



Housing Advice Sheet 2 - General Housing Advice

Are you homeless?

You don't have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over your head to be considered homeless. Most people who are legally homeless are not on the streets. There are many situations where the council must accept you are homeless and may have a legal duty to help you with housing.

For example:

- You are at risk of violence or abuse where you are living. This can be from a partner, ex-partner or family member, or someone in your area. The council may ask you to provide details of the incidents. Evidence is helpful but the council will not turn you away if you haven't reported to police.
- You don't have 'a roof over your head' i.e. you are street homeless
- You are at risk of losing your home
- You cannot afford to stay where you are
- Your accommodation is very temporary
- You are staying with friends or 'sofa surfing'
- You have been locked out or illegally evicted
- Your accommodation is in very poor condition
- You cannot live together with your partner or close family
- You have nowhere to put your houseboat or caravan

If one or more of these apply, you may be eligible for help from the council.

Who the council can help

Homelessness Application can be made by someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, or a representative can make an application on your behalf, for example someone acting in a professional capacity, solicitor/social worker etc.

Upon making a homeless application the council will carry out enquiries into eligibility this is to confirm that you normally reside in the UK long-term and are not subject to immigration control. If you are eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness there are 3 other elements in addition to the eligibility that may be assessed prior or during your homelessness application:

- Priority Need- this means you either have dependent children, a physical or mental health disability, or you are vulnerable for other reasons, such as fleeing domestic violence. Please note even if you do not meet the priority need criteria you will still be eligible to make a homeless application, however this can affect duties owed such as a temporary accommodation duty.
- Intentionality- this is to assess whether you have intentionally made yourself homeless. As above this does not affect your rights to make a homeless application, and is part of the enquiries made during your homeless application.
- Local connection- Enquiries will be made to ensure you have a local connection with the district. You may be referred to another local authority if you do not hold a local connection with East Suffolk Council, and you hold a local connection elsewhere.

At the interview

A housing interview will usually be done over the phone, however in some circumstances you may be asked to complete a face-to-face interview. The process will be quicker if you provide all documentation to your allocated Housing Needs Officer as soon as possible.

For more information on the homelessness interview, you can visit the Shelter website at shelter.org.uk in the 'How to apply as homeless'

If the council says it can help you...

If the council accepts that it has a duty to continue housing you, you will probably have to stay in temporary accommodation until it offers you somewhere more long-term or 'settled'.

If the council says it cannot help you...

You can challenge the council's decision.

If you think the council's decision is wrong, contact an independent local advice centre like Citizens Advice Bureau as soon as you can.

Other support if you are not eligible

If you are not eligible for housing from the council, you may still be able to access:

- help from social services when homeless: if you have children or additional needs you may be able to get support from Children's or Adult Social Care
- short-term emergency housing
- support in finding private rented accommodation

You can get further advice from:

- Shelter
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Crisis
- National Domestic Violence Helpline
- Stonewall Housing (LGBT charity)
- Metro (LGBT charity)