

Single homeless people to be considered for two bedroom houses

Single homeless people may be given two-bedroom homes in East Lothian after it was revealed 93 per cent of those who had been on the waiting list for over a year lived alone.

A severe shortage of one bedroom East Lothian Council properties has seen the county named as one of eight Scottish local authorities in serious risk of failing to delivery homeless services.

A report to councillors today revealed that the average waiting time for suitable accommodation in the county was 452 days – compared to 207 days nationally.

And it said the vast majority of those were single people who ended up in temporary or unsuitable accommodation for longer than acceptable periods.

It said: “In April 2024, the Scottish Housing Regulator named eight local authorities as being at heightened risk of systemic failure regarding the delivery of homelessness services.

“East Lothian Council is one of the local authorities named, with a particular focus on high levels of breaches in respect of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order and use of temporary

accommodation.”

It said the majority of breaches were caused by delays to housing single homeless people with less than 2000 of the council’s stock of just under 9,400 one bedroom properties and almost a third of them specialist including sheltered housing.

To tackle the demand councillors agreed to open up the availability of two bedroom homes, which make up half the stock, to single homeless people who meet the criteria.

Additional support will be made available to help new tenants moving into larger properties manage them.

Councillors also agreed to scrap a six month period in which people applying for accommodation are allowed to give specific areas or preferences before they are offered housing further away.

Council leader Norman Hampshire said: “The use of ‘unsuitable’ temporary accommodation such as B&Bs is something we want to reduce significantly, and I believe these changes will put us on that path.

“Previously, single homeless people were only eligible for one bedroom properties and these are what we particularly lack in East Lothian, meaning that the average time spent in temporary accommodation in East Lothian was way higher than the national average.

“There remains enormous pressure on the council’s social housing sector as there is a high demand for properties and a shortage of supply.

“However, we will continue to work with national and partner agencies to do what we can to improve social housing in East Lothian.”

The meeting of the council’s cabinet approved the changes to

housing policy.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter