

# Council tenants could benefit from cash if they downsize

Council tenants in Edinburgh will now be able to benefit from up to £1,000 worth of help in a pilot scheme to tackle the issue of homes that are too big for them.

A new Tenants Incentive Scheme has started to free up much-needed housing space for those families who are living in a property with three or more bedrooms and are interested in moving to a smaller home.

Under the city-wide initiative, tenants who have successfully bid for another available home advertised through the Choice based letting system can get cash help of up to £1,000 which they can use to help with moving costs including removals/packing and decoration.

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

Councillor Norman Work, Vice Convener for Housing in Edinburgh, said the new project was a good way of trying to help increase the supply of larger family accommodation in the City that is currently being under-occupied.

He said: “No one wants to see rooms lying empty in some of our larger Council homes whilst other families are living in over-crowded accommodation. Tenants now have an incentive 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.”

Betty Stevenson, Chair of the Edinburgh Tenants Federation, said:- "We hope this incentive will help people living in bigger homes move to more suitable ones although people who have lived there for many years may not want to move which is easy to understand.

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

A sum of £50,000 has set aside for the initial pilot project which will then be evaluated to allow the Council to decide on future incentive options.