

Know your housing – homelessness advice

You don't have to be on the streets to be homeless

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're 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're at risk of losing your home
- You can't afford to stay where you are
- Your accommodation is very temporary
- You are staying with friends or 'sofa surfing'
- You've been locked out or illegally evicted
- Your accommodation is in very poor condition
- You can't 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. The council will support you to prevent your homelessness. If that is not successful, it will support you to relieve your homelessness. The council will not consider if it owes you the main housing duty (that is the duty to house you) until prevention and relief actions have been exhausted.
4. However, you may be given additional support if you have a priority need - this means either you have children, you have a physical or mental health disability, or if you are more vulnerable for other reasons such as fleeing domestic violence.

5. If you have made yourself homeless on purpose, your actions will impact on the council's decision as to whether or not it owes a duty to house you.
6. We will support everyone who is eligible to prevent homelessness. However, in order to relieve your homelessness you must have a local connection with the borough. Although, this is not necessary if you are fleeing domestic violence.

You may be offered an interview to discuss your housing situation. You must contact the housing team on 01284 763233 to make an appointment. You will be given information in advance of an interview.

At the interview

You need to take the right documents to your interview. You will be told what these are when the date for your appointment is made. If you don't complete the correct forms and provide the right documentation, your interview will be unlikely to go ahead and your application will not be assessed.

If the council says it can help you...

At the interview you will complete a Personal Housing Plan (PHP). This plan will set out steps which you can take to help prevent or relieve your housing situation. It will also identify what steps the council will take to help you with your housing. If the council accepts that it has a duty to continue housing you, you'll 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
- Bury Drop In - Trinity Methodist Church, Brentgovel Street every Tuesday and Friday between 1pm and 3pm. A Drop In service, offered by local churches and run with the cooperation of the local authority. The service offers homeless and vulnerable people a warm, safe and friendly place to be. Hot and nourishing food and drink is served and other agencies will be on hand to offer specialist help.