



Know your rights

Information about housing and homelessness for young people



Photo: Nick David

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Who do I go to for advice?

What happens if I can't pay my rent?

I've been kicked out by my parents.

Where can I go if I'm homeless?

Your rights and responsibilities at a glance

Note this is a summary only; check out the rest of the information in this booklet and get advice if you are unsure about your rights and responsibilities.

Rights

- **If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, you have a right to help from the council.** The help you will get varies, from advice to help you find somewhere to live to rehousing, depending on your situation.
- **If you are renting your accommodation, in many cases you have a right to stay there until ordered to leave by the court.** You may not have this right if you live with your landlord, or if you live in short-term accommodation, but in these cases your landlord should normally give you reasonable notice if they want you to leave.
- **If you are on a low income, you have a right to apply to the local council for help with your rent (known as Housing Benefit).** The amount you will get depends on your income and circumstances.

- **If you are renting, you have a right to a decent home and to live there peacefully.** For example, your landlord must ensure your home is in a good state of repair, and cannot enter the property without notifying you first.
- **If you are leaving care, you have a right to help from social services.** They should help you to find accommodation, and may help you with paying for it.

Responsibilities

- **If you get help from the council, social services, or another organisation, you must tell them honestly about your circumstances.** Organisations will have to keep any information you give them confidential (other than in some exceptional circumstances).
- **You must ensure your rent (or mortgage) and other bills are paid.** Don't bury your head in the sand if you think that you might not be able to afford your expenses.
- **You must treat the other people you live with and near considerately.** Don't play music too loudly, for example.
- **If you are renting, you should tell your landlord about any problems.** For example, you must tell them if you think a gas appliance is dangerous.



Photo: Nick David

Introduction

Having somewhere to live where you feel safe and comfortable is very important, but it can be hard work and confusing finding somewhere that you're happy with.

You might be moving away from home for the first time, or find that the place you're living in isn't quite right. Whatever your situation, this booklet has information for 16- to 25-year-olds on (among other things):

- what to do in an emergency
- finding a place to live
- paying for your accommodation
- what to do if you're having problems with your landlord.

It's best if you can find someone to help you if you have housing problems, because they can be quite complicated and you may need some support. Sometimes you might feel it is all too much for you, but don't panic: take some time to have a look through the information in this booklet.

The information in this booklet will not give you all the answers. You will find details of websites and organisations where you can get further information in the 'Useful contacts' section on page 35. Any organisations or websites referred to in the text are listed there.

If you are unsure about anything, you should get advice. The booklet says where something is complicated, and you may need to get advice. See the 'Getting help and advice' section on page 9 for details.



Photo: Nick David

Getting help and advice

Housing can be difficult, and in several places in this booklet we suggest that you should get further advice. If you do need to get advice, do as soon as possible, because there may be deadlines that must be met.

How Shelter can help

Shelter do not provide accommodation, but we can give you advice to help you to find accommodation. All the advice offered by Shelter is professional, independent (we are not part of the council), and free. We can give you advice in three ways:

Know your rights: advice on the Internet www.shelter.org.uk/knowyourrights

If you can access the Internet, then visit Know your rights. This advice section of Shelter's website has been written for young people, and there is loads of information about all kinds of housing problems.

Shelter's free housing advice helpline **0808 800 4444**

Shelter's helpline is open seven days a week from 8am to midnight. Your call will be answered by a housing adviser who can:

- give immediate practical assistance
- tell you your rights
- offer advice and guidance
- put you in contact with specialist or local services that can give you long-term help.

Top tip: Shelter's helpline is a busy service, so you may not get through first time, but don't give up. Try phoning first thing in the morning or last thing at night – you might have a better chance of speaking to someone then.

Shelter Housing Aid Centres (HACs)

You might prefer to speak to someone face to face. Shelter has a network of HACs throughout the country. To find your nearest HAC, visit Shelter's online Advice services directory, or ring our customer services number on 0845 458 4590. Some HACs have drop-in sessions and others will give you an appointment.

Top tip: when going to a HAC you might need to take along some paperwork with you. Check with them what you might need to bring with you.

Contacting the council

Local councils (borough, district, or city councils) have duties to give advice to (and in some cases rehouse) people who are homeless (see pages 16–20 for more details). They can also give advice about many other housing problems, such as disrepair or harassment.

You can find details of your local council under 'councils' in the Yellow Pages, or online on Shelter's Advice services directory. If you have trouble finding your local council's details, Shelter's helpline or your local Citizens Advice bureau (CAB) should be able to give you details.

Contacting social services

Social services departments should give help to some children and people aged 16 or 17, and some other young people who have been in care or are disabled. If the social services department doesn't have to help you, it should be able to tell you who can. Your local council, Shelter's helpline, or your local CAB should be able to give you contact details.

Students

Most colleges and universities have a welfare service that will be able to give you advice about housing and financial matters. Most also have an accommodation service; this may deal only with university accommodation, or may deal with other accommodation in the area that is rented to students. If you need advice that is independent from the university (for example, because you have a problem in university accommodation), then the students' union may be able to help.

Citizens Advice bureaux

There is a CAB in most towns. The CAB can give advice on a wide range of issues, including housing. If it can't help you, it should be able to put you in touch with an organisation that can. Look in the Yellow Pages under Citizens Advice bureau, go to the Citizens Advice website, use Shelter's online Advice services directory, or phone Shelter's helpline to get details.

Solicitors

For some serious housing problems, you might need help from a solicitor. Phone Shelter's helpline to see if you need to contact a solicitor. Details of local solicitors can be found on the Community Legal Service website.

Other advice organisations

There are some other organisations and helplines that may be able to give you advice on housing problems. Use Shelter's online advice services directory or phone Shelter's helpline to get details of organisations in your area. There are also some listed in the 'Useful contacts' section on page 35.

Key housing problems

These pages cover key information only. They will help you identify what help you are entitled to, but you will need to find out more. Our Know your rights website goes into more detail, or you may want to get advice.

Leaving in a hurry

Although it's best to plan a move to new accommodation in advance, in some circumstances (for example, if you've been kicked out, or you are not safe at home) this isn't possible.

Been kicked out?

If you're over 16 and your parents or carers want you out of the house, you'll probably have to go. If you're in this situation, have a look at the checklist below for a list of stuff that it is important to take with you.

Stuff to take if you're leaving home in a hurry

- Some form of ID (for example, birth certificate, passport, or driving licence).
- National Insurance number.
- Medication (inhalers, etc).
- A change of clothes and a warm coat.
- Address book and mobile phone.
- Toiletries.
- Benefits book (if you have one).
- Money or your bank card.



Scared to go home?

If you feel unsafe or in danger at home, it may be best to leave straight away. If possible, get advice and arrange some emergency housing before you go. If you are under 18 and feel unsafe at home, you can contact Childline. For details of other organisations that may be able to help you see the 'Useful contacts' on page 35.

Does the council have to help you?

If you have nowhere to stay, you can apply as homeless to the local council. To see what help you are entitled to, see the section on 'Help from the council' on page 16.

Can social services help?

If you're under 18, and particularly if you have been in care in the past, or have a disability, you may be entitled to help from the social services department. You can get social services' number from the local council. If you think the social services department should help you, but it won't, get advice.

Need somewhere to stay tonight?

Your first stop should be the council's housing department (see the section on 'Help from the council', page 23).

The council might have a legal duty to provide you with accommodation. If not, it should give you some advice to help you to find accommodation. You might want to consider one of the emergency accommodation options opposite.

Emergency accommodation options

- **Hostels or nightshelters.** These are short-stay accommodation for homeless people. The council will be able to give you details of hostels and nightshelters in your area, or you can go to the Homeless UK website or phone Shelter's helpline.
- **Women's refuges.** If you are a woman and you are homeless because you are escaping domestic violence, you may be able to stay in a women's refuge. Contact Women's Aid for details.
- **Nightstop or lodging schemes.** In these schemes you will lodge with a volunteer. See the Nightstop UK website or ask the council for more details of schemes in your area.
- **Staying with friends or family.** Friends or family (grandparents or older brothers or sisters, for example) may be able to put you up while you sort out longer-term accommodation.
- **Bed and breakfast hotels.** Some bed and breakfast hotels will put up homeless people. The council should be able to give you details, but this may be quite an expensive option.

Sleeping on the streets?

If you find yourself sleeping on the streets, make sure you stay safe (see page 16 for details) and get help and advice immediately. Get details of local support services for homeless people (Shelter's helpline or the council should be able to give you details, or you can find details on the Homeless UK website). They will have support workers (or outreach workers) who can give you further advice and help.

Staying safe on the streets

- **Keep warm.** Choose a sheltered place to sleep. Some support services can give you blankets or sleeping bags. Don't sleep directly on the ground; put down blankets or cardboard.
- **Keep safe.** It is sometimes best to sleep where other homeless people sleep, as there is safety in numbers, and support workers and 'soup runs' sometimes visit these areas.
- **Keep healthy.** If you feel unwell, go to see a doctor. Some towns have health services especially for homeless people. The council or an support worker can give you details of these.
- **Keep fed.** Make sure you eat properly. Many towns have 'soup runs' that provide hot meals to homeless people. Find out more from the council or an support worker.
- **Keep in touch.** Let a family member, friend, or support worker know where you're sleeping.

Need help with paying to get accommodation?

If you've had to move in an emergency, and you haven't got any money, you could apply for a Crisis Loan or Budgeting Loan to help with your housing costs.

To find out more about these ask at your local Jobcentre Plus. Claim forms are also available on the Department for Work and Pensions website.

Help from the council

If you don't have any accommodation, the council will have to give you advice and, depending on your circumstances, it may have a legal duty to rehouse you.

Need housing now?

If you're homeless and need a place immediately, the council's housing department may have to house you. You don't have to be sleeping on the street to be considered homeless; you may be living in short-term accommodation (such as staying on a friend's sofa), or your accommodation may be seriously unsuitable for you (for example, because you are at risk of violence there). If you are homeless, the council should take a homelessness application. This is not the same as going on the council housing waiting list.

What will the council do?

The council should make inquiries to work out what you're entitled to. Among other things, it should look into whether you have a priority for rehousing, and whether you have deliberately made yourself homeless. **The law is complicated:** the flowchart on page 18 gives more information about what the council will look into. Get more advice if you are unsure about anything. When it has finished its inquiries, the council has to tell you its decision on your application in writing.

Mediation

If you have left your parents' or guardians' home, the council may offer you mediation, especially if you are 16 or 17 years old. Mediation is where an independent person helps you and your parents talk through the problems that have led to them kicking you out or you feeling you have to leave. The aim is to resolve those problems so that you can return home.

Mediation should not be offered if you have left because of abuse, or if your parents don't want to take part. It is a good idea to accept mediation, because even if it does not result in you returning home, it can improve your relationship with your parents. If your parents won't let you return home during mediation, the council should take a homelessness application.

Making a homelessness application to the council

Take **identification** with you if you can, including:

- proof of income
- proof of identity
- proof of where you used to live.

Also make a note of the name of the person you speak to.

1 Go to the your local council's housing department and say you want to make a homelessness application. Remember, if you are homeless, the council cannot turn you away – it must look into your circumstances.

Am I homeless?

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

You could be:

- staying with friends
- living in run-down accommodation
- at risk of violence at home
- about to be evicted.

Do I have a priority need?

You have a priority need if:

- you are 16 or 17 years old. The council must house you, at least temporarily. The council will probably check that you can't go back and live with your family, but it can't force you to go back.
 - you are 18 to 20 years old, if you've left care.
 - you are responsible for a child or children.
 - you are pregnant.
 - your home has been damaged by fire, flood, etc.
 - you are vulnerable (because of a disability, physical or mental health problems, having been in prison or the armed forces, or having left home due to violence).
- The rules around these circumstances are complicated. If the council refuses to help you and you think your situation matches one of the above, get advice.

2 When you've made your application, the council will look to see if you:

- are **homeless**
- are **eligible**
- have a **priority need** (this is the council's name for special circumstances). It must look into your circumstances.

Am I eligible?

Most UK citizens are eligible, but if you've lived or come from abroad, the rules are complicated. Get advice if you're from abroad

3 If the council thinks you may be homeless, eligible, and have a priority need, it must give you temporary accommodation.

3 If the council thinks you aren't homeless, eligible, or do not have a priority need, and you disagree with the decision, get advice, as you might be able to challenge the decision.

4 While you are in temporary accommodation the council will carry out further inquiries to decide if you are homeless, eligible, and in priority need. At the same time the council will decide if you:

- became **homeless intentionally**
- have a **connection with the area**.

When the council has looked into these things it will inform you of its decision in writing.

What do 'becoming homeless intentionally' and a 'connection with the area' mean?

Becoming homeless intentionally means the council thinks that the reason you have nowhere to live is your fault. A connection with the area can mean that you normally live or work somewhere, or have close relatives there. If you don't have a local connection, the council can refer you to a council where you do, who will have to house you.

5 If the council agrees to house you, depending on the availability of housing in the area you may have to stay in temporary accommodation until a more permanent option becomes available. The accommodation the council provide you with has to be suitable, whether it is long term or not.

5 If the council doesn't agree to house you and you feel the decision is wrong, get advice about what you can do next. You might be able to appeal. The council must give you further help finding non-council accommodation, even if it does not have to house you directly.

Application refused?

If the council has reason to believe that you may be homeless (or may become homeless soon), it can't turn you away without looking into your situation first. If it does turn you away, get more advice from a local advice centre or solicitor to make sure you're not being treated unfairly.

Who gets housed?

If the council thinks you may be homeless, from the UK, and have a priority for rehousing, then it should give you temporary accommodation immediately, until it completes its enquiries. (If you are not from the UK or have lived abroad, the rules are complicated, so get advice).

When it has completed its inquiries, the council may decide, depending on your circumstances, that:

- it does not have to rehouse you
- it only has to rehouse you temporarily
- it has to rehouse you permanently (although you may have to spend some time in temporary accommodation before a permanent place becomes available).

If the council has decided that it does not have to rehouse you permanently, it should help you to find somewhere for yourself.

If the council decides it has to rehouse you, but you do not have strong connections with its area, it may refer you to another council for rehousing. Get advice if you don't want to go to the other area.

The council won't help me

If the council says it doesn't have to rehouse you, it should still give you advice on your other housing options. It's also worth contacting a local advice centre for a second opinion. They may be able to help you appeal against the council's decision.

Getting a Place

Although living by yourself might sound ideal, it can be really hard. Think very seriously before leaving home. If you are having a hard time with your parents or carers, try to talk to someone about it before making the decision to leave home. Don't leave home without having arranged alternative accommodation unless you have to.

More information about the advantages and disadvantages of different types of housing can be found in the housing options table below on page 24. Make sure you get housing that is right for you by using the checklist on page 26.

Living on your own

Living on your own can be great fun, and give you all the space and independence that you want, but it can also be quite frightening and hard work. If you're not used to living by yourself, you might find it a bit of shock having to cook, clean, do shopping, pay your bills, deal with your landlord, handle difficult neighbours, etc. At times you might feel overwhelmed.

Make sure you find out about what help and support is available, and don't be afraid to ask for it. 'Moving on' is a website aimed at supporting care leavers when they are leaving care, but the information it provides is relevant to anyone who needs advice on living on their own for the first time. Also take a look at the 'Useful contacts' on page 35.

Short-term solutions

If you need a quick housing solution, such as a hostel or refuge, see 'Need somewhere to stay tonight?', on page 14.

Renting privately

If you want to rent privately (from a private landlord, rather than the council or a housing association), check out the flowchart on page 22, which can help you find the right place for you. You'll usually need to pay a deposit and rent in advance before moving in.

Finding private rented accommodation

1 Start searching

The best places to start looking for somewhere are:

- shop windows (local newsagents)
- local papers
- renting websites (see the 'Useful contacts' on page 35)
- letting agencies (or estate agents)
- asking friends if they know of anywhere (especially if you're looking for a room in a shared house).



2 Take and compare notes

Note down addresses, numbers, and prices. Work out what's important to you: price, size of room, number of flatmates, location, etc. Compare the different properties and call the best choices to arrange viewings. When you ring, remember to:

- check the amount of deposit required
- check the rent and bills
- if it's a shared house, ask about flatmates (age, occupation, smokers etc)
- ask for the exact location, how to get there, and a time to meet.



3 Visiting places

When you visit houses, use the checklist on page 26. Take notes and ask lots of questions. If you can, take someone with you, or otherwise let people know where you're going.



4 Making a decision

It's normally best to look at a few places so you can compare them and decide which one you like best. If you see somewhere you like, you'll usually have to put a deposit down to keep it.



5 What to do when you move in

- Read the tenancy agreement and sign it if you're happy with it.
- Check the inventory, noting if the actual contents of the house or room differ, and any disrepair. Make an inventory if there isn't one, and ask the landlord to sign it.
- Establish any house rules (like smoking or cleaning).
- Set up bills.

Council or housing association housing

Renting from the council or from a housing association is cheaper than renting privately. Most people are eligible to go on the waiting list for a council or housing association place, but this doesn't mean that the council has to house you. Many areas have very long waiting lists, and councils have to give priority to certain groups of people. Some housing associations accept direct applications, but there is also likely to be a long waiting list.

If you are homeless, you can make a homelessness application to the council, and it may have a legal duty to provide you with accommodation (see 'Help from the council', page 16)

Foyers and supported housing

You may feel that you need some help to manage living on your own for the first time. In some areas there are housing projects for young people (called Foyers) that provide help with budgeting, getting into training or employment, etc, as well as accommodation. Contact the Foyer Federation for more details.

There may also be other supported accommodation that you can access if you have specific requirements (for example, if you are a young single parent).

Lodging schemes

On these schemes, sometimes called Nightstop schemes, you stay in a room in another person's house. This person will often have received some training in providing support to young people. Often the schemes are used for short-term housing in an emergency.

Buying a place

Buying a place is very expensive, so, unless you have some savings and a good income, it is unlikely to be an option.

Housing options table

	Foyers (see page 23)	Lodging schemes (see page 23)	Buying a house	Supported housing	Housing associations	Council housing	Renting privately
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expensive, but financial help is often available. Services, bills and meals sometimes extra. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often cheaper than renting privately. Deposit not usually required. Bills often included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most expensive option, but prices vary. Regular income required to get a mortgage. Lots of extra costs. Owners have to pay for all repairs. Possibly ground rent and service charges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually more expensive than other rented housing, but help sometimes available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheaper than renting privately, but more expensive than council housing. Bills and Council Tax usually paid separately. No deposit needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually the cheapest way to rent. Bills and Council Tax paid separately. No deposit needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More expensive than council places. Bills and Council Tax usually paid separately. Deposit and rent in advance needed.
Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normally a waiting list. Helps if an adviser puts you forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only exist in some areas. You can often get in quickly. Length of stay can vary, but often short-stay only. Helps if an adviser puts you forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of choice in most areas. Most places sold through estate agents. Check local papers and property websites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many places help people with drug or alcohol problems. Often a waiting list. Often requires an interview to get in. Helps if an adviser puts you forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few places available. Most properties go to people on the council's waiting list. Direct applications are sometimes accepted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few places available. Usually a long waiting list Some people ineligible. Application forms available from the council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of places to choose from (not all of them will be available or affordable if you receive Housing Benefit, see page 28). Available through letting agencies, websites, local papers, shop windows and word of mouth. Might need a guarantor.
Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and careers help provided as condition of stay. You can be evicted if you cause problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can be evicted very easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most flats are leasehold; most houses are freehold – this affects your rights. Eviction less likely, but still possible if you don't keep up your mortgage repayments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most tenancies end when extra support is no longer needed. Rights vary, but are usually quite limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most tenancies have no end date, although there may be an introductory period. Usually strong rights, although different tenancy types give different rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most tenancies have no end date, although there may be an introductory period. Council tenants usually have very strong rights (after any introductory period), although you can still be evicted if there is a good reason (eg if you don't pay the rent). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most tenancies are for six or 12 months, but can be extended. Landlord doesn't usually need a reason to evict, but must follow legal procedures. Sharing with the landlord reduces your rights.

Getting the right place checklist

1. Look around the property and area

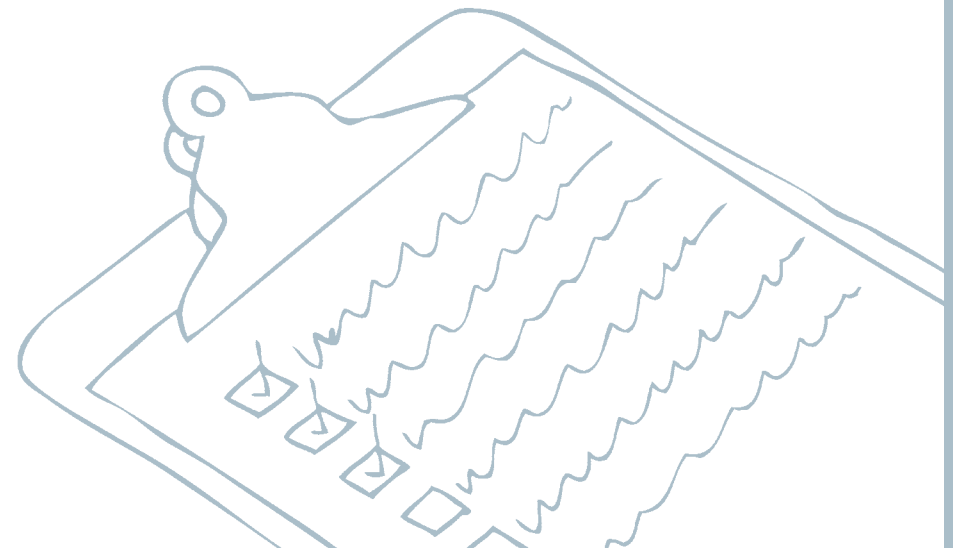
- Think about safety.** Is the area dodgy at night? Is there street lighting? Are there any streets to avoid?
- Listen out for noise.** Rumbling traffic, barking dogs, and noisy neighbours could all get annoying.
- Check out the facilities.** Is there a local shop, doctor, gym, college, or bar?
- Find out about public transport.** Is it easy and close by? Is it regular? How much is it?
- Look for available car parking or bike racks.** Even if you don't have transport yourself, it may make it easier for others to visit.
- Work out if it's convenient.** Are you close to friends, family, work, or college?

2. Find out about the property

- Check what condition the place is in.** Are repairs needed? Does it smell of damp? Would the landlord be willing to do repairs before you move in?
- Find out about heating.** How much might the bills be? Is there double glazing?
- Think about security.** How do the windows and doors lock? Has it ever been burgled?
- Ask what furniture is provided.** You'll have to buy anything that isn't provided. Also ask about appliances, such as a washing machine.
- Meet anyone you'll be sharing with.** It can be a bit of a gamble if you don't.
- Check that there's a phone line.** Installing one can be expensive.
- Make sure it's got everything you need.** This is especially important if you've got a disability or a child.
- Look around the garden or yard.** Are the fences and walls secure? Would it be a hassle to look after?
- Work out what your priorities are.** Very few people can afford their ideal home!

Work out the total cost

- Check out how much the deposit is.** Ask the landlord to confirm how much it is and when you'll get it back.
- Double-check the rent details.** How much is it and when is it due? Who do you pay it to, and how?
- Ask roughly how much the bills come to.** Is there a meter? How much is the Council Tax?
- Check if the landlord will accept people who claim Housing Benefit.** Not all do.
- Check if the rent includes services or bills.** Housing Benefit won't pay for most of these.
- Work out how much anything that isn't provided will cost.** You may have to save up to get everything you need.
- Find out if you can claim Housing Benefit.** Also, whether you can get help to pay your deposit or rent in advance.
- Ask the estate/letting agent about administration costs.** If you used an agent, there may be extra costs when you sign the tenancy agreement or, in the future, when it needs renewing.



Money matters

Having your own place is expensive. You will probably need to buy stuff for your new place. If you are moving into private rented accommodation, you will probably need to find a deposit and rent in advance. After you've moved in, you will have regular bills to pay, on top of your rent.

Can you afford it?

Before you get a place of your own, you will need to work out if you can afford it. If you are moving into private rented accommodation, you will need to have the money for the deposit and rent in advance.

The budget form can help you plan for your regular expenses. Fill in the relevant amounts and add them up. If your outgoings will be more than your income, you will need to reduce your outgoings (for example, by finding a cheaper place or giving up smoking) or increase your income (look into whether there might be benefits that you are entitled to, for example).

Help with housing costs

If you're on a low income, you can apply to the local council for Housing Benefit to help with your rent. The amount of benefit you can get depends on your income and circumstances. If you're under 25, single, and don't have children, Housing Benefit will only pay enough for a single room in a shared house (unless you are under 22 and have been in care – see the 'Been in care?', page 31). Most students can't get Housing Benefit (see 'Students', page 32).

To find out more about Housing Benefit, check out Shelter's Know your rights website or the Department for Work and Pensions website.

Rent arrears or other debts

You are responsible for paying your rent and if you miss a payment you will have 'rent arrears'. Your landlord can evict

you if you have rent arrears, but they must follow the proper procedure – they can't usually just kick you out. If you are struggling to pay your rent, or your landlord is threatening to kick you out because you have rent arrears, you should get advice as soon as possible. Try to prioritise rent over other debts, if you can. For help with debts check out UK Debtline.

Budget form

Outgoings per month	£
Rent	
Electricity/gas	
Water rates	
Council Tax	
Insurance	
TV licence	
Phone/Internet	
Mobile phone	
Credit card and loan repayments (such as student loans)	
Travel	
Food	
Toiletries	
Clothes	
Cigarettes	
Going out	
Other	
Total	
Income per month	£
Wages	
Benefits	
Student loans	
Family contribution	
Other	
Total	

Nightmare landlords

The law protects tenants from bad landlords. There are rules about how landlords can evict tenants, how they should treat tenants, and what condition they should keep their properties in.

Worried about eviction?

Your landlord cannot normally kick you out without following a legal procedure. If your landlord is trying to evict you and you have nowhere to go, contact the local council, solicitor, or a local advice centre as soon as you can. An adviser can check whether your landlord is following the rules – if they're not, the eviction could be illegal.

Landlord hassling you?

If your landlord is snooping around, threatening you, or coming round unannounced, they may be guilty of harassment. If your landlord is trying to force you to leave by doing things like this, it may be a criminal offence. Contact your local council or an advice centre for advice. If the problem is serious, or your landlord has been violent, contact the police and/or a solicitor.

Home unsafe or needs repairs?

If you're worried about gas, fire, or electrical safety in your home, don't take risks. Get advice to find out what your landlord's responsibilities are, and make sure they are met. Your landlord also has responsibility for some other repairs, but if you break something, it will be your responsibility to replace it or get it fixed.

Haggling over a deposit?

If you think your landlord has kept your deposit unfairly at the end of your tenancy, it's best to try to talk to them at first to say why you don't think it's fair. Write them a letter if you can't talk to them. If that doesn't work you can take your landlord to court.

It's quite straightforward and some landlords pay up as soon as they realise you're serious. Get advice, and don't get ripped off.

From 6 April 2007, if you pay a deposit for a new tenancy, it must be protected by an approved tenancy deposit protection scheme. The schemes will include a service for sorting out disagreements about the return of the deposit.

Been in care?

Leaving care and getting your own place is a big step, so it's important that you're well prepared. The social services department has a legal duty to help you prepare. Even though you might have had enough of people interfering in your life, it's important to get what you're entitled to.

Budgeting and rent

Like anyone living on their own for the first time, you'll need to work out a budget and think about how you're going to pay for your accommodation before you leave. You may be able to get help from social services to pay a deposit, and you can also apply for a Community Care Grant to help you set up your own place, or a Crisis Loan or Budgeting Loan to pay rent in advance (see Shelter's Know your rights website or the Department for Work and Pensions website for more details).

Help with housing costs

You'll probably be financially dependent on social services until you turn 18. Most care leavers can't claim Housing Benefit until then, although there are some exceptions. Until you're 22, Housing Benefit will not be restricted to the rent for a single room as it is for other under-25s (see 'Money matters', page 28).

Nowhere to stay?

You may be eligible for temporary housing, either from the social social services department or the council's housing department. Many 16- and 17-year-olds who have been in care should get help from social services, and many 18-, 19-, 20-year-olds who have been in care have a priority for housing from the council. If you think you're entitled to help, but have problems getting them to help you, get advice straight away.

Students

Many young people leave home for the first time when they go to college or university.

Where will I live?

Most students opt for university accommodation during the first year and then rent privately from landlords or letting agencies after that. If you decide to rent privately, use the checklist on page 26 to help you find the best place.

How will I pay for it?

You will need to budget carefully to ensure that you can pay your rent. You will normally need a deposit and a month's rent in advance to give to your landlord before or when you move in. Most students cannot get Housing Benefit to help with rent, but there are a few exceptions (for example, students who have children).

I'm a student leaving care

If you're a student leaving care, you'll need to find out about the different funding options open to you, including grants and the possibility of support from social services. Your personal adviser should be able to help you with this. Social services will help you with accommodation during the holidays.

Young parents

Living on your own can be especially scary if you also have a child or children to look after.

Where will I live?

If you have children or are pregnant, you need to think carefully about what sort of place you need, and what you can realistically afford. There are lots of different options, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. Use the table on page 24 to see what the option is the best one for you.

There are also some specialist supported accommodation projects for young single women with babies (sometimes called 'mother and baby units'). You will usually need to be referred by the council or social services to get into these.

What if I need somewhere immediately?

If you've nowhere to stay, don't panic. Contact your local council immediately. The council normally has to give temporary accommodation to you if are homeless and a parent or pregnant woman, and may have to rehouse you. See 'Help from the council', page 16 for more information. If the council says it won't help, get advice.

Can I get financial help?

You will need to budget carefully to afford to look after your child or children. Use the budget planner on page 29 to plan your budget, and stick to it. Parents are entitled to special benefits. If you are a parent, you will not be subject the Housing Benefit restrictions that under-25s and students are. Benefit rules are complicated, so if you are unsure if you are getting what you are entitled to, get advice.



Photo: Nick David

Useful contacts

This section contains details of organisations and websites that you might find useful if you have housing problems.

Shelter

Shelter's free housing advice helpline: 0808 800 4444

Know your rights website: www.shelter.org.uk/knowyourrights

Online Advice services directory:
www.shelter.org.uk/advice-services-directory

Housing and homelessness

Centrepoint

Housing for young homeless people (mainly in London, but some projects elsewhere).

Tel: 0845 466 3400
www.centrepoint.org.uk

Homeless UK

Website detailing accommodation and support services for homeless people. There is a local site for London.

www.homelessuk.org
www.homelesslondon.org

National Missing Persons Helpline

Confidential advice and message home service.

Runaway helpline (for under-18s): 0808 800 7070
Message home helpline (18 and over): 0800 700 740
www.missingpersons.org

Finding a place

Renting websites

These websites have details of properties available to rent privately and houseshares.

www.rentomatic.co.uk
www.loot.com
www.uk.easyroommate.com

www.findaproperty.co.uk
www.moveflat.com

Foyer Federation

For more information about Foyers (see page 23) and contact details for Foyers in your area.

Tel: 020 7430 2212
www.foyer.net

Nightstop UK

For more details about Nightstop schemes (see page 23) and contact details for schemes in your area.

Tel: 01274 533004
www.nightstop-uk.org

Care leavers**Carelaw**

Information website for children and young people in or leaving care.

www.carelaw.org.uk

Moving on

Information on independent living for care leavers (but which others may also find useful).

www.info4movingon.org.uk

Voice

Help for children and young people in or leaving care.

Tel: 0808 800 5792
www.vcc-uk.org

Education, training, and employment

The following organisations may be able to help if you need advice about education, training, or employment.

Rainer

www.raineronline.org.uk

The Prince's Trust

www.princes-trust.org.uk

Weston Spirit:

www.westonspirit.org.uk

Fairbridge:

www.fairbridge.org.uk

Drugs and alcohol**Frank**

Information and confidential advice about drugs and alcohol.

Tel: 0800 776 600
www.talktofrank.com

Young Addaction

Website with information about drugs and alcohol.

www.youngaddaction.org.uk

Domestic violence**Childline**

Free helpline for children and young people.

Tel: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Mankind

Helpline for men experiencing domestic violence.

Tel: 0870 794 4124
www.mankind.org.uk

Women's Aid

Information and advice for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Freephone 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk

Advice on other issues and general advice**Citizens Advice**

Online advice and details of your local Citizens Advice bureau.

www.adviceguide.org.uk

Community Legal Service

Website with legal information and a directory of solicitors and legal advisers.

www.clsdirect.org.uk

Connexions

Advice and information for people aged 13 to 19.

Tel: 0808 001 3219

www.connexions-direct.com

Department for Work and Pensions website

Website for the Government department in charge of benefits. Gives more details about various benefits that you might be eligible for.

www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/benefits

Mind

Advice and information about mental health.

Tel: 0845 766 0136

www.mind.org.uk

National Debtline

A free, confidential, and independent telephone helpline for people with debt problems.

Tel: 0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Samaritans

Confidential listening service.

Tel: 0845 7909 090

www.samaritans.org.uk

TheSite

Information website for young people.

www.thesite.org.uk



Photo: Nick David

Shelter believes everyone should have a home.

We help people find and keep a home.
We campaign for decent housing for all.

We can only do this with your help.
Please support us.

88 Old Street
London
EC1V 9HU

Telephone: 0845 458 4590
or visit www.shelter.org.uk/knowyourrights

The Vodafone UK Foundation is supporting Shelter's work with and for young people, enabling Shelter to provide young people with the information they need at the time they need it. The Vodafone UK Foundation and Shelter are working together to tackle youth homelessness and social exclusion in the long term.

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