

**Are you 16
or 17 years
old and
homeless?**



Introduction

You do not have to be sleeping on the streets to be homeless. If you are staying somewhere, you have no legal right to stay (like a friend's house) or somewhere that is not safe for you or you are sofa-surfing then you are homeless.

Having nowhere to live or leaving home suddenly can be stressful and confusing.

You will need help understanding what your housing options are and making the right decisions, so you get the help and support you need.

Who can help you?

Homeless 16 and 17 year olds can access help and support including accommodation, by either the housing department or Children's Social Care. **Children's Social Care have the main responsibility.**

There are important differences between the type of support that each department can offer homeless 16 and 17 year olds.

These differences are set out in this leaflet, so make sure you read it carefully, as you may have to make a choice about which department you want to support and accommodate you.

Whichever route you choose, both departments will work together with you, and you will always meet with a social worker who will explain your choices to you and undertake an assessment of your needs.



What will happen?

A social worker will carry out an assessment about your circumstances and will arrange to meet with you and your parents or guardians. This is because your parents or guardians have parental responsibility for you until you reach the age of 18.

The social worker will ask you about what has happened to you to make you homeless and talk to you about any support to help you return home, if this is safe to do so. If you are not able to return home and your parents cannot find extended family or friends to help you then you will be found emergency accommodation.

The social worker will need to find out whether you are able to cook and care for yourself and manage your money. The social worker will also need to assess if you could safely live and manage on your own.

While your assessment is being carried out the council will make sure that you have someone to support you, and a safe place to stay. This might be temporary accommodation or living with a family member. It will not be a bed and breakfast.

After you have been assessed:

If the Social Worker feels that you can safely stay with your family, you will not be offered any accommodation and Children's Services will offer support to you and your family to keep you living safe and secure either at home or with a trusted family member. This may include organising a Family Conference, social work support or other resources. If you need help to make a decision, the social worker will refer you to an advocate to help you understand and to explain your choices.

If the Social Worker feels you need to be accommodated by Children's Services and you agree with this option, you will become a 'Looked After Child' and have an allocated Social Worker until you turn 18 years-old or cease being a Looked After Child.

- **Becoming a Looked After Child**

Whilst you are a Looked After Child you would not pay rent, however your Social Worker will work with you to prepare you for independence by helping you gain the skills to be able to pay your own rent which you will have to do once you are in independent accommodation.

- **Accommodation**

If you choose to become a Looked After Child, you will be provided with accommodation in a placement that meets your assessed needs. For example this may be:

- With Foster carers in a Foster Placement
- In a Residential Children's home
- In Semi-Independent accommodation
- In Supported accommodation or housing

- **Support the Social Worker will provide**

Whilst you are a Looked After Child, your allocated social worker will provide you with support in the following areas if you need it;

- Your Emotional health and well-being
- Your identity and family relationships
- Your accommodation needs
- Your education, employment or training goals
- Developing your independence skills and confidence
- Learning how to manage finances and budget



- **Help after you turn 18 years old**

If you are still a Looked After Child when you turn 18, you will be entitled to receive services and support as a Care Leaver. Some of the support will be dependent on whether or not you are deemed to be a 'relevant' child. The support could include help in the following areas;

- Your Emotional health and well-being
- Your identity and family relationships
- Your accommodation needs (this does not extend to the provision of a council tenancy)
- Your education, employment, or training goals
- Developing your independence skills and confidence
- Learning how to manage finances and budget.

You have the right to say that you do not want to be looked after in this way. If you do not think you need to be looked after, then the Homeless Prevention Officer will consider whether you can be housed by the Council's Housing Department.

If you are housed by the Housing Department, you will likely be placed in suitable temporary accommodation to prevent you from becoming homeless, before a permanent place is found.

You would be responsible for paying your own rent, bills, and any service charges. You should make an application for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, which your Homeless Prevention Officer will assist you with. This will only cover your rent so you will have to pay any service charges or bills out of any income or benefits you receive. During this time, you will still be entitled to Social Work support and help up to the age of 18, and at this time your Social Worker will work with you to transition any on-going support you may need over to the Housing Officer.

The accommodation you will be offered will be Supported Accommodation where you will be allocated a key worker and be expected to engage in a programme of support which will provide you with practical skills to live independently and help you find education and or employment. They will also support you around future move on options available to you.

Once you are placed in accommodation the Housing Team will work with you until you are no longer at risk of homelessness and are settled into suitable longer-term accommodation.

It is important to note that if you are placed in accommodation by the Housing Department and then evicted for non-payment of rent or for anti-social behaviour, this may mean that you are considered 'intentionally homeless' and not entitled to further housing assistance.

If you need more help understanding your options:

You can get independent advice from:

The Citizens Advice Bureau:

0300 3309 038 or 020 8594 6715
Barking Learning Centre, 2 Town Square,
Barking, Essex, IG11 7NB
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing

The council can refer you to the local CAB with your agreement, who will then make contact with you direct, in case you do not feel confident enough to contact them yourself.

Other Independent Advocacy Services:

www.nyas.net
www.barnardos.org.uk

Shelter:

0808 800 4444 (UK)
www.shelter.org.uk

Just for Kids Law:

020 3174 2279
www.justforkidslaw.org

No Second Night Out:

0870 383 3333
www.nosecondnightout.org.uk

Runaway Helpline:

www.runawayhelpline.org.uk

This is a national, 24-hour free helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home. They give confidential advice and can help a child or young person get to a place of safety. They can also pass a message home. Text them for free on 116 000 or email at 116000@runawayhelpline.org.uk

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Children's Service:

020 8227 3811
childrensservices2@lbbd.gov.uk

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Housing Advice and Homeless Persons Unit:

020 8724 8323
housingadvice@lbbd.gov.uk

