

New government measures will help with housing costs

A new £10 million fund will be part of a government package to support anyone struggling to pay their rent due to financial difficulty associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Tenant Hardship Loan Fund will open later in the Autumn and offer interest-free loans to those unable to access other forms of support for their housing costs.

The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund which helps tenants in receipt of benefits will increase by £3 million, bringing the total to £19 million. This is in addition to the £60 million DHP budget already being used to fully mitigate the so-called 'bedroom tax'.

Emergency legislation put in place to protect private and social tenants from eviction during the coronavirus pandemic will be extended by six months, pending approval from the Scottish Parliament.

Ministers will also introduce new regulations to allow for the notice period for eviction for anti-social or criminal behaviour to return to one month to protect other neighbours.

Housing Minister Kevin Stewart said: "Tackling inequality and supporting people is a central theme of this year's Programme for Government and this package of support for tenants is part of that.

“We already know that the pandemic has hit the lowest earners hardest and the Scottish Government has already put in place a range of actions in place to support tenants.

“This new £10 million fund, along with a further increase in our Discretionary Housing Payment funds, will mean that no one should be left in a position where they cannot access support to pay their rent. The intention is that this fund will open in November for those unable to access other forms of support to help meet their housing costs.

“We have been clear that no landlord should evict a tenant because they have suffered financial hardship due to the pandemic. I fully expect landlords to be flexible with anyone facing such challenges, signposting them to the sources of financial support available, and tenants in difficulty should engage with their landlord and seek advice on the options open to them.

“I can confirm today that emergency legislation will be extended to ensure no evictions can take place until March 2021. However, since the initial legislation was introduced we have listened carefully to tenants and housing authorities concerned that a three month notice period is too long where tenants have behaved in an anti-social or criminal way. We are therefore reverting back to a one month period for repossession for such cases to ensure we can protect other tenants, neighbours and landlords who should not have to tolerate such behaviour.”