

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the housing emergency?**

In November 2023, we [declared a housing emergency in Edinburgh](#) due to significant pressures on the city's housing market, including homelessness rates and housing costs.

Our [Housing Emergency Action Plan \(HEAP\)](#) sets out the actions we are taking to relieve the impact of these pressures and reduce the number of households in Edinburgh without settled accommodation.

Whilst we've made significant progress on the action plan, we've been unable to meet the demand for suitable housing for all those in need, including people assessed as homeless.

- **Why are you pausing advertising council homes?**

As a Local Authority, we have a statutory duty to provide accommodation for anyone assessed as homeless. Failing to do this is a breach of the law.

We regularly fail to meet our statutory duty by:

- not being able to provide temporary accommodation for people who urgently need somewhere to stay
- providing temporary accommodation that is not suitable (generally B&B type accommodation).

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

- require temporary accommodation
- are assessed as homeless and who are currently in unsuitable temporary accommodation
- have Urgent Gold or Gold Priority on their EdIndex application.

This does not affect homes advertised by housing associations and housing co-ops.

- **What is a 'failure to accommodate'?**

Anyone who is assessed as homeless, or where homelessness is being investigated, has a statutory right to temporary accommodation.

Failing to accommodate a homeless household is not only a breach of legislation, but it also means that in many cases these households have no secure accommodation option available to them.

It also increases pressure on housing services and staff as those we have failed to accommodate are presenting multiple times to try and access temporary accommodation.

In addition, given the increasing number of breaches of this legislation we have seen a significant increase in the number of legal challenges due to the failure to provide accommodation.

- **What is ‘unsuitable temporary accommodation’?**

The law states that a homeless household should not be placed in unsuitable accommodation for more than seven days. Broadly speaking this refers to B&B type accommodation.

Given the lack of suitable temporary accommodation and the current lengths of stay, we breach the law on a daily basis. This means that in some cases, homeless households are placed in accommodation which has shared facilities and access to one room for years.

- **Has the housing emergency been caused by those seeking asylum and immigration to the UK?**

The housing emergency is the result of a situation that has been developing for many years. The main issue is that there are increased numbers of people presenting as homeless, and a shortage of permanent homes available to offer. You can read more about these issues in the [Housing Emergency Action Plan \(HEAP\)](#).

- **Will those seeking asylum and immigration to the UK be prioritised for housing over other applicants?**

No additional priority is awarded on the basis of asylum or immigration status

- **Are adverts for all types of social housing being paused? eg housing associations**

Housing Association and Housing Co-op homes will still be advertised, either through Key to Choice or through their normal advertising channels. [Find more information on the EdIndex website.](#)

- **How long are you pausing adverts for council homes?**

This is a temporary pause and we will keep it under regular review. [Updates will be put on the EdIndex website.](#)

- **I have Urgent Gold or Gold Priority. Can I still bid for a home?**

While the pause is in place, applicants with Urgent Gold or Gold Priority will not be able to place bids for a council home. However, they should still bid on suitable homes advertised by Housing Associations on Key to Choice.

Applicants who hold Urgent Gold or Gold Priority for ground floor accessible/adaptable homes will be contacted directly by their Assessment Officer if a suitable council home that meets their needs becomes available.

- **Can I still register for social housing while adverts are paused?**

Yes, you can still [register for EdIndex online](#) and view your housing options. If you do not have access to the internet, you can [visit one of our locality offices to register](#).

Once you've registered, you'll be able to set up your Housing Online account to get on the Key to Choice website.

You'll also be able to use our Housing Options tool to help you

- find the most suitable, affordable housing option for your circumstances
- find out if you're eligible for a priority for social housing
- see if social housing is the best option for you
- view your other housing options.

- **How can I find out my housing options?**

We would encourage anyone who needs housing to visit the EdIndex website and register with Housing Online. This will allow you to complete the Housing Options tool which will show you a range of options that might suit you including private rent, mid market rent and social housing.

If you decide that you wish to apply for social housing you can register from the **social housing** option in the Housing Options tool. It is not possible to register for social housing online without completing the Housing Options tool first. You can also download a paper copy of the EdIndex application from our website if you prefer.

- **I have mobility issues. How can I apply for a home?**

We will continue to allocate homes to people with mobility issues that have Urgent Gold Priority or Gold Priority on EdIndex.

To qualify for Urgent Gold or Gold Priority you need to meet certain criteria. [Find out more about Gold Priority Criteria](#).

Applicants who have Urgent Gold or Gold Priority for ground floor accessible/adapted homes will be contacted directly by their Assessment Officer if a suitable council home that meets their needs becomes available.

- **I already have a council house but need to move**

If you currently live in a council or housing association home and wish to move, you can register with House Exchange to swap your home with another social tenant who also wishes to move. This service is free.

Whether it's for a new job, a need for more space, a family change, downsizing or other personal reasons, a home swap can be the ideal solution.

House Exchange is the biggest mutual exchange website, and last year helped 14,000 social tenants to exchange their homes with other registered applicants.

[Register for House Exchange.](#)

- **I don't feel safe in my council home, how can I get support?**

If you feel unsafe in your council home, speak to your housing officer who can help direct you to services that can support you. You can also approach our Family and Household Support Service directly. For more information and contact details, [visit the Family and Household Support Service.](#)

Please note we are unable to respond to any individual enquiries regarding the pause of council adverts.