

Applying as homeless: priority need

This factsheet looks at if you have a priority need for accommodation if you apply as homeless.

The council's duties under homelessness law are strongest for people in 'priority need'.

Who has a priority need?

You will usually have a priority need if you:

- are pregnant
- have a dependent child who normally lives with you
- have been made homeless by a fire, flood or a similar emergency
- are aged 16 or 17 (but social services will usually have the main duty to accommodate and support you)
- are aged 18, 19 or 20 and were 'looked after' (even for one day) by social services when you were aged 16 or 17
- are a 'vulnerable' person.

You will usually also have a priority need if someone in your household is in this list.

Who is a 'vulnerable' person?

To decide if you are a 'vulnerable' person, the council will look whether you would suffer more harm from being homeless than an 'ordinary person' would suffer. In particular, the council will look at whether you would suffer harm because you:

- are over 60 years old
- have physical or mental health problems, or a learning disability
- had to leave your home because of violence or harassment
- have been in care, the armed forces, a young offenders' institute or prison in the past.

The council won't automatically consider you to be vulnerable just because you are in one of these categories. Tell the council how being homeless would affect you. The council must look at your whole situation, including whether you have family members who you can depend on for ongoing support.

The council's duty

The council must draw up a plan setting out the steps that you and the council will take to help you keep your home or find somewhere else to live if you:

- are homeless or in danger or becoming homeless within 56 days, and
- meet immigration/residence conditions.

If you are already homeless and the council thinks you have (or may have) a priority need, it must provide you somewhere temporary to live while it considers your application.

If the council decides you **do** have a priority need, it may have a long-term duty to find housing for you. But first it will consider if you made yourself intentionally homeless.

If you don't have a local connection with the council you applied to, it might refer you to a council where you do.

For more information, see [other factsheets](#) in this series on local connection and intentional homelessness.

Temporary accommodation

You may be offered:

- a hostel place
- bed and breakfast accommodation
- a self-contained flat or house.

Reviewing the decision

You have the right to ask for a review of a decision that you do not have a priority need, or if you are offered unsuitable temporary accommodation, or if you are referred to a different council.

You must ask for a review within 21 days of being notified of the council's decision. Get advice quickly if you want to do this.

If your review does not succeed, you may be able to appeal to court.

If you are on a low income you may qualify for [legal aid](#) to help you with a review or an appeal.

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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