

Am I homeless?

This factsheet is the first in a series of five considering the issues that a local council will look at if you are homeless and apply to it for accommodation.

This factsheet looks at the question of who is homeless and the initial steps to take if you become homeless.

If you are sleeping on the streets you will be homeless, but even if you have a roof over your head you can still be homeless. This is because you may not have any rights to stay where you live or it might not be reasonable for you to continue living there.

You may be a homeless person if you are:

- about to be evicted
- temporarily staying with friends or family
- in 'crisis accommodation' such as a nightshelter or women's refuge
- at risk of violence in your home
- living somewhere where you have no legal right to stay (eg a squat)
- living somewhere that you cannot afford to pay for without depriving yourself of basic essentials such as food or clothing
- forced to live apart from your family or someone you would normally live with because your accommodation is not suitable
- have nowhere to park/moor your mobile home/houseboat
- living in very overcrowded conditions
- living in poor conditions that badly affect your health.

Note that it can be very difficult to be accepted as homeless on the basis of the last two points in the list.

First steps

Go to your local council's housing department and say you want to make a homelessness application. The council cannot just turn you away – it must look into your circumstances to decide what, if any, duty it owes you.

Take some documents with you if you can. These could include:

- birth certificate(s) or passport(s) for everyone in your household
- details of your child benefit
- proof of pregnancy
- tenancy agreement
- eviction notice served by your landlord

- court possession papers
- a letter from anyone who has asked you to move out (eg your parents).

What the council will look at?

The council will look at whether you are:

- homeless
- eligible for assistance (second factsheet)
- in priority need (third factsheet).

If you are any of the above, the council will then look to see if you:

- made yourself intentionally homeless (fourth factsheet)
- have a local connection (fifth factsheet).

In general, the more of these 'hurdles' you get through, the more the council will have to do to help you.

Negative decisions

You have the right to request a review of any decision that goes against you, though your request must be made within 21 days of being notified of the decision.

Threatened with homelessness

If it is likely that you are going to be evicted within 28 days, the council must at least provide you with advice and assistance. If you are likely to be eligible for assistance and in priority need, it should do more.

Duty owed

If the council accepts that you are homeless, it will then look at whether you are eligible for assistance. We will look at this in the second factsheet.

Further advice

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

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



Specialist support on housing advice

A Shelter and Citizens Advice service. DCLG funded.



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Shelter

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