

Tenants Incentive Scheme in Edinburgh

Council tenants in Edinburgh could benefit from up to £1,000 in a pilot scheme to tackle the issue of under-occupied homes.

A new Tenants Incentive proposal aims to free up much-needed housing space for those families who are living in homes that are far too small for them.

Under the citywide pilot tenants could get up to a maximum of £1,000 for moving costs including removals/packing, decorating and floor coverings.

Research has shown that around 5% of council homes – over 1,000 in the city – are under-occupied.

Evaluation of the pilot project will allow the Council to decide on future incentive options.

The latest idea came through the Tenant Incentives Working Group which was set up by the Council to look at various incentive options. The group consisted of Council Housing staff, representatives from the Edinburgh Tenants Federation and the former Just Rewards programme.

✘ Councillor Norman Work, Vice Convener for Housing in Edinburgh, said the incentives proposal was a good way of trying to solve the dilemma of a high demand for social housing in the Capital but limited supply.

He said: “It’s very frustrating that we have rooms lying empty in some of our larger Council homes whilst other families are living in over-crowded accommodation. We hope that this pilot project will act as an incentive for tenants to move and free up much-needed family accommodation.

“There are just not enough large homes in the social housing

sector in Edinburgh to meet demand. Because of a change in circumstances some tenants are still living in homes that are now too large for them but we can't insist that they move when their family move on.

"Offering up to £1,000 in moving costs is a small price to pay if we can shake up the stagnant state of our under-occupied homes situation. In these times of budgetary pressures freeing up larger homes means families can move out of temporary accommodation and ultimately save the Council money."

Betty Stevenson, Chair of the Edinburgh Tenants Federation, said: "We hope this cash incentive will help people living in bigger homes move to more suitable ones.

"Sometimes the thought of packing and moving could put people off especially in today's current economic climate but this money will come in useful. Also smaller homes will also save them money as they will be cheaper to heat."