

# Homelessness: 16 and 17 year-olds

**This factsheet looks at the help you can get from your local council if you're 16 or 17 and homeless.**

If you're aged 16 or 17 and homeless your local council can help you.

## **Must you be sleeping on the street?**

You don't have to sleep on the street to be homeless. You are legally homeless if where you're staying is unsafe, unsuitable or if you have no legal right to stay there. You could be homeless if you're sofa surfing at friends because, for example, you're escaping from abuse or the risk of violence.

## **Housing or children's services?**

You can ask children's services (part of social services) or the Housing Options/Advice department for help. Housing Options will only be able to help if you meet immigration and residence conditions.

It is best to contact children's services as they can offer you more help. Ask to speak to the duty social worker.

If you go to Housing Options, they should find you somewhere to stay for the night. They should also refer you to children's services for a 'child in need' assessment.

Whichever department you go to, you must not be left on the streets for even one night. Get advice if you are passed around between departments.

## **Which council?**

The council where you usually live is the one that has a duty to help you. In an emergency you can go to any council in England.

## **What will the council do?**

Children's services or Housing Options will check to see if you can return home but can't force you to go back if you don't feel safe there. You may be asked to attend 'family mediation' to improve the relationship with your family. You can still be housed while this happens.

## **What kind of place will you get?**

You could be offered a place with a foster family, in a hostel for young people, in a volunteer's home or in more independent shared accommodation.

You should accept what the council offers you because you might not get any more help if you turn it down.

You can ask the council to look again at its decision about what to offer you. You can do this after you accept its offer. You will usually only have 21 days from when the council writes to you with its offer to ask for a 'review'. Get advice if you are in this situation.

## **Support from children's services**

If you ask children's services for help they must look into all your needs. They can:

- pay for your accommodation and your living costs
- provide you with a personal adviser to advise and support you
- help you make a 'pathway plan' for the future, covering your education, training and employment.

## **What happens after you turn 18?**

If you have been 'looked after' by children's services for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 18, including at least one day after your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, they can continue to give you support including helping you to find somewhere to live.

## **Finding the right support**

Services that support homeless young people vary between different areas.

The following organisations help young people with housing and/or advice:

**Centrepoin**t: 0808 800 0661

**Coram Voice**: 0808 800 5792

**Runaway Helpline**: 116 000

**Depaul Nightstop (London)**: 0207 939 1220

**ChildLine**: 0800 1111

## **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](http://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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