

Homeless Reduction Act

Homelessness is changing with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA 2017).

This will place more emphasis on the assistance each council in England can offer customers who have experienced or are about to experience homelessness. This will result in more customers being assisted as each council will no longer consider if a customer has a priority need or has made themselves intentionally homeless initially before they are assisted.

We will register a homeless application for all eligible customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. From 1st April 2018, we will make every effort to prevent or relieve homelessness after registering an application before it makes a final decision on the application. This means that applications will be open beyond the current statutory guidance whilst we try to assist each customer in preventing or relieving their homelessness.

If it is not possible to prevent homelessness in 56 days we will then help to relieve homelessness for another 56 days. We will also start to register applications for those who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days to ensure that more people are assisted as soon as possible. We will make our decision for whether people are owed the full housing duty at the end of the relief stage if the homelessness has not been resolved. It will continue to provide some customers with interim accommodation where applicable while it seeks alternative solutions to their problems.

This will be our new way of working with all customers from April 2018. We are excited at the prospect of delivering even more of a prevention approach which will ensure that we are able to assist as many customers as we can.

How can we help?

Our Housing Options service can help you in the following ways:

- We can assess your current housing situation and work out what your needs and requirements are.
- If you are worried that you might become homeless, we can give you advice on the next steps and how to stay in your home.
- You can be referred to us in a number of ways, including through our partners and support services.
- If you have a physical or mental illness, if you are ex armed forces and homeless, a care leaver and homeless or if you have been released from prison and have nowhere to live we may be able to refer you to specialist support organisations that can help you.

- We can refer you to specialist Domestic Abuse support and accommodation services.
- We can refer to legal specialists.
- Supported housing may be an option for you and we can make referrals on your behalf in these circumstances.
- We can help you make a housing plan so you can work towards the next steps to find a permanent home.

Are you experiencing financial difficulty?

Our team might be able to help you in these ways:

- With a one-off payment to assist with housing costs.
- With rent arrears to stop you being evicted by your landlord.
- If you have issues because of new benefit changes such as Universal Credit, the Bedroom Tax, Benefit Cap or Local Housing allowance.
- With budgeting and managing your money at home.
- With employment problems and job seeking.
- With getting a smaller, more financially manageable home.

Do you rent privately?

- We can help if you are being harassed or threatened by your landlord, or if you have been locked out of your home, evicted or if the rent is being increased.
- We can visit you at home and work with you and anyone who might try to make you homeless, to resolve your housing problems.

Finding a home

We can help you with:

- Your council housing application.
- Assessing and reviewing your priority need as a homeless household, including if you have extra or complex housing needs.
- Looking at the housing options available to you, including temporary accommodation or private housing.
- Finding somewhere to stay tonight, in an emergency, when you have nowhere else to go.
- Reviewing a refused homelessness or council housing application.

Our aim is to prevent homelessness so don't leave it too late to get help and advice

Contact us on 01636 650000 and ask for the housing options team