# Edinburgh City Council suspends housing allocations to prioritise homeless support amid crisis



Edinburgh City Council has once again suspended its council housing allocations amid ongoing challenges in meeting the Scottish Government’s housing requirements, as the city grapples with a growing housing crisis. This marks the second suspension within a year, following a similar halt initiated in November.

The suspension is part of an effort to prioritise housing for those experiencing homelessness. Under the new policy, almost all available council housing units will be dedicated to homeless households, except for cases involving individuals with acute medical needs or those awaiting hospital discharge. Vacant council properties will primarily serve as temporary accommodation or permanent homes for homeless people. Officials have set a target to make 120 units available each month by bringing void properties back into use.

At a Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work committee meeting held on Friday, councillors were informed of the severe pressures facing the city’s housing system. Figures revealed that in the past year, Edinburgh failed to provide accommodation for homeless individuals on 3,263 occasions—a rise of 115% compared to the previous year. In March alone, 750 homeless households seeking housing could not be accommodated, amounting to 58% of the requests received that month. The housing situation has worsened following a recent legal ruling that halted the use of certain hotel and bed and breakfast rooms for temporary accommodation, due to licensing issues.

In response to the crisis, Edinburgh Council is exploring multiple strategies to swiftly increase housing supply. Among the options under consideration is the purchase of private student housing blocks. SNP councillor Danny Aston, representing Craigentinny/Duddingston, disclosed during the committee meeting that councillors are examining the acquisition of purpose-built student accommodation, with rumours suggesting more than one block could be involved.

The council is understood to be considering a report planned for presentation to the Finance and Resources Committee next week, focusing on the potential purchase of ELS house on Gorgie Road, a prominent private student housing block in the city. Gareth Barwell, Edinburgh Council’s executive director of Place, acknowledged ongoing discussions regarding several sites. Speaking at the meeting, Barwell said: “There are some discussions ongoing with some sites as you’d expect, some commercially sensitive discussions. But we are aware of a number of opportunities in the city where we may be able to buy buildings that are either ready or will be ready within the next, I think, six to nine months. I think it’s an ongoing discussion.”

Council officers also indicated that longer-term plans for expanding the council housing stock are being explored to provide more sustainable solutions to the city’s housing demands.

The suspension of council housing allocations has prompted concerns among councillors about the potential impact on existing tenants and those on waiting lists. Stuart Dobbin, SNP councillor for the Forth ward, noted that approximately 1,000 families living in council housing in Edinburgh currently endure overcrowded conditions.

The council intends to review the suspension decision at a meeting scheduled towards the end of June. Meanwhile, the issue remains on the agenda for the upcoming formal meeting of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work committee on Tuesday, 13 May, which will be accessible for public viewing.

The developments reflect Edinburgh’s ongoing efforts to balance immediate needs against long-term housing strategies, as the city seeks solutions to alleviate the strain on its housing system.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.midlothianview.com/news/edinburgh-suspend-council-housing-allocations-again> - Confirms that Edinburgh City Council has suspended council housing allocations for the second time within a year, due to struggles in meeting Scottish Government housing requirements amid a housing crisis.
2. <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/b26333/Late+Reports+25th-Apr-2025+10.00+Housing+Homelessness+and+Fair+Work+Committee.pdf?T=9> - Provides official committee documentation from the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee meeting where councillors were informed about the housing pressures, suspension policy, and plans regarding housing allocations and prioritisation.
3. <https://news.stv.tv/east-central/edinburgh-city-council-suspends-housing-policy-amid-worsening-homelessness-crisis> - Details the suspension of the housing policy redirecting almost all council housing to homeless households, including statistics about homelessness and the council's emergency measures in response to worsening homelessness.
4. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/edinburgh-poised-to-suspend-lettings-policy-to-prioritise-homeless-households> - Supports the claim about Edinburgh preparing to suspend its general council house letting policy to prioritise homeless households, detailed statistics of failures to accommodate homeless people, and the impact of legal rulings on temporary accommodation.
5. <https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2025/04/council-could-buy-private-student-housing-blocks-to-help-tackle-housing-crisis/> - Corroborates the council's exploration of purchasing private student housing blocks such as ELS House on Gorgie Road to increase housing supply quickly, and includes comments from councillors about ongoing sensitive discussions.
6. <https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2025/04/council-could-buy-private-student-housing-blocks-to-help-tackle-housing-crisis/> - Also mentions concerns raised by councillors regarding the impact of suspending allocations on existing tenants and overcrowding, quoting SNP councillor Stuart Dobbin about overcrowded families in council housing, and the planned review of the suspension decision.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMikAFBVV95cUxQeUJQek1fdGp4eC1jYmd3RFFnNUhfaE1Sbm1mZGZ3UHF0X2ZGUHZRRnltcHhuZ2FYZzhVS01Pb3JjZmZ0d3lYNTdPeU9TZmRuZENHeU1qR1J2RGdWN3Z5MzFwQktneVdONHVpQUNSUmxBZm1TT3V3VlFERUJZcllEb0VPaUlBb0E4bG1ZM0ZBU3c?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data