

A Shelter advice booklet

# Homeless? Read this

The rules on how  
and when the council  
has to help you

# Shelter



# Homeless? Read this

You can ask your local council's housing department for help if you have nowhere to stay or are likely to lose your home in the next 28 days. The council is legally required to give you advice and help you to find a place to live. Depending on your situation, you might also be entitled to accommodation.

Even if the council has already told you that it doesn't have to help you, or that it can't provide you with a home, you can use this guide to check whether the reasons it has given you are legally correct. If they're not, you may be able to take action.

The guide only offers an introduction to the law in England. If you need more detailed information, you should get advice from a local Shelter advice service or a citizens advice bureau; contact Shelter's free housing advice helpline on **0808 800 4444** (open from 8am to 8pm on Mondays to Fridays and from 8am to 5pm on weekends, calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks); or visit **[shelter.org.uk/advice](https://www.shelter.org.uk/advice)**

If you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland the law may be different and you should contact Shelter Cymru, Shelter Scotland or the Housing Rights Service (see pages 20–21).

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## Where can I get help?

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Most people who don't have anywhere to live, or who are about to lose their home, can get help from their local council. Some people are also entitled to accommodation. If you are homeless, or likely to become homeless within the next 28 days, contact your local council and tell them that you want to make a homelessness application. If you are about to become homeless, try to do this before leaving your current home. (See Appendix 3 on page 23 for a sample Homelessness application letter you can use.)

If there is time, it may help if you go to an advice centre before you apply. An adviser can give you an idea of what you might be entitled to. Alternatively, s/he may be able to help you keep your current home, even if you are behind with your rent or mortgage, or if you've been told you have to leave.

If the council has already told you it doesn't have to help, read the relevant sections of this guide, or visit [shelter.org.uk/advice](https://www.shelter.org.uk/advice) to check whether the reasons given are legally correct. If they're not, you may be able to take action (see page 18). If you are certain that you are not entitled to help from the council, or you want information on your housing options, see Shelter's free advice booklet *Finding a place to live*.

If you need to speak to an adviser immediately, call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444 (open 8am to 8pm Mondays to Fridays and from 8am to 5pm on weekends. Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks).

## What will happen if I apply as homeless?

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The flowchart on page 15 gives an overview of the rules on how the council has to help. If you can show you are within the legal definitions of 'homeless' (see page 6), 'eligible for assistance' (see page 7) and 'priority need' (see page 8), the council must:

- make sure you have somewhere to stay while it looks into your situation
- find somewhere for you to live longer term, unless it decides you made yourself homeless intentionally (see page 12).

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance but not in priority need and not intentionally homeless, the council must assess your housing needs before giving you advice and assistance to help you find somewhere to live.

## Applying as homeless

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To apply as homeless, go to your local council's homeless persons section or housing options team, which is usually part of the housing department. It may help to take a friend or adviser with you.

It is very important to make it clear that you are homeless or soon will be. One way to do this is to fill in the letter on page 23 and give it to the council. Date the letter and keep a copy. Make a note of the name of the person you speak to at the council because you may need to speak to them again. You should also take:

- ID (eg passport, birth certificate)
- proof of your income (eg wage slips, child benefit book)
- your tenancy agreement (if you have one)
- if you are being evicted, any letters you have received from your landlord/landlord, or the court.

If the council office is closed there should be an emergency service. Ring the town hall number or ask at a police station. If you need help with this, contact Shelter's free advice helpline on 0808 800 4444.

Applying as a homeless person is not the same as being on the waiting list for permanent council housing or another council housing scheme. You may want to apply to join these waiting lists as well, so

you have a better chance of getting permanent accommodation. Ask the council about the waiting list and any other schemes in the area. See Shelter's free advice booklet *Council tenancies* for more information.

### **Housing options**

Many councils have housing option or homelessness prevention schemes. The council can help you to find alternative accommodation, usually a private tenancy, or help you keep your current home, but it must not refuse to accept an application from you if you are homeless or threatened with homeless. If it does refuse, get advice.

### **Who can apply?**

If you are homeless or likely to become homeless during the next four weeks, the council must allow you to apply. But it only has to help you if you are 'eligible for assistance'. A number of people from abroad are not eligible for assistance – for more information see page 7.

### **What must the council do?**

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The council has a legal responsibility to help people who are, or soon will be, homeless. How much help it has to give you depends on your situation. The flowchart on page 15 gives an overview of the rules.

While it is looking into your situation, the council may have to provide you with somewhere to live. Sometimes it will make a decision on the same day as you apply.

First, the council will check three things:

- that you are, or soon will be, homeless (see below)
- that you are 'eligible for assistance' (see page 7)
- that you are in one of the 'priority need' groups (see page 8).

The council will then check:

- whether you are intentionally homeless (see page 12) and may then check
- if you have a local connection in the area (see page 13).

These terms have special legal meanings. The council will ask for details about your situation so take any important papers with you, such as a court eviction order, notice from your landlord or your rent book. The council may ask to see your passport to check whether you are eligible for assistance.

If the council thinks you are homeless and eligible for assistance and in priority need, you must be given temporary accommodation immediately while the council looks into your situation. However, this does not necessarily mean that the council will have to find you long-term accommodation.

Make sure the details you give to the council are correct. If you aren't sure, say so. Giving false information could be a criminal offence.

## Am I legally homeless?

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The legal definition of 'homelessness' covers more than being out on the streets. You should be considered homeless if:

- you have nowhere to live in the UK or anywhere else in the world
- you can't stay in your home because of violence or threats of violence
- you have nowhere you can live together with your family or anyone else who lives or could reasonably be expected to live with you, for example your children, partner or carer
- you don't have permission to stay where you are, for example if you're a squatter
- you've been locked out of your home and are not allowed back
- your home is a boat, mobile home or caravan and there is nowhere you are allowed to put it
- you have somewhere to live but it isn't reasonable for you to stay there. This may be due to serious overcrowding, very bad conditions affecting your health, or because you cannot afford your housing costs.

You can also apply to the council if you are likely to become homeless within 28 days. This includes circumstances where:

- you've been taken to court by your landlord and the court has said you must leave within 28 days
- you've been living with friends or relatives and they've asked you to leave within 28 days.

If you have more than four weeks before you have to leave where you are living, you should still contact the council who may be able to help you find somewhere else to live, or to stay in your home longer. You can also go to an advice service – if you can't find one in your area, search Shelter's 'Advice services directory' at [shelter.org.uk/advice](https://www.shelter.org.uk/advice) or call our free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444.

If you are leaving care, hospital, or prison, you can ask your personal adviser, social worker or probation officer to help you apply to the council. You may be in 'priority need' (see page 8).

## Am I eligible for assistance?

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Most people are eligible for assistance, but some people from abroad are not.

## Subject to immigration control

You are probably not eligible for assistance if:

- you are an asylum seeker. Most asylum seekers get temporary housing arranged by the UK Border Agency, a part of the Home Office (see Shelter's advice booklet *Asylum seekers and refugees* for more information)
- you are from abroad and have limited rights to remain in the UK, or you have stayed longer than the time you were allowed
- you are from abroad and you aren't entitled to claim 'public funds'
- you are in the UK illegally (the council can investigate your immigration status and inform the Home Office if it thinks you came to the UK illegally).

If you are unsure of your immigration status, you may need to get help from an immigration adviser.

## European nationals

You will be eligible for assistance if you are from an European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA) country and you are working or self-employed in the UK. Your family members may also be eligible for assistance. If you are a worker from one of the newer EU member states (known as A8 and A2 countries) you may also have to be registered with

the Home Office to be eligible for assistance. See Appendix 2 on page 22 for information on which countries are EU, EEA, A8 and A2 countries.

### **Habitually resident**

If you are not habitually resident in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or the Irish Republic you will not be eligible for assistance.

If you have come to, or recently returned to the UK after living abroad, even if you are a British citizen, the council will check whether you are habitually resident. The check looks into where you normally live.

The length of time you have to have been living in the UK to be habitually resident will depend on your individual circumstances. If you had been habitually resident before, moved abroad and then returned to the UK, you should be habitually resident straight away.

If you are an EU or EEA national who is eligible for assistance (see above) you are automatically treated as habitually resident.

### **Help if you are not eligible**

If you are not eligible for assistance, the council doesn't have a duty to you under homelessness law. But you may be entitled to help from social services. The homeless persons section of the council should assist you to get help from

social services if they think you will qualify. The law in this area is complicated so get advice as soon as you can.

### **Am I in priority need?**

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The rules below about priority need applies to **England**. If you live in Wales, contact Shelter Cymru or visit [sheltercymru.org.uk](http://sheltercymru.org.uk) (see page 21). In England, you are in priority need if:

- you, or someone you live with, is pregnant
- you are responsible for dependent children
- you are homeless as a result of flood, fire or other disaster
- you are a 'vulnerable' person (see below)
- you are aged 16 or 17, unless social services has a responsibility for you (see page 9)
- you are aged 18–20 and were 'looked after' by social services (even for one day) when you were aged 16 or 17 (unless you are a student in full-time higher or further education whose accommodation is not available during the holidays, in which case social services has to help you until you are 24).

### **Vulnerable people**

When deciding whether you are in priority need because you are

vulnerable, the council should look at your situation as a whole and decide whether your circumstances mean that you are more likely to suffer injury or harm if you had to sleep on the streets than other people would in the same situation.

For example, the council may decide you, or someone you live with, is vulnerable because:

- of old age
- you have a physical or mental illness or disability
- you are over 20 and are vulnerable because you were in care
- you were in the armed forces or prison, custody or detention in the past
- you can no longer stay in your home because someone has been violent or abusive towards you or has threatened you with violence. This includes anyone facing harassment due to her/his gender, ethnic origin or religion.

It may help if a doctor, social worker, health visitor or probation officer supports your application. Take any medical evidence you have to the council.

### **Children**

If your relationship has broken down and your children live with you, the council shouldn't insist upon you having a court order to prove the

children's residence. If it does, get advice, or call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444.

You may still be in priority need if:

- you share looking after your children with your ex-spouse or partner
- your children can't live with you but would do if it were not for your housing problem
- your children are in care because of your housing problems.

### **16- and 17-year-olds**

You are in priority need if you are aged 16 or 17 unless the exceptions below apply to you. If you are homeless because you left home, the council may check whether there is a possibility of reconciliation with your family. But it cannot make you return to a family home, particularly if it is not safe for you to do so.

In **England** you are not in priority need when you are 16 or 17 if social services has a responsibility for you. Social services will be responsible for you if:

- you are a 'relevant child'. This means that at some time from the age of 14 you were 'looked after' by social services for at least 13 weeks and you have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17
- social services says you are a 'child in need' to whom it has to provide accommodation.

Most homeless 16- and 17-year-olds will be a child in need, and this means that social services will usually have the duty to accommodate you – and to provide you with any other support you need.

However, if you are homeless today you should get immediate help with temporary accommodation from the council's homeless persons section. It should then make sure you get further help from social services.

### **Care leavers aged 18 to 20**

The housing department has a responsibility towards young people aged between 18 and 20, if after the age of 16, they have:

- lived in a hostel or voluntary housing scheme
- been in residential care
- been in foster care
- been housed by social services.

Care leavers aged over 20 may be vulnerable (see page 9).

### **Will I get temporary accommodation?**

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If the council believes you are homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need, it must make sure that you have somewhere to live while it makes its inquiries into your application. This may mean that it arranges somewhere for you

– a bed and breakfast hotel, hostel, flat or house. If you have children or are pregnant, you can only be placed in a bed and breakfast if it's an emergency and nothing else is available. Even then, the council can only house you there for a maximum of six weeks.

### **What if the accommodation is unsuitable?**

If what you are offered is unsuitable you should tell the council why. Don't refuse the offer without speaking to an independent adviser first, as the council may not offer you anywhere else. You can move into the property and still ask the council to review its offer, it may then move you elsewhere. If the council doesn't change its decision, get advice to check whether there is anything you can do to get more suitable accommodation.

The council may agree to you staying with friends or relatives, but you should check with a local advice centre how this will affect your rights before you decide to do so.

The council also has a duty to look after your possessions but can make a reasonable charge for this.

When the council finishes its inquiries, it must write to tell you what its decision is and give reasons if it decides not to provide you with longer-term accommodation.

## **Paying for short-term accommodation**

You may have to pay towards the cost of the short-term accommodation you have been given. The charges must be reasonable. If you feel they are not, contact an independent advice centre in your area. If you are on benefits or a low income, you should be entitled to get housing benefit to help pay the rent. See Shelter's free advice booklet *Housing benefit and local housing allowance* for more information.

## The council won't help

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The council is legally required to consider all applications properly. Always make a note of the name of the person you speak to. If you're not happy with the way you are treated, ask to speak to a more senior person.

Most people have a legal right to be given advice and help, even if they're not entitled to housing. The council should not turn you away without considering your application. If it decides it cannot help you or will ask another council to help you, the council must tell you why in writing.

Once you have received a written decision letter, get advice if you think it's wrong or unfair. Doing this can make a big difference. An adviser

can check whether the council's decision has been made correctly. If it hasn't, s/he may be able to help you request a review or appeal to the county court (see page 18). You have rights that are protected by law, and an adviser may be able to help you get what you're entitled to. Contact your local housing advice service, citizens advice bureau or law centre, visit **shelter.org.uk/advice** or call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444.

If the council says you are intentionally homeless, see below. If it says another council has to help you because you have no local connection, see page 13.

## I'm not in priority need

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Even if you aren't in priority need (see page 8), the council must look at your housing situation. It must then advise and help you find somewhere else to live or help you keep your home. It should give you information about accommodation that suits you and should tell you about places that you could try, for example housing associations, hostels or private landlords. The council can offer you accommodation if there is any available, but this is unlikely to happen in areas, like London, where there is not enough housing.

You should also be allowed to apply to go on the waiting list for permanent council housing, or other schemes the council has. If you are told you can't do this, ask the council to put it in writing and then get advice. For information on your housing options see Shelter's free advice booklet *Finding a place to live*.

## Am I intentionally homeless?

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The council will look into why you became homeless. If it finds that becoming homeless was your fault, it can decide you made yourself intentionally homeless. It may decide this if it believes that:

- you chose to leave a home you could have stayed in
- you did not pay the rent or pay the mortgage when you could have afforded to
- you arranged to be made homeless to take advantage of the system.

The council should not say you are intentionally homeless if:

- you could not afford to live in your home unless you went without food or heating
- you left home because of violence or fear of violence
- you lost your home because of rent or mortgage arrears, which built up because of circumstances

beyond your control, for example job loss, wage cut or problems with benefits

- you sold your home because you got into mortgage arrears through financial difficulties and you were going to lose your home if you didn't sell
- someone else's actions made you lose your home and you didn't know what they were doing, or didn't agree with what they were doing but couldn't stop them
- your home went with your job and you lost your job through no fault of your own
- you lost your home because you didn't know your rights, for example you didn't know that your landlord needed a court order to get you out, or that you could get housing benefit to help pay your rent
- it wasn't reasonable for you to remain in your home because it was seriously affecting your health.

If the council says you are intentionally homeless and you are in priority need, it must still house you temporarily.

If you have children, the housing department must, if you agree, refer you to social services for help. Social services can help you find somewhere to live. They may pay for your accommodation for a short time

while you look for somewhere to live, and/or they may give you money to give to a landlord for a deposit on a property. Sometimes social services will say that they can only house your children. If this happens get advice.

If you don't want the council's housing department to ask social services to help you or it is not applicable to do so, the housing department must give you some help finding somewhere else to live. It should give you accommodation for a long enough period for you to find somewhere, although depending on your circumstances this may only be 28 days. You should be able to put your name on the council waiting list for housing. The council may have other housing schemes you can apply for as well.

## What is a local connection?

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Most people will apply for help from the local council in the area they live if they become homeless. However, you can apply to any council you wish. It is unlawful for a council to turn you away or tell you to apply to another council because you do not have a local connection with their area.

If the council decides you are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless, it can then check to see

if you have a local connection in the area.

You have a local connection with an area if you (or someone in your household):

- have a job in the area
- live, or have lived, in the area for at least six months in the last year or three of the last five years
- have a close relative who has lived in the area at least five years. This is usually restricted to a parent, adult child, brother or sister you wish to live near to
- need to live in the area for a special reason, such as to receive specialist health care or because you had lived in the area for a long time in the past.

Time you spent in an institution such as a prison or hospital, will not usually count as a local connection. If you've been living in one of these places and the council says you don't have a local connection, get advice.

If you claimed asylum and have now been granted leave to remain or refugee status, and you had accommodation provided by the UK Border Agency, you will have a local connection with the area in which that accommodation is situated. If housed in more than one area, you have a local connection with the most recent area.

**I don't have a local connection**

If the council decides that you are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless but don't have a local connection with its area, it can ask another council to help you. But there are steps that must be taken when one council is going to ask another council to house you.

If the council says that you have a connection elsewhere and you don't want to move to that area or you don't agree with the decision, get advice. You can't be sent there until the proper steps have been followed or before the other council has agreed to help you.

**I have ties with more than one area**

If you have a local connection with the council you applied to, it can't ask another council to house you because you have stronger ties with that other council's area. If you have no local connection with the council you first went to but have ties with more than one other council, you should be asked which of the areas you'd prefer to live in before one of those councils is asked to house you.

**I've left because of violence**

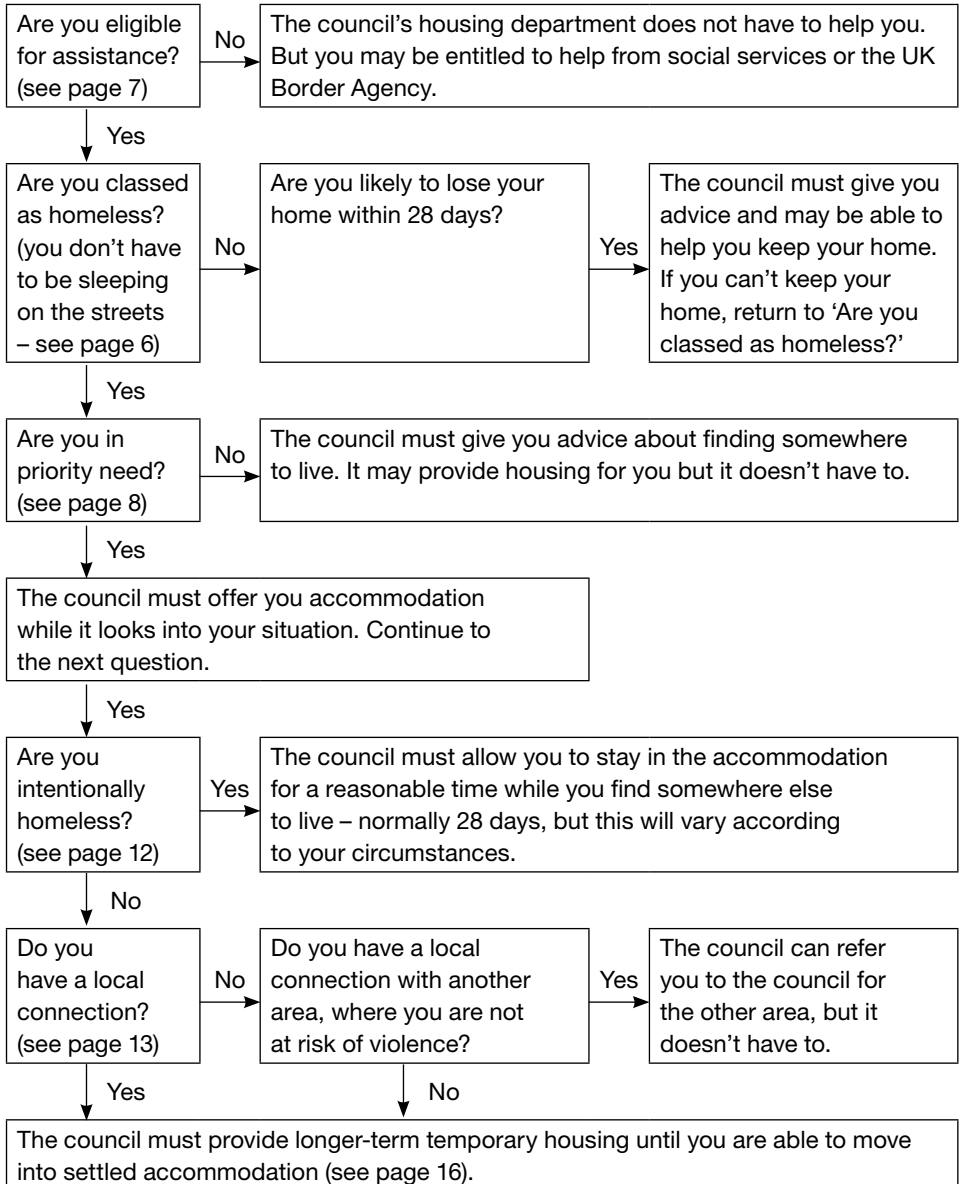
Even if you have no local connection with the council you applied to, it can't send you back to an area where you would be at risk of violence or threats of violence.

**I don't have a local connection anywhere**

If you don't have a local connection anywhere, the council cannot refer you to another council for housing.

## How the council has to help flowchart

The inquiries the council makes will affect what you are entitled to. This flowchart shows what you might be entitled to. If the council's decision at any stage is unfair, you may be able to challenge it.



## How must the council help?

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If the council has decided you are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need, not intentionally homeless and it is not referring you to another council, it has an ongoing duty to provide you with accommodation.

Depending on where you live, you may have to stay in temporary accommodation until the council finds you longer-term accommodation. If you have children or are pregnant, you can only be placed in a bed and breakfast if it's an emergency and nothing else is available. Even then, the council can only house you in a bed and breakfast for a maximum of six weeks.

If you are homeless because it is not reasonable for you to remain in your home, the council may be able to expect you to remain there until it finds suitable accommodation for you.

You may have to wait a long time before you are offered settled accommodation.

## Settled accommodation

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As long as there are no problems in the temporary accommodation, there is no limit to the amount of time

you can stay. You can normally stay until the council offers you either:

- a council tenancy
- a 'final offer' of an assured tenancy with a private rented landlord or housing association
- a 'qualifying offer' (see page 17) of an assured shorthold tenancy with a private rented landlord.

The council must be satisfied that the accommodation you are offered is suitable for you and must also inform you that:

- you have the right to ask the council to review the offer if you think the accommodation is unsuitable
- if you refuse the offer, the council won't have to help you any more and you will have to move out of your temporary accommodation.

If you are not given this information when the offer is made, then it doesn't count as a final offer.

You may have a reason for thinking the offer is not suitable, perhaps because of your health, the size of the accommodation, the location, or a risk of violence in the area. **It is strongly advisable to accept the offer even if you don't think it's suitable.** You are allowed to ask the council to review the offer and tell it why you think the accommodation is unsuitable.

However, if the accommodation is found to be suitable and you did not accept the offer, then the council does not have to offer you another property.

If you move out of your temporary accommodation before you have been offered another property, or are evicted from the temporary accommodation (perhaps because you did not pay the rent or you caused a nuisance), then the council may not have duty to find you somewhere else. If you are in this situation, get advice to check whether you are entitled to any more help.

### **Council tenancy**

The council may offer you a council tenancy. You may be offered a choice of more than one council property but this is unusual. Many councils now run choice-based lettings schemes where you have to bid for vacant properties.

A council tenancy may be an introductory tenancy (a type of trial tenancy) for the first 12 months. After that the tenancy will automatically become a secure tenancy, although the trial period can be extended if the council is worried about your behaviour. Secure tenants have very strong rights.

### **Assured tenancies**

You may be offered an assured tenancy from a housing association or a private landlord. Or you may be able to bid for a housing association tenancy through the council's choice-based lettings schemes. Assured tenants have strong rights. If you accept an offer of an assured tenancy, the council will not have a responsibility to continue to provide temporary accommodation.

### **Qualifying offer**

The council may offer to arrange a qualifying offer of an assured shorthold tenancy with a private landlord. Assured shorthold tenants have fewer rights than assured and secure tenants and can be evicted quite easily.

A qualifying offer is an assured shorthold tenancy with a private landlord that has been approved and arranged by the council. It must be available for a fixed term (such as one year) and the council has to be satisfied that the accommodation is suitable for you. The offer must be accompanied by a written statement, which explains clearly that:

- you don't have to accept the offer, but
- if you do accept, the council won't have to give you any more help.

The council's responsibility to help you ends only if you sign a written statement saying you have accepted the qualifying offer and that you understand that this means the council doesn't have to give you any more help. If you don't get this information when the offer is made, it doesn't count as a qualifying offer.

In 'restricted cases', ie where you are only in priority need (see page 8 though someone in your household is not eligible for assistance (see page 7), then the council's duty to help can end with an offer of an assured shorthold tenancy without the 'qualifying offer' conditions.

## I disagree with the council's decision

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If the council says it doesn't have to help, read the relevant sections of this guide to check if the reasons it has given are legally correct. If they're not, you may be able to take action. If you want to do so, you should ask a local advice centre for help (see page 19). Specialist help will increase your chances of getting the decision changed.

### **Reviews**

If the council has made a decision you disagree with or you think is wrong, you can ask them to review it.

You must make this request within 21 days from when you are told about the decision. You can only make a request after 21 days if you have a good reason for not doing so sooner (a serious illness, for example).

### **Appeals**

If you disagree with the council's review decision, you may be able to appeal to the county court. You must do this within 21 days of when you are told of the outcome of the review. You can also appeal to the county court if the council doesn't make a decision within eight weeks.

### **Accommodation**

The council does not have to provide you with accommodation while you are waiting for the outcome of the review or the appeal. If you ask for accommodation and the council refuses, you should get advice or see a solicitor immediately.

### **Change of circumstances**

If your circumstances change after you get a negative decision, you can apply as homeless all over again. The council must go through the same checks as before. However, if there hasn't been any real change, the council does not have to accept your application.

## Where to get further advice

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This guide is only an introduction to the law. If your situation isn't covered or fully explained here you can contact an adviser to discuss your situation.

An adviser may be able to help by:

- explaining the rights you have if you apply as homeless
- helping you challenge a decision you are unhappy with
- explaining complicated legal matters.

You can get advice from a local Shelter advice service, or a citizens advice bureau, or by contacting Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444, or by visiting **[shelter.org.uk/getadvice](https://www.shelter.org.uk/getadvice)**

### **Help from a solicitor**

If you need to see a solicitor, you may be entitled to public funding, often referred to as legal help and legal aid. If you are eligible for legal help you can get free legal advice. If you are also eligible for legal aid, the Government pays your legal costs, although you may have to make a contribution.

However, many solicitors do not offer legal help or aid. You can get details of solicitors who do from Community Legal Advice (see Useful organisations on page 20). There is a 'means test'. You will qualify for legal

help if you are on certain benefits or you have a low income. To qualify for legal aid you must also have a good chance of success if your case goes to court, your solicitor will be able to advise you about this.

If you do not qualify for legal aid, a solicitor may be willing to do a first interview with you for a fixed fee, but following that, the fees can get expensive.

## Appendix 1: Useful organisations

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### **To contact Shelter**

You can call our free housing advice helpline on **0808 800 4444**. (The helpline is open from 8am to 8pm on Mondays to Fridays and from 8am to 5pm on weekends. Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.) We can provide minicom or interpreting services if required.

Visit [shelter.org.uk/advice](http://shelter.org.uk/advice) for information about your housing rights and details of our local advice services.

Other organisations that may be able to help you:

### **Advice UK**

6th Floor, 63 St Mary Axe  
London EC3A 8AA  
020 7469 5700  
mail@adviceuk.co.uk  
www.adviceuk.org.uk

### **Citizens Advice**

To find details of your local bureau go to [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### **Community Legal Advice**

To find a solicitor, use the CLA Directory at:  
[www.unitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.unitylegaladvice.org.uk)  
To get free initial advice, call the helpline on 0845 345 4345

### **Department for Work and Pensions**

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

### **Directgov**

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

Helpline: 0845 604 6610 (England)  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### **Housing Rights Service**

(Northern Ireland)  
4th Floor, Middleton Buildings  
10–12 High Street  
Belfast BT1 2BA  
028 9024 5640  
[www.housingrights.org.uk](http://www.housingrights.org.uk)

### **Immigration Advisory Service**

[www.iasuk.org](http://www.iasuk.org)

### **Jobcentre Plus**

Contact this government agency to make a claim for benefits.  
0800 055 6688  
[jobseekers.direct.gov.uk](http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk)

### **Law Centres Federation**

020 7842 0720  
info@lawcentres.org.uk  
[www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)

### **Law Society**

An online database of solicitors  
[www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law)

**National Debtline**

Tricorn House  
51–53 Hagley Road  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B16 8TP  
0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)

**National Domestic Violence****Helpline**

0808 2000 247  
[nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

**Refugee Council**

240–250 Ferndale Road  
London SW9 8BB  
020 7346 6700  
[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

**Shelter Cymru**

25 Walter Road  
Swansea SA1 5NN  
0845 075 5005  
[sheltercymru.org.uk](http://sheltercymru.org.uk)

**Shelter Scotland**

Scotiabank House  
6 South Charlotte Street  
Edinburgh EH2 4AW  
0344 515 2444  
[shelter.org.uk](http://shelter.org.uk)

## Appendix 2: Countries in the EU and EEA

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European Union countries			European Economic Area countries
Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain Sweden and UK.	'A8' countries (joined in 1 May 2004): Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia, and the Czech Republic.	'A2' countries (joined in 1 January 2007): Bulgaria and Romania.	The EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

## Appendix 3: Homelessness application letter

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(Send this letter to the Homeless Persons/Housing Options Team of your local council.)

My address:

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to apply as homeless under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. I have provided some basic details below, but I would like an urgent appointment to see a homelessness officer.

I will be homeless/I became homeless on: \_\_\_\_\_

because: \_\_\_\_\_

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The following people also live with me (or would live with me if I had a home for all of us):

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Yours faithfully,

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## Until there's a home for everyone

In our affluent nation, tens of thousands of people wake up every day in housing that is run-down, overcrowded, or dangerous. Many others have lost their home altogether. The desperate lack of decent, affordable housing is robbing us of security, health, and a fair chance in life.

Shelter believes everyone should have a home.

More than one million people a year come to us for advice and support via our website, helplines and national network of services. We help people to find and keep a home in a place where they can thrive, and tackle the root causes of bad housing by campaigning for new laws, policies, and solutions.

Visit [shelter.org.uk](http://shelter.org.uk) to join our campaign, find housing advice, or make a donation.

We need your help to continue our work.  
Please support us.

88 Old Street  
London  
EC1V 9HU

Tel: 0300 330 1234  
[shelter.org.uk](http://shelter.org.uk)