

Factsheet 1: Housing Advice at Runnymede Borough Council-what to expect when you contact us

Housing Options interviews can be conducted over the telephone or you may be asked to attend an appointment. We gather information from you in stages to enable us to give you the best advice at the right time. Your first contact will be with the duty housing needs officer. The first question we will ask you is 'what have you done to resolve your own housing situation?' It is important that everyone accepts responsibility to be part of their own housing solutions.

Stage 1. Initial Assessment. The duty housing needs officer will take details about yourself and any members of your current household. This stage is usually completed on the telephone. If you have called into the offices, you will have to wait to be seen and there is no guarantee of how long this may take. It is far better to telephone or e mail if you can in the first instance. It is useful if you have full names, dates of birth, postcodes, landlord details, mortgage lenders details and any other information that may explain your housing circumstances. The Officer will make an assessment on how urgent your case is and whether to refer you to a named Housing Options Officer. If at this stage you require general housing advice only, the Officer can give you that advice and we may require you to attend for a further appointment.

Stage 2. Being referred to a Housing Options Officer Your case only reaches this stage if it has been assigned to a named Housing Options Officer, usually because some direct action needs to be taken. The housing options officer will advise and assist you to keep your current home or to consider other housing options if this is not possible. Most of this stage can be conducted over the telephone however there may be occasions when we need information sent or brought to us. We will make an appointment for you to come in if necessary but we will rely on you to make sure we have all the relevant information so we can help the best we can. We will also expect you to be looking for your own housing solutions and to try and resolve issues to the best of your ability. Our job is to work with you to find solutions not for you. Personal responsibility is key and we will remind all applicants of this.

At this stage examples of things we may do include:

- Speak to your landlord
- Visit you at home if you have problems with friends or family
- Negotiate with your mortgage lender
- Refer you for money advice (CAB)
- Refer you to Floating Support to help sustain your tenancy/mortgage