

Applying as homeless: offers of accommodation

This factsheet looks at when the council has to offer you accommodation if you are homeless and meet certain conditions.

If you apply to the council as homeless, the help you will get depends on your circumstances.

Emergency accommodation

The council must offer you emergency temporary accommodation if it has reason to believe you may:

- 1) be homeless
- 2) meet immigration and residence conditions
- 3) have a priority need.

Other factsheets in this series give details of these conditions.

The council should also help you to try to find somewhere to live. It must help you for at least 8 weeks after you applied for help. It must also do this if you meet the first two but not the third condition above.

Note that you might not get any more help if you don't cooperate with the council or refuse any suitable offer it makes you.

Longer-term accommodation

After 8 weeks, the council will owe you the 'main' duty if you meet conditions (1) to (3) above and you:

- are homeless through no fault of your own
- (in most cases) have a local connection.

Under the main duty, the council must provide longer term accommodation. Normally this will be temporary accommodation while you wait for an offer of more settled housing.

If the temporary accommodation comes to an end through no fault of your own, the council must make you another offer.

Suitable accommodation

Any accommodation offered must be suitable for you and anyone who normally lives with you.

If you think accommodation you are offered is unsuitable, it's almost always best to accept it first, and challenge it after. See *Applying as homeless: suitable accommodation*.

What the council might offer you

There are different types of emergency and temporary accommodation:

Hostel

A hostel consists of a bedroom and shared facilities. You might have to share a bathroom, shower and kitchen with other residents. There might be specialist support available, eg for mental health problems.

Bed and breakfast

Bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation consists of a room with basic appliances, such as a toaster and a kettle. There is usually no access to a kitchen. Bathroom facilities are often shared with other families. You and your family might have to sleep in one room.

Self-contained accommodation

Sometimes the council will arrange self-contained accommodation for you with a private or housing association landlord. You would have your own bathroom and kitchen.

What you pay

You will have to pay rent for any accommodation you're offered. The council must take into account what you can afford to pay when it makes you an offer. You can claim benefits to help pay your rent. If this does not cover the whole rent you will have to pay the shortfall.

Find out if you are also responsible for paying anything else, such as bills, service charges (eg for cleaning if provided), council tax or charges for meals (if provided).

Final offers of accommodation

The main duty usually ends because the council makes you a final offer of settled housing. This could be:

- a council or housing association tenancy
- an assured shorthold tenancy with a private landlord. This must be for a fixed term of at least 12 months.

The duty can also end if you refuse a suitable offer of accommodation.

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.



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Note

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