden Ladywell Whitburn	2230	General Amenity	
Ark Housing Association	Linlithgow Uphall	1 11	General	
Barony Housing Association	Armadale Bathgate Broxburn Polbeth	197	General Amenity	DA
Bield Housing Association	Throughout West Lothian	565	Sheltered Amenity	SH VSH Housing with Care
Cairn Housing Association	Bathgate East Whitburn	36 23	Sheltered General	SH
Dunedin Canmore Housing Association	Armadale Bathgate Blackburn Blackridge Craigshill Knightsridge Polbeth Stoneyburn Torphichen Uphall West Calder Whitburn* (*100% WLC Nominations)	336	General Sheltered Amenity	SH DA
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association	Armadale Bathgate Blackridge Broxburn Carmondean Deans Dedridge Eliburn Fauldhouse Knightsridge Uphall West Calder Winchburgh	724	General Amenity	DA
Hanover Housing Association	Armadale Bathgate Broxburn Livingston Village Whitburn	218	General Sheltered Amenity	SH DA
Horizon Housing Association	Blackburn Fauldhouse Livingston Whitburn Winchburgh	135	General Amenity	DA
Trust Housing Association	Blackridge Dedridge East Calder Winchburgh	87	General Sheltered Amenity	SH DA Housing with Care
Link Housing Association	Addiewell, Bathgate, Breich, Linlithgow Bridge, Uphall, West Calder	131	General	DA
Margaret Blackwood Housing	Armadale	62	General	DA

Association	Broxburn Deans Mid Calder West Calder		Wheelchair Mobility	
Weslo Housing Management	Throughout West Lothian	1753	General	
West Lothian Housing Partnership	Bathgate Blackburn Boghall Broxburn Craigshill Stoneyburn West Calder	380	General Amenity	

OPH = Older Persons Homes SH = Sheltered Housing
VSH = Very Sheltered Housing DA = Adapted for disability

9.3 How The Housing Association And Other Providers' Waiting Lists And Allocation Schemes Work.

9.3.1 Council "Nomination" Agreements

Most councils and housing associations and, sometimes, other providers operating in their area have "nomination agreements" to refer applicants off their waiting lists. West Lothian Council has a agreements with the listed providers, called Nomination Agreements. This means that the Council can nominate applicants from the Council's housing list to fill an agreed number of vacancies that each housing provider may have. An applicant will only be nominated by the Council for vacancies that suit their family size and housing requirements. Housing providers will then consider and assess nominees from the Council in line with their own allocations policy. It is important, however, to note that the agreement only gives the Council the right to suggest names of applicants - **not** over to whom the association decides to allocate its houses.

9.3.2 Where And How To Apply For Housing Association Rented Housing

The names and addresses of associations and other local housing providers are listed in the table above. You can contact they directly to ask for a copy of their application form.

Please note that Weslo Housing Management and Almond Housing Association now participate in a joint housing register with West Lothian Council, so you will only need to complete the one form to apply for housing by all three providers. Forms are available from any local CIS office or by telephoning 01506 280000.

9.3.3 West Lothian Housing Register

There are three partners in the West Lothian Housing Register: Almond Housing Association, Weslo Housing Management and West Lothian Council.

The West Lothian Housing Register aims to provide applicants with a simple way of applying for social housing in the West Lothian. When you fill in a West Lothian Housing Register application form you will be registered on the housing lists of Almond Housing Association, Weslo Housing Management and West Lothian Council. You will not need to apply for these landlords individually, you fill in one form instead of three different ones.

If you were on the waiting lists of any of the three partners prior to the launch of the West Lothian Housing Register, your information has been automatically transferred into the new West Lothian Housing Register. This will mean for example that your application to any of the three partners has not been affected and you will remain on that partner's housing list. If however you wish to be considered for all three partners in the West Lothian Housing Register and you are not a new applicant, you should fill in an amendment form available at any Customer Information Centre or by phoning (telephone 01506 280000), or from the website (<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/917/925/981/>).

9.3.4 Housing Associations' Allocation Systems

The number of applicants for housing normally exceeds the number of houses likely to be available. In these circumstances Housing Associations seek to allocate their housing using a points system, which is considered an appropriate way to assess the relative priority between applicants. In cases where Housing Associations provide general needs housing priority is given to applicants in much the same way as the council does, however other housing providers also provide specific housing for the elderly or the physically disabled and their allocations policy reflect these priorities. Copies of any Housing Associations allocations policy can be obtained directly from them.

9.3.5 Further Advice On The Application And Allocation Process

Applicants and those who advise applicants should not hesitate to ask housing association staff for further information and advice if it is required. Further detailed written information is available, but staff are happy to discuss any questions arising.

9.4 Rent Levels

Rent levels for similar size properties, however, vary according to certain factors, including the remoteness of the location and the lack of services in the area and/or the amenities within the particular property e.g. what kind of heating system or size of kitchen it has and so on. Please contact the Housing Association directly for rent information about a specific scheme.

Area	Provider	Type Of Housing Provided	2011/12 Average Rent per week (unless otherwise stated)
West Lothian	West Lothian Council	General Needs	£59.99
West Lothian	Almond Housing Association	General Needs & Amenity	£65.83
West Lothian	Ark Housing Association	General Needs	£71.75
West Lothian	Barony Housing Association	General Needs & Amenity	£73.33
West Lothian	Bield Housing Association	General Needs Amenity, Sheltered Very Sheltered, Housing with Care	1 person flat £457.96/month 2 person flat £482.38/month
West Lothian	Cairn Housing Association	Sheltered General Needs	£64.90 £60.24
West Lothian	Dunedin Canmore Housing Association	General Needs & Sheltered	£65.79
West Lothian	Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association	General Needs	£70.00
West Lothian	Hanover Housing Association	Sheltered & Amenity	
West Lothian	Horizon Housing Association	General Needs & Amenity	£58.96
West Lothian	Link Housing Association	General Needs	£55.14
West Lothian	Margaret Blackwood Housing Association	General Needs	£67.88
West Lothian	Trust Housing Association	General Needs, Amenity, Sheltered, Housing with Care	£58.72
West Lothian	WESLO Housing Management	General Needs	£275.76/month (rent charged monthly)
West Lothian	West Lothian Housing Partnership	General Needs	£76.21

9.5 Special Needs Housing

Many of the local Housing Associations offer sheltered or supported accommodation in a variety of locations throughout West Lothian. The ways in which accommodation is supported vary between providers and also between the type of provision on offer, for example there are some very sheltered housing units which have a significantly higher level of support than sheltered housing (see section 10).

9.6 Rights And Responsibilities Of Housing Association Tenants

9.6.1 Repairs And Maintenance

All Housing Associations operate a repairs and maintenance service and most carry out this work in line with the Scottish Secure Tenancy.

9.6.2 Adaptations

All Housing Associations provide aids and adaptations to their tenants. This is normally done in conjunction with an Occupational Therapists assessment.

9.6.3 Right To Buy

All of the Housing Associations who have taken part and provided information for this guide have charitable status and as such their tenants have no right to buy their property, although some existing tenants may have a protected right to buy.

9.6.4 Transfers And Mutual Exchanges

Almost all Housing Associations have a transfer or mutual exchange scheme, most participating in a joint scheme with West Lothian Council and in the scheme operated by Homeswapper www.homeswapper.co.uk/

10 SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

10.1 Introduction

Special needs housing is a general term covering housing built with particular tenant groups in mind. Usually it involves either specially built or adapted housing, for example housing for older or disabled people, or houses linked to some support facility for adults with learning difficulties. It can also refer to houses allocated to particular groups, for example older people. Terms used to describe particular types of housing include:

- **Amenity Housing:** flats or houses with special modifications for people with particular needs, but not supported to a warden. For example, amenity housing for older people could include bathroom handrails, non-slip flooring and repositioned electrical sockets
- **Sheltered Housing:** groups of self contained homes linked to a warden who provides specialist support to all of the tenants
- **Hub or Cluster Flat:** a flat where a number of separate individuals hold an individual tenancy, primarily in respect of their respective bedrooms, but share the use of common spaces. This management arrangement is often used for special needs purposes, for example for people with learning difficulties, with care and support being provided by a specialist agency.

Special needs housing is most often provided by registered social landlords but some provision is also made by Councils. A list of housing associations in Scotland and the client groups they cater for is available on request from the Scottish Government on 0131 313 0044 from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations at www.sfha.co.uk.

Information about the housing options for disabled people is available Ownership Options on 0131 247 1400.

A comprehensive database of housing for older people can be accessed on www.housingcare.org

10.2 Care In The Community

West Lothian Council is committed to Care in the Community. It works closely with West Lothian Community Health and Care Partnership, housing providers, housing support providers and voluntary agencies to help meet the housing, care and support needs of vulnerable people living in West Lothian including;

Older people

- People with physical disabilities
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health problems
- People with drug and alcohol addictions
- People with AIDS and those who are HIV positive

West Lothian Council will allocate a number of vacant houses to people in these Community Care Groups. These allocations take place outwith the allocation policy. More information about the Council's Care in the Community Policy can be obtained from your Local Customer Service Centre.

10.2.1 Procedure

Adults who have been assessed by social work as requiring additional support when allocated their own tenancy will be considered according to West Lothian Council's Care in the Community Procedure.

Priority will be given to:

- Adults currently living in registered or other supported living accommodation and who have been identified as being able to move to greater independence and thus creating a vacancy for another service user.

- Adults in hospital, who may previously have held a tenancy and are now assessed as able to return to live in the community.
- Adults who are unable to share and require support in a single tenancy.
- Adults where the care plan is that they move to more independent accommodation, this will include young adults currently living with carers who wish to become more independent or where their parents can no longer provide care and/or support.

This process is not designed to meet emergency needs.

Applicants will be helped to submit a housing application form as soon as the plan for a tenancy is identified.

When a property becomes available to let central allocations will check the suitability of this property with the Social Worker, who will make contact with applicant and assist them through the allocation and resettlement process.

10.3 Home Safety Service

West Lothian Council's Home Safety Service aims to help maximise a person's potential independence by increasing their personal and environmental safety enabling them to remain living in their own home for as long as possible. People at risk, can have unobtrusive and easy to use equipment installed in their own home that is linked to specially trained advisers who will respond to all alarm calls for help. The equipment ensures that access to help is there when most needed. Applicants must have a working landline telephone connection without incoming or outgoing call barring. It is preferable not to use a 'Pay as you Go' arrangement, since a lack of credit could prevent successful transmission of an alarm call to Careline

10.3.1 What is provided?

A Lifeline Home Unit - this is the hub of the system and connects to the telephone line and mains electrical power supply. It receives smart information from the other detectors and sensors which are positioned around the home and generates alarm calls for help.

There are also:

- 2 Movement Sensors - these are usually programmed to monitor during the daytime for inactivity by the householder over a set period of time. E.g. can alert in the event of a fall. These sensors can also be used to detect intruders.
- 2 Flood Detectors - dependant on where they are located on the floor, they can detect water from leaking pipes, washing machines, taps left on, defrosting fridges etc.
- Temperature Extremes Detector - this is able to detect low temperatures and also high temperatures in the kitchen/cooking area.
- Smoke Detector - to protect against risk of fire.
- Carbon Monoxide Detector – this can be provided where there is no existing provision.
- Personal Pendant - used to trigger off an alert for help or to answer the phone. Can be worn around the neck as a pendant, on the wrist or clipped to items of clothing.

The sensors require only minimal fixing - some go on the ceiling or wall. Only the Lifeline Unit has to be plugged in as all the other equipment operates by radio signal. The equipment automatically alerts West Lothian Careline when a detector is activated.

10.3.2 How Much Does the Service Cost?

There is currently no charge for the service. The equipment is provided on a free loan basis for as long as is required to address risk. Battery and maintenance costs are also covered so there is no charge to the service user apart from

telephone calls.

10.3.3 How to Apply

You can pick up an application form and information leaflet from any Council Information Service Centre or Health Centre. Alternatively, telephone the Customer Service Centre on 01506 280000.

On receiving the application, a member of the Home Safety Service Team will come and assess you in your home to ensure that you meet the criteria for the service and establish how best to tailor the technology to your situation. If you have specialist needs they can also assess for further equipment.

10.3.4 Once the Home Safety Service has been installed

If you require assistance, an adviser from West Lothian Careline will answer your call and give you advice and help as required. They will also answer all calls that are triggered automatically by the equipment.

The adviser will know who you are and where you live and what piece of equipment triggered the call. They will also know where the equipment is in your home.

The adviser will have details of the telephone numbers of your doctor, family and friends, emergency services or the Home Safety Service team and will contact the appropriate person for help.

The adviser will stay on the line with you until help arrives, reassuring you that you are in safe hands and that someone will be with you soon.

10.4 Housing With Care

West Lothian Council in partnership with Bield Housing Association, Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association, Dunedin Canmore Housing Association and Trust Housing Association, supports 177 housing with care tenancies. The aim of Housing with Care is to promote independent living through assisting older people with support needs to reside longer in their own homes as an alternative to other forms of institutional care.

Development	Landlord	Support Provider	No of Tenancies
Almondvale Gds, Blackburn	Bield HA	WLC	24
Brucefield House, Whitburn	WLC	WLC	8
Brucefield House, Whitburn	Dunedin Canmore HA	WLC	7
Crusader Court, Livingston	Trust HA	WLC	32
Colinshiel Court, Armadale	Hanover HA	WLC	30
Cunnigar House, Mid Calder	WLC	WLC	17
Holmes Gardens, Broxburn	Bield HA	WLC	30
Dickson Court, West Calder	Bield HA	WLC	30

Housing with Care provides a much higher level of support services than are currently available in sheltered or very sheltered housing. A generic on-site staff team provides the following:

- Housing Support Services
- Domestic Support
- Personal Care
- 24 Hours staff cover (including access to a sleepover service)

Also available within each Housing with Care development is access to a range of facilities, such as:

- Restaurant/cafe service
- Hairdressers
- Social Activities
- Laundry Facilities

- Assisted Bathing Facilities

A service charge is made to cover the cost of some of the services (no charge is made for personal care), together with a rental and property charge for the individual flat.

Older people who have housing and support needs may apply. Application forms are available from Customer Service Centres, Social Work offices, from West Lothian Council's Central Allocation Team or from the individual Housing Association.

Each application form received by West Lothian Council will be assessed by the Housing with Care Screening Group. The Screening Group will assess applicants as either Grade A, B or C depending on the number of hours of support and care outlined in the application. A joint visit will always be undertaken by the landlord and the support provider to determine any additional needs. Grade A applicants will be nominated for tenancies located nearer the hub of a development while Grade Bs will be allocated dwellings further away from the hub. Application forms assessed as Grade C are not eligible for housing with care and will be informed by letter.

10.4.1 Access To Housing With Care - Procedure

Interested applicants can apply for the service through the completion of a Housing with Care Application form. An information pack, including an application form is available from:

- Customer Information Centres
- Bield, Hanover, Dunedin Canmore or Trust Housing Association
- West Lothian Council Central Allocations Team
- Social Work Offices

All completed application forms should be returned to Central Allocations Team.

10.4.1.1 Screening Group And Assessment Process

There is a Screening Group which assesses and prioritises applications. The remit of the Screening Group is:

- To check that applicants meet the housing with care eligibility criteria.
- To prioritise the applications in terms of the Group System (see 9.4.3).
- To agree if an assessment (Single Shared Assessment) is required, if not already undertaken.
- To monitor progress with applications and Single Shared Assessment requests.
- To ensure a joint home visit has taken place with the appropriate landlord where required.

10.4.1.2 Acceptance To The Housing With Care List

The information provided in the application form enables the Screening Group to prioritise applicants in accordance with the Priority Groupings (see below). On completion of this process successful applications will be added to the Housing with Care list according to:

- Priority Group.
- Date of application within each Priority Group.

The Central Allocations Team will send a letter to the applicant advising which priority group they have been placed in.

Applicants who do not meet the criteria will be given the opportunity to be considered for Sheltered Housing or general needs housing.

10.4.1.3 Offer Of Accommodation

Applicants will normally be entitled to 2 offers of accommodation. (i.e. they have the right to refuse the first offer without affecting their date of application).

10.4.1.4 Notification Of Vacancy

The Housing Association will contact WLC Centralised Allocations team as soon as a vacancy is identified in a development. The Housing Association will provide details about the property and request 3 nominees as per vacancy.

10.4.1.5 Joint Visit

The Housing Association will undertake a home visit to the applicant, with the Housing Support Manager. The purpose of this visit is to check that housing, support and care circumstances have not changed prior to offer of accommodation.

10.4.1.6 Offer of Tenancy

The Housing Association will consider nominations in line with their own organisations allocation policy and will allocate the tenancy to the nominee with the highest points.

10.4.2 Care And Support Plans

A joint Care and Support Plan will be completed and agreed when a tenancy has been offered.

10.4.3 Priority Groupings

The eligibility criteria set down within the following table is based on circumstances at 'Point of Access' for the Housing with Care Service. In general applicants who are frailer with higher personal care and support needs will be housed wherever possible in the Hub flats.

Applicants who have profound dementia are not considered suitable for Housing with Care. A diagnosis by a Psychogeriatrician will be requested if there are any concerns.

GROUP	POINT OF ACCESS CRITERIA
TRANSFER	Applicants discharged from hospital who are not offered their first choice of housing with care development
GROUP A	Applicants who are: In hospital awaiting discharge or who are living at home and have care needs which would require the equivalent of 12-18 hours personal care and support each week to maintain their safety.
GROUP B	Applicants who are: Living at home and have care needs which would require the equivalent of 6-12 hours personal care and support per week to be maintained at home.
GROUP C	Applicants who have less than 6 hours of weekly support would be considered for mainstream accommodation or sheltered housing accommodation provided by either WLC or other RSL's with homes in the applicants preferred communities.

10.5 Sheltered Housing and Very Sheltered Housing

10.5.1 Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing can best be described as small easy to manage almost always rented properties, provided by the Council and housing associations. They are grouped together in a scheme with the services of a housing support worker. All properties are provided with a community alarm system, for use in emergencies.

West Lothian Council manages five sheltered housing schemes. Applicants aged 55 and above can apply for sheltered housing accommodation. However, applicants will not normally be considered for a vacancy until they have reached pensionable age. (60 years).

The allocation of sheltered accommodation takes into account the needs of the individual applicant, the nature of the vacancy and the level of support that is available. Applicants moving into sheltered housing may qualify for the relocation grant scheme.

10.5.1.1 Sheltered Housing Schemes Managed by West Lothian Council

SCHEME	ADDRESS	No of Tenancies	Customer Service Centre
Brucefield House All Ground Floor	McMartin Court Whitburn	15	Whitburn CSC 5 East Main Street Whitburn
Rosemount Court Ground & 1 st Floor (Lift)	Mid Street Bathgate	21	Bathgate CSC Lindsay House Bathgate
Jane Place Ground & 1 st Floor (Lift)	Academy Street Bathgate	13	Bathgate CSC Lindsay House Bathgate
Norvell Lodge Ground & 1 st Floor (Lift)	Philip Avenue Boghall	28	Bathgate CSC Lindsay House Bathgate
Cunnigar House All Ground Floor	Avenue Park West Mid Calder	3	West Calder CSC 24-26 Main Street West Calder

10.5.1.2 Sheltered Housing Schemes Managed By Other Housing Providers In West Lothian

Scheme	Location	Landlord	No of Tenancies
Ochilview Court	Armadale	Bield	37
Hanover Close	Bathgate	Hanover	39
Academy Street	Bathgate	Cairn	36
South Loch Park	Bathgate	Bield	28 (amenity)
Stewart Court	West Calder	Bield	36
Manse Court	East Calder	Trust	25
West Port	Linlithgow	Bield	27
Mossie Court	Blackburn	Bield	37
Almondell Court	Broxburn	Bield	29
Church Street	Broxburn	Hanover	42
Abercorn Court	Winchburgh	Bield	24
St Andrews Drive	Uphall	Bield	32
Bowling Green Rd	Whitburn	Hanover	29
Mansewood Court	Whitburn	Bield	32
Blackfaulds Drive	Fauldhouse	Bield	33
Hanover Court	Livingston Village	Hanover	20
Craigengar Park	Livingston	Bield	39
Pentland View	Livingston	Bield	32
Restondene	Livingston	Bield	26
Brucefield House	Whitburn	Dunedin Canmore	16
			618

10.5.2 Very Sheltered Housing

Very Sheltered Housing offers a higher level of housing support than sheltered housing and also offers other services such as a meals service, hairdressing facilities etc. West Lothian Council do not own any Very Sheltered Housing developments or have any nomination rights to this type of accommodation.

Scheme	Location	Landlord	No of Units
Tollgate House	Armadale	Hanover	22
Carron Court	Bathgate	Bield	29
Brae Court	Linlithgow	Bield	40
Ashley Hall	Linlithgow	Abbeyfield Scotland Ltd	8

10.6 Tenancy Support Service

10.6.1 West Lothian Council

West Lothian Council tenants can receive assistance from the Housing Support Service. A Housing Officer (Support) provides support to tenants within their own tenancies. Their role is to offer a flexible and responsive approach to supporting the individual.

The Housing Officers (Support) can:

- Help with budgeting issues
- Help with claiming benefits
- Give guidance in the use of domestic or household appliances
- Advise on how to obtain help with preparing meals
- Give guidance on neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour
- Assist with resettlement
- Assist with making contact with other professional help

10.6.2 The Rock Trust

10.6.2.1 Bedrock West Lothian

This is a housing support service available to young people (16 – 25) who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. It also receives referrals for young people moving on from care.

Young people are provided with a tenancy for up to two years (average stays are around the 1 year mark) and receive a package of support to help develop their independent living skills.

Support plans are developed which include reference to resettlement plans. This allows us to focus on the future housing needs and aspirations of each young person – including areas where they are most suited for resettlement (taking into account important current and future supportive networks), the type of housing tenure and financial considerations that may impact on their housing choices. We work in partnership with many West Lothian organisations to ensure that the young people who we work with receive up to date and accurate information about the choices and opportunities that exist for them.

10.6.2.2 Networks Through Care

Networks Through Care supports young people in care who are socially isolated within their communities. It works with such young people to develop their social coping skills and to develop their networks of support (improving existing ones and building new ones). Housing Options work necessitates good dialogue with those who find themselves in difficulty. Of consideration here is the concept of such people having the confidence and skills to access and engage with such services. Social networks support therefore is a key component of ensuring that whatever services are available, are accessible and well used by all. Social network support can also lead to family reconciliation, which in some instances can resolve the issue of homelessness.

Contact Details:

Bedrock West Lothian
20 Grampian Court
Livingston
EH54

Tel: 01506 420760
Email: admin@rocktrust.org

Opening Hours: Mon – Fri 08:45 to 17:00
Out of hours service available to Bedrock service users

10.7 Residential And Supported Accommodation

There are residential and supported accommodation establishments provided by the Council, housing associations and other voluntary organisations and the private sector for people with special residential and respite care needs, including for:

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Data Label: Public

- older and infirm people
- adults with mental health problems
- adults with physical and/or learning disabilities
- children and young adults with a learning disability
- young people
- ex-offenders
- people with alcohol or drug related problems
- combinations of these and more specialist requirements

Details can be obtained from West Lothian Council, Telephone 01506 280000

11 HOMELESSNESS

11.1 Introduction

Homelessness is something that happens to many ordinary people all over Britain. Society has for many years accepted that it must find accommodation for those people who become "homeless", as defined by the law.

Local authorities have a legal duty to help homeless people - firstly by interviewing them and assessing their housing situation and, secondly, by offering them temporary or permanent accommodation where required according to criteria laid down in Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

11.2 The Council's Legal Duty

In West Lothian people who present themselves as homeless are interviewed by skilled and experienced staff at any local Housing office, or by the Young Adults Team. Everyone presenting is offered advice. The Council's legal duty applies to applicants who satisfy the following four main criteria:

- are homeless;
- are in priority need;
- are or are not intentionally homeless; and
- have a local connection to the area.

Detailed guidance is contained in the Scottish Government's "Code of Guidance on Homelessness". This code provides guidance to Authorities as how to interpret each of these criteria. Copies are available at Customer Service Centres.

Key points to note about each of the criteria, sometimes described as hurdles, are explained in the following sections.

11.2.1 Homelessness Definition

'Homeless' means the applicant and anyone who would reasonably be expected to live with them either -

- has no accommodation - anywhere in UK or elsewhere - which he or she is entitled or permitted to occupy
- or
- is going to be in such a homeless situation within 2 months.
- or
- that it is unreasonable to expect the applicant to go on living in their present home - typically because of the threat of violence from another member of the household or because the accommodation is so sub-standard that it presents a real danger to the health of the applicant.

11.2.2 Priority Need

The following people have a priority need for accommodation:

- Families with dependent children (including pregnancy)
- People made homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or any other disaster
- Young people aged 16 and 17
- Young people aged 18 to 20 who by reason of the circumstances in which they are living run the risk of sexual or financial exploitation or involvement in the serious misuse of alcohol, any drug or volatile substance
- A person aged 18 to 20 who, at the time when the person ceased to be of school age, or at any subsequent time, was looked after by the Local Authority and the person is no longer looked after by the Local Authority

- A person who runs the risk of domestic abuse
- A person who, by reason of that person's religion, sexual orientation, race, colour or ethnic or national origin runs the risk of violence, or is, or is likely to be the victim of a course of conduct amounting to harassment
- A person who is vulnerable as a result of:
 - old age
 - mental illness or personality disorder
 - learning difficulties
 - physical disability or chronic ill health
 - having suffered a miscarriage or undergone an abortion
 - having been discharged from a hospital, a prison or any part of the regular armed forces of the Crown, or other special reason
- The following additional categories of priority need were introduced as local policy by West Lothian Council (as from 1st September 2009):
 - a person aged 25 and under and aged 55 and over
 - a person who has been re-assessed as homeless or potentially homeless within 12 months of the previous case being completed and both cases involving the same household / family composition.
 - a person discharged from hospital
 - a person whose home has been forcibly sold due to matrimonial breakdown
 - a person with overnight access to his or her child / children for a minimum of 1 night per week.

11.2.3 Intentionality

The Council has to satisfy itself that the applicant did not deliberately do something or **fail** to do something which resulted in homelessness e.g. refusing to pay rent for no proper reason; a teenager leaving the parental home without presenting a compelling reason why he or she could not return.

11.2.4 Local Connection

As a general rule the applicant must have a local connection with the Council area. However applicants in special circumstances are assessed on a case by case basis. This includes people fleeing domestic violence or someone who has no local connection with any place in the United Kingdom. A local authority has a power, but not a duty, to refer an applicant to another local authority in Scotland, England and Wales if it thinks the applicant does not have a local connection with it but does have a local connection with another authority.

11.3 Homelessness Assessment

Where an applicant is homeless, temporary accommodation will be secured, or if the person has no local connection, they may be referred to another authority. The Council aims to reach a final decision on each application from a potentially homeless person within 28 days. People facing a homeless situation should seek legal advice where appropriate.

The assessment period for applications allows Council staff enough time to make the necessary enquiries to verify each applicant's homeless circumstances properly. Applicants are kept regularly informed by the staff concerned on the progress being made with the assessment of their application.

Dissatisfied applicants may appeal the decision. There is a statutory right to get your decision reviewed. If you are unhappy about a decision made regarding your homeless application you can appeal in writing to the Housing Manager of the office where the decision was made.

You can get independent advice from:

Advice Shop, Bathgate Partnership Centre, South Bridge St, Bathgate, EH48 1TS. Telephone (01506) 283000.

Shelter's Housing Aid Centre 0808 800 4444 (line open Mondays 1-4, Tuesdays 10-1 and Thursdays 1-4)

<http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>

11.4 Homeless Applicants In West Lothian

On average, about 1, 800 homeless applicants seek assistance from the Council.

The majority of homeless applicants in West Lothian are single people between the ages of 18 and 60, but homelessness can affect any type of household. Vulnerable homeless applicants may well require additional forms of support to help them through these difficult periods in their lives and the Council's Housing Needs Officers work closely with other Council staff and all the relevant local agencies to ensure that such support is provided.

11.5 Temporary Accommodation

The type of accommodation used by the Council to house homeless applicants includes furnished emergency accommodation within the homeless persons unit in Blackburn and furnished properties throughout West Lothian. Other housing providers also lease some of their properties to the council. For women fleeing violence, a referral may be made to Women's Aid (Livingston). Accommodation is provided until a decision is reached on the application. Thereafter only those who fulfil all the criteria will continue to be provided with temporary accommodation, pending an offer of permanent housing.

The homeless unit in Blackburn provides emergency accommodation for a short period (depending on individual circumstances). If moved to other temporary accommodation the average length of stay is between 4 to 6 months. For households that are not going to be offered permanent accommodation, temporary accommodation and advice and assistance will be offered for a reasonable period to allow the household to secure alternative accommodation.

Offers of permanent accommodation will be made by the Council for a council property or a referral will be made to a housing association or other local landlord for re-housing. Up to two offers of accommodation are made. If these offers are unreasonably refused, the applicant(s) will have to vacate the temporary accommodation and secure their own accommodation as the Council will have fulfilled its obligation to them.

The Council is the primary provider of homelessness accommodation within West Lothian. Some Housing Associations do provide homeless accommodation but it is accessed via the Council. Open Door Hostel provide direct access for young single homeless people.

11.5.1 Nightstop

Nightstop, (currently in development in partnership between The Rock Trust and West Lothian Council) is a short stay 'time out' service for young people who are approaching housing crisis and require an intervention to stabilise their current housing situation, whilst looking at alternative options and taking the time to make the right next steps. It involves matching young people with volunteer hosts who are happy to put the young people up in their own homes for a few days. During this time each young person is supported to plan appropriate next steps. The service can include mediation – which in some instances will lead to reconciliation and a return to their previous address.

11.6 What To Do If You Are Homeless

During office hours (9am – 5pm) you should telephone 01506 280000, or visit in person Lomond House, Beveridge Square, Livingston, or email homelesservices@westlothian.gov.uk .

Outwith office hours you need to contact the police or the council's emergency telephone number - 01506 631240 - and a member of staff will try to help.

You will be interviewed and asked for:

- Your name;
- Previous address;
- Details of any children – their ages; and
- Whether you have accommodation for the night.
- You will also be asked if you have a current housing application. If not, you will be asked to complete one.

You will be interviewed in private to discuss your situation.

You can bring a friend or advisor with you to the interview if you want to.

You can request an interview with someone of the same sex.

You will be offered advice and assistance to try to prevent you becoming homeless. You will be asked details of your circumstances in order to assess your options and what can be done to assist you.

If you do not have a current housing application registered with the Council you will be asked to complete an application form at this stage. (see Section 8 for details of the Council's Housing Application Policy.)

12 WHERE TO GET GOOD HOUSING INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Organisation	Address	Telephone
Advice Shop	Bathgate Partnership Centre, South Bridge St, Bathgate, West Lothian, EH48 1TS	01506 283000
Age Concern Scotland	113 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DT	0845 833 0250
Allelon (SACRO)	16 Leamington Terrace, Edinburgh, EH10 4JN	0131 229 4192
Almond Housing Association	Shiel House, Craigshill, Livingston EH54 5EH	01506 439291
Ark Housing Association	The Priory, Cannan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG	0131 447 9027
Barony Housing Association	Canal Court, 40 Craiglockhart Avenue, Edinburgh EH14 1LT	0845 140 7777
Bedrock	Unit 20, Grampian Court, Livingston, West Lothian	01506 591860
Bethany Christian Trust	18 Jane Street, Edinburgh, EH6 5HD	0131 467 3030
Bield Housing Association	79 Hopetoun Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4QF	0131 273 4000
Breich Valley Information Service	10 Main Street, Fauldhouse, West Lothian, EH47 9HX	01501 770276
Cairn Housing Association	64A Leven Rd, Townhead, Coatbridge, ML5 2LT	01236 441850
Canongate Advice & Support Team (CAST)	Southbridge Resource Centre, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LT	0131 556 9389
Care & Repair West Lothian	Leving House, Fairbairn Place, Livingston, EH54 6TN	01506 424148
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association	1 Hay Avenue, Edinburgh	0131 657 0600
Chinese Elderly Support Association	25 Home Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9JR	0131 228 5808
Citizens Advice Bureau	Sheil House, Sheil Walk, Livingston, West Lothian	01506 432977
Commission for Racial Equality	The 'Tun', 12 Jackson's Entry, Edinburgh EH8 8PJ	0131 524 2000
Contact a Family	Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY	0131 475 2608
Cyrenians West Lothian Service	Kirkton Business Centre, Kirk Lane, Livingston	01506 205412
Disability West Lothian	Ability Centre, Carmondean Road, Livingston, EH54 8PT	01506 774030
Dunedin Canmore Housing Association	8 Newmart Rd, Edinburgh EH14 1RL	0131 478 8888
ELCA (Edinburgh and Lothian Council on Alcohol)	6 Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5DR	0131 337 8188
Elderpark Housing Association	31 Garmouth St, Glasgow, G51 3PR	0141 440 2244
Emergency Supported Accommodation	Blackburn Homeless Unit, 151 Rowan Drive, Blackburn	01506 773757
Enable	7 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 3HL	0141 226 4541
Family Mediation Lothian	37 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2HN	0131 226 4507
HOMES/ MoveUK (Housing Mobility & Exchange Scheme)	6 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh EH12 5AA	0131 226 7216
Hanover Housing Association	95 McDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4NS	0131 557 0598
Horizon Housing Association	Leving House, Fairbairn Place, Livingston EH54 6TN	01506 424140
Jewish Care Scotland	May Terrace, Giffnock, Glasgow G46 6LD	0141 620 1800
Leep (Lothian & Edinburgh Environmental Partnership)	36 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh EH6 5PY	0131 555 4010
LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Youth Scotland	John Cotton Centre, 10 Sunnyside, Edinburgh EH7 5RA	0131 622 2266
Linkwide	33-35 Wellside Place, Falkirk FK1 5RL	01324 625881
Lothian Centre for Integrated	57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH 7 5QY	0131 475 2350

Living		
Margaret Blackwood Housing Association	Craigievar House, 77 Craigmount Brae, Edinburgh, EH12 8XF	0131 317 7227
MECOPP	23 Leith Walk, Edinburgh EH6 8LN	0131 467 2994
MILAN	10 Albert Street, Edinburgh EH7 5LG	0131 555 5330
Moving Into Health	Lomond House, Beveridge Square, Livingston	01506 280000
Move On	55 Albany Street, Edinburgh	0131 524 9870
One Parent Families Scotland	13 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh EH1 3NX	0131 556 3899
Open Door Accommodation Project	7-12 Adelaide Street, Craigshill, Livingston, EH54 5HG	01506 430221
Ownership Options in Scotland	Unit 20, John Cotton Centre, 10 Sunnyside, Edinburgh	0131 247 1400
Penumbra	Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY	0131 475 2380
Positive Action In Housing (PAIH)	98 West George St, Glasgow, G2 1PJ	0141 353 2220
Rock Trust	55 Albany Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3QY	0131 557 4059
Rural Housing Service	28 Albany Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3QH	0131 477 5206
SACRO Criminal Justice Services	Edworth Halls, 25 Nicholson Street, Edinburgh	0131 622 7500
SAMH	13 Marmion Rd, Bathgate, West Lothian	01506 630067
Save The Children Scotland	8 Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5DR	0131 527 8200
Scottish Churches Housing Action	28 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QH	0131 477 4500
Scottish Council for Single Homeless	5 th Floor, Wellgate House, 200 Cowgate, Edinburgh EH1 1NQ	0131 226 4382
Scottish Refugee Council	5 Cadogan Square (170 Blythwood Court), Glasgow	0141 248 9799
Shelter Housing Aid Centre	4 th Floor, Scotia Bank House, 6 South Charlotte St, Edinburgh EH2 2AW	0808 800 4444
Streetwork UK	14 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QB	0131 476 3666
Tenants Participation & Advisory Service	74-78 Saltmarket, Glasgow G1 5LD	0141 552 3633
The Action group	Norton Park Centre, St Albion Road, Edinburgh	0131 475 2315
The Link Centre	HMP Edinburgh, 33 Stenhouse Road, Edinburgh	0131 444 3000
The Rights Office	Southside Community Centre, 117 Nicolson St, Edinburgh, EH8 9YG	0131 667 6339
Trust Housing Association	12 Newmart Road, Edinburgh	0131 225 7246
Throughcare/Aftercare	Lomond House, Beveridge Square, Livingston	01506 280000
VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian)	8-12 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2PW	0131 466 4120
Waverley Care Solas	2-4 Abbeymount, Edinburgh, EH8 8EJ	0131 661 0982
Weslo Housing Management	66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, West Lothian EH48 4PP	01506 634060
West Lothian Council Housing, Construction and Building Services	Civic Centre, Howden Rd South, Livingston EH54 6FF	01506 280000
West Lothian Housing Partnership	3 Michaelson Square, Kirkton Campus, Livingston EH54 7DP	01506 416438
West Lothian Women's Aid	92 Ivanhoe Rise, Dedridge, Livingston EH54 6HZ	01506 461938