

'Scandal' over delay in homes for disabled

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Courtesy Barrhead News

By William Brown

DISABLED people in East Renfrewshire are having to wait a “scandalously” long time for a suitable home, campaigners say.

Latest figures show the area has the longest average waiting time in Scotland, at a whopping 1,971 days.

One case has been on the waiting list since 1996, although it is understood the applicant has declined the council’s offer of a property on two occasions during that time.

According to the statistics, compiled by the Scottish Conservatives, the number of disabled people in East Renfrewshire waiting for permanent housing stands at 365 – up from 202 last year and almost four times the total of 95 from 2017.

Michael McEwan, chairman of East Renfrewshire Disability Action (ERDA), described that increase as “very worrying and disappointing.”

He told the Barrhead News: “Disabled people, like everyone else, deserve appropriate housing to give them independence and dignity.

“Unfortunately, disabled people always seem to be the last to get things.”

Conservative MSP Maurice Golden, who represents East Renfrewshire as part of his West Scotland remit, said the lack of support for disabled people with housing needs is an “absolute scandal.”

He added: "A growing number of disabled people are waiting for housing and potentially living in completely unsuitable circumstances.

"This is extremely difficult for them and their families, depriving them of choice, dignity and freedom to access suitable homes.

"Local authorities are facing insurmountable financial pressures and simply do not have the resources to provide these homes.

"The SNP government must step in now to reverse this trend and give disabled people some hope."

A spokesman for East Renfrewshire Council said there is a high demand for social housing.

He added: "We work closely with social landlords to develop new housing that meets the needs of those on the waiting list. This includes ensuring all properties are built to the Housing for Varying Needs standard to ensure they can be adapted, if required, and any other specialist housing that is required.

"All applications are considered in line with the housing need identified by the resident and offers are made based on our availability of suitable housing.

"Some residents may apply to join the housing list but not have a specific housing need, yet choose to remain on the list for their potential future needs."

The council is also to invest £40million in developing more than 600 affordable homes over the next five years, which will include properties to rent from the council and housing associations.

The Scottish Government said it has published guidance that requires councils to set targets across all housing tenures for the delivery of wheelchair-accessible homes and is currently working with them to make sure these are in place.

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