

GETTING HELP IF YOU'RE HOMELESS

ABOUT

If you have found yourself homeless or at threat of homelessness there are some services which are there to help you. This is a guide to explain what they do and what you can expect from each of them.

YOUR COUNCIL

Your local authority is legally required to give you advice on your current housing situation and help you to find a place to live.

You need to:

- Find out what your entitlements are to housing welfare benefit
- If you can claim for any sort of emergency loan
- Fill out a homeless person application form.

The Council are legally obliged to:

- Accept a homelessness application from you
- Give you advice and assistance to help you avoid losing your home (this may include helping you to negotiate with your landlord or mortgage lender)
- Give you advice about finding somewhere else to live.

The process of applying to your council for help with homelessness:

1. Fill in the homelessness application.
2. Undertake an interview with the council giving them the details of your circumstances.
3. You may be offered emergency accommodation if the council considers you to be particularly vulnerable while it makes enquiries
4. The council may be willing to look after your belongings while you are in temporary accommodation.
5. The council will complete its enquiries and makes a decision.
6. The council should give you its decision in writing.
7. If you are accepted as homeless, you may be offered longer term temporary accommodation before eventually be offered 'settled' accommodation.
8. If you are not accepted as homeless, your temporary accommodation will end.

CLAIMING BENEFITS

You can claim housing benefit if you are working but with a low income or if you are already claiming other benefits. The amount that you are entitled to depends on your age and circumstances. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Jobcentre Plus office will be able to advise you on what you are entitled to.

If you phone the council to start a claim for housing benefit, they will send you a claim form. You must complete and return this within a month.



Connecting rough sleepers to local services

www.streetlink.org.uk

Housing benefit is paid from the date you move into your property, not the date they get the housing benefit claim form, so make a note of the date and the name of the person you speak to at the council when you phone.

Depending on your age and entitlement, housing benefit may help pay the cost of private rented tenancy or your own room within a property.

PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

If you are eligible for housing benefit but are sofa surfing or sleeping rough and have been advised you need to find your own place to live, the private rented sector can be a good option. Some local authorities also offer a rent deposit scheme which you can find out about from your local CAB or homeless person's day centre.

The following websites might be able to help you find a room or rental property:

1. Gumtree: <http://www.gumtree.com/flats-houses>
2. Spare room: <http://www.spareroom.co.uk>
3. Easyroommate: <http://uk.easyroommate.com/Spareroom-And-Lodger>
4. DSSCribs: <http://www.dsscribs.com/>
5. Crisis Private Rented Sector: www.privaterentedsector.org.uk
6. Re-house UK: <https://www.rehouseuk.com>

When approaching a prospective landlord it's good to be well presented and positive and remember to be succinct - there's no need to explain your entire housing history.

BACKPACKER AND PRIVATE HOSTELS

If you're at risk of homelessness and find that your budget is very limited you can usually find very low cost accommodation in private and backpacker hostels. Rates start from as little £8-10 per night for a bed in a shared dormitory, especially if you look outside of the centre for town.

You can search for availability using these websites:

1. Hostel World: <http://www.hostelworld.com>
2. Hostel Booker: <http://www.hostelbookers.com>
3. Hostels 24/7: <http://www.hostels247.com>
4. Yell: <http://www.yell.com> (Type in 'I'm looking for [hostels] in [insert local town / city]')

DAY CENTRES

Day centres are places set up to offer rough sleepers assistance during the day. They can also be used by anyone who no longer has to sleep rough but wants activities and companionship even if they have moved on to living in their own home.



Connecting rough sleepers to local services

www.streetlink.org.uk

Different day centres provide varying ranges of services and are open at different times so it is best to check before visiting your local centre. But, most are not open at weekends or in the evening.

Day centre provision can include:

- Advice on finding accommodation and benefits
- Washing facilities
- Cheap or free food
- Laundry room
- Activities
- Access to medical treatment

Ensure that you Get there early so that you can make best use the facilities and make an appointment for an assessment of your housing situation.

You can find your nearest day centre using the following websites:

1. Homeless UK: Details of homelessness services across the UK
<http://www.homelessuk.org>
2. The Pavement: A magazine for homeless people in London and Scotland. Has an extensive list of homelessness services across the UK
<http://www.thepavement.org.uk/services>.

CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU

The Citizens Advice Bureau service helps people to resolve their problems. They are equipped to deal with a wide range of problems spanning debt and employment to consumer and housing, and everything in between.

Your local CAB can be found by searching the Citizen's Advice website:

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.htm>

SAMARITANS

Finding yourself homeless can be very difficult and getting emotional support is equally as important as practical support. The Samaritans provide a confidential listening and support service. You can talk to them about any topic on 08457 90 90 90

SHELTER

A lot more information on housing, homelessness, rough sleeping and tenancy issues is also available from Shelter.

You can find out more on their website: <http://england.shelter.org.uk> Or by contacting the Shelter Line on: 0808 800 4444