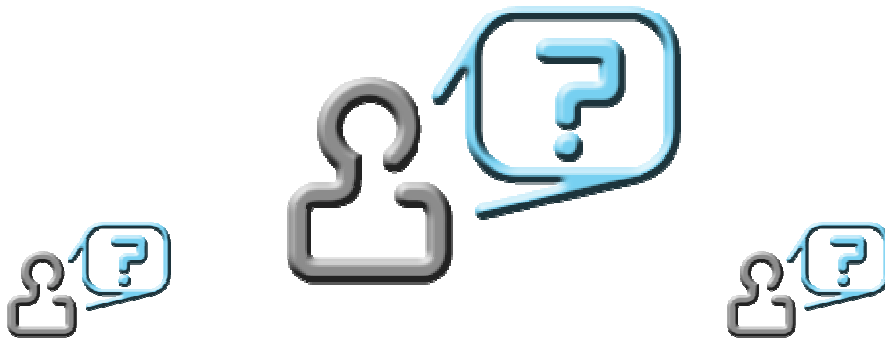




Housing Options Service

“What Happens When I Ask For Emergency Accommodation?”



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The Housing Options Service will aim to prevent someone from becoming Homeless wherever possible.

If you need emergency accommodation the Housing Options Service has to follow government legislation to assess whether there is a statutory duty to provide you with temporary accommodation.

The Council has to be satisfied of 5 tests. The details of which are listed in this booklet.

1. Are you eligible for assistance?

Most people are eligible. However, if you meet one of the following criteria then you are probably not eligible for assistance:

- An Asylum Seeker
- Have limited rights to stay in the UK
- Are from abroad and cannot claim 'public funds'
- Aren't normally resident in the UK

If the Housing Options Officer advises that you are not eligible for assistance you will not be entitled to any further help, although you will be advised of other agencies that may be able to help you.

2. Are you homeless?

The legal definition of 'homelessness' covers more than being out on the streets.

You may be considered homeless if:

- You have nowhere to live in the UK *or* anywhere else in the world.
- You can't live at home because of threats of or actual violence.
- You have nowhere that you can live together with all of your family.
- You don't have the owner's or tenant's permission to stay.
- You have been locked out of your home and are not allowed back.
- Your home is a boat, mobile home or caravan and you have nowhere to put it.

You may also be considered homeless if you are living somewhere but have to leave within 28 days. This could be as a result of a Court order or being asked to leave by relatives or friends.

People leaving hospital or another institution may be considered as homeless if they have nowhere else to go when they leave.

If the Housing Options Officer advises that you are Not Homeless you will be given advice on your options as well as information on other agencies that may be able to help you.

3. Are you in priority need?

If you are eligible for assistance and homeless (or threatened with homelessness) the Housing Options Service will check to see if you have a priority need. The following are brief descriptions of those households considered to have a priority need.

- If you have dependent children living in your household, or if you have dependent children who wish to live with you
- If you, or a member of your household, is pregnant
- If you are 16 or 17 years of age
- If you have medical problems
- If you have left the Armed Forces
- If you have just left Prison
- If you have experienced violence
- If you are an older person, or you live in a household with an older person
- If you are vulnerable, due to ill health or some other reason.

Households that fall into the above categories may be considered to be in a priority need. The Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002 tells the Housing Options Service what a priority need is.

If the Housing Options Officer advises that you do not have a priority need the Council will not have a duty to provide any accommodation for you. The Housing Options Officer will give you advice on how to secure alternative, affordable accommodation.

If you meet the criteria of points 1, 2 and 3 the Housing Options Service will have a duty to provide you with temporary accommodation. This is known as Interim Accommodation.

If the Housing Options Officer cannot decide whether you are in priority need they are sometimes able to accommodate you whilst they make further enquiries into your situation.

Interim accommodation is only used for a short period of time.

Offer of Interim

The Housing Options Service use different types of Interim Accommodation depending on your individual circumstances.

- Hostel
- Refuge
- Self Contained Bedsits
- Bed & Breakfast
- On occasion, empty flats or houses.

You will usually be made one offer of interim accommodation. If you refuse this you may not be made another offer. Don't refuse an offer without seeking advice first. If you feel that the offer is unsuitable you should tell the Housing Options Officer why.

Whilst in Interim

While you are living in interim accommodation the Housing Options Officer will make enquiries into your situation.

If you are found not to be in priority need you will be asked to leave the accommodation.

4. Are you intentionally homeless?

The Housing Options Officer will also look at why you have become homeless.

If you are found to be intentionally homeless the Housing Options Service will still have a duty to provide you with housing on a temporary basis.

This is so that you have a reasonable period of time to find somewhere else to live. The Housing Options Service will explain what options you have.

If they find that you have become intentionally homeless you may wish to seek advice from an independent agency.

5. Do you have a local connection?

In order for the Housing Options Service to offer you any accommodation they also have to be satisfied that you have a local connection.

You have a local connection if you (or someone in your household)

- Lives or has lived in the area of Neath Port Talbot for 6 months in the last year, or 3 out of the last 5 years.
- You have a job in the area.
- You have a close relative (e.g. Mother, Father) who has lived in the area for some time.
- You need to live in the area for some special reason.

If the Housing Options Officer advises that you do not have a local connection the responsibility for re-housing you may lie with another local authority.

Other Information

Decision Letters

If you are in temporary accommodation provided by the Housing Options Service you will be given a written decision on what duty you are owed by the Local Authority.

The Housing Options Officer will aim to issue this decision within 33 working days.

This letter will explain what the decision is and why that decision has been made.

It will also advise you of your right to an appeal should you disagree with the decision.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly or are dissatisfied with the way your case was dealt with, the letter will advise you of the Complaints Procedure.

Permanent Accommodation

If the Housing Options Service accepts a full duty to re-house you they will make you an offer of permanent accommodation.

This accommodation must be suitable and available for you and your family.

If you don't like the accommodation offered to you, you are advised to seek legal advice before you refuse it.

The Housing Options Service will only make you one offer of accommodation. Refusal of this offer may also result in you having to leave your temporary accommodation.

This leaflet is designed to give general information to Homeless Applicants about what happens when they need temporary accommodation.

During your interview the Housing Options Officer will discuss all other aspects of securing accommodation in more detail.