



Housing Advice Sheet 2 - General Housing Advice

Are you homeless?

You don't have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over your head to be considered homeless. Most people who are legally homeless are not on the streets. There are many situations where the council must accept you are homeless and may have a legal duty to help you with housing.

For example:

- You are at risk of violence or abuse where you are living. This can be from a partner, ex-partner or family member, or someone in your area. The council may ask you to provide details of the incidents. Evidence is helpful but the council will not turn you away if you haven't reported to police.
- You don't have 'a roof over your head' i.e. you are street homeless
- You are at risk of losing your home
- You cannot afford to stay where you are
- Your accommodation is very temporary
- You are staying with friends or 'sofa surfing'
- You have been locked out or illegally evicted
- Your accommodation is in very poor condition
- You cannot live together with your partner or close family
- You have nowhere to put your houseboat or caravan

If one or more of these apply, you may be eligible for help from the council.

Who the council can help

1. You must normally live in the UK long-term and not be subject to immigration control.
2. You must be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
3. You have a priority need - this means either you have children, you have a physical or mental health disability, or you are more vulnerable for other reasons, such as fleeing domestic violence.
4. You must not have made yourself homeless on purpose.
5. You must have a local connection with the district.

If you meet these criteria, you can make a homeless application. This means that you are telling the council you are homeless or at risk of homelessness and need their help. By law, you must be allowed to make this application on the day you come to the council.

The council will make an appointment for you to be interviewed by a housing officer. This should be the same day if you have nowhere to stay that night. You can bring a support worker or friend with you in to the interview.

At the interview

You need to take the right documents to your interview. The process will be quicker if you bring your ID and notice of eviction or a letter from the person you have been staying with. For more information on the homelessness interview, you can visit the Shelter website at shelter.org.uk in the 'How to apply as homeless' section.

If the council says it can help you...

If the council accepts that it has a duty to continue housing you, you will probably have to stay in temporary accommodation until it offers you somewhere more long-term or 'settled'.

If the council says it cannot help you...

You can challenge the council's decision.

If you think the council's decision is wrong, contact an independent local advice centre like Citizens Advice Bureau as soon as you can.

Other support if you are not eligible

If you are not eligible for housing from the council, you may still be able to access:

- help from social services when homeless: if you have children or additional needs you may be able to get support from Children's or Adult Social Care
- short-term emergency housing
- support in finding private rented accommodation

You can get further advice from:

- Shelter
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Crisis
- National Domestic Violence Helpline
- Stonewall Housing (LGBT charity)
- Metro (LGBT charity)

Early Help

Drop-in surgeries are available at:

- **Felixstowe Library** - Tuesday and Thursday between 2pm and 4pm
- **Woodbridge Library** - Monday and Friday between 2pm and 4pm
- **Marina Centre, Lowestoft** - Please report to Customer Services who will take some initial information for assessment of your case. You will be allocated a case worker if the assessment outcome is that we will need to offer advice and assistance