

Prisoners: housing on release

This factsheet looks at your housing options when you come out of prison

If you are still serving a sentence of 12 months or less, 'Through the Gate' services are available in prison and can advise you how to find housing on release from prison.

NACRO's Resettlement Advice Service on 0300 123 1999 can advise you on your housing options after leaving prison.

Family and friends

It is difficult to get housing on release from prison so this can be a good short-term option. If relationships with family or friends have broken down, you may need to show them that you have dealt with past issues.

Hostels and nightshelters

Hostel places are limited - you may need to go on a waiting list. Some hostels are only for certain groups, eg people with mental health problems, or under 25s. You may be able to claim benefits to pay the rent.

Nightshelters usually only offer a basic mattress and food, at no charge. They are run by churches and charities and are available in the winter.

Supported housing

Supported housing can help you address issues to assist you to live independently and adjust back into the community. Varying levels of support are provided, depending on the type of accommodation and your needs. You will probably need to be referred by someone like a support worker. Most projects have waiting lists.

Finding homelessness services

You can search for accommodation, advice and other services for homeless people at homeless.org.uk

Private renting

Private rented housing is expensive in many areas. You may be able to claim benefits to help you pay the rent. How much you can get depends on your income, age and the size and location of the property. If you are under 35, benefits will usually only pay the rent of a room in a shared house.

Landlords or letting agents will want references, a deposit, rent in advance, and proof that you can pay the rent.

Apply as homeless

If you apply as homeless the council must assess your needs and devise a personalised housing plan (PHP) containing the steps you and the council will take to find somewhere suitable for you to live. The council only has to give you somewhere to live while it looks into your homelessness application if it believes you may be:

- homeless
- eligible (some people from abroad aren't eligible)
- in 'priority need'.

Some people, such as pregnant women and those with dependent children, are in priority need automatically. Others have to be 'vulnerable'. The council will only decide you are vulnerable if it agrees you are significantly more at risk when homeless than an 'ordinary person' would be.

Former prisoners are not automatically vulnerable, though it can be a factor. You could also be vulnerable because you are, for example, physically or mentally ill, or elderly, or were in care.

Longer-term accommodation

If you are in priority need and not 'intentionally homeless', the council will only arrange longer-term housing if - after following the PHP - you still can't find anywhere to live.

But if the council says you made yourself homeless 'intentionally', eg because you lost your home after you went to prison for committing a crime, it will only have to house you for a short period. Get advice on whether you can challenge this.

The council will check if you have a local connection with its area. If you don't, the council may ask another council to help you.

Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free* housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice

*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



Note
Information contained in this factsheet is correct at the time of publication. Please check details before use.