

Applying as homeless: priority need

This factsheet looks at if you have a priority need for accommodation if you apply as homeless.

The council's duties under homelessness law are strongest for homeless people in 'priority need'. The legal meaning of priority need is limited to certain categories of people.

Who has a priority need?

You will usually have a priority need if you:

- are pregnant
- have a dependent child who normally lives with you
- have been made homeless by a fire, flood or a similar emergency
- are aged 16 or 17 (but social services will usually have the main duty to accommodate and support you)
- are aged 18, 19 or 20 and were 'looked after' (even for one day) by social services when you were aged 16 or 17
- are a 'vulnerable' person.

You will usually also have a priority need if someone in your household is in this list.

Who is a vulnerable person?

To decide if you are vulnerable, the council will look at your whole situation and assess whether your circumstances mean you are significantly more at risk when homeless than an 'ordinary person' would be.

In particular, the council will look at whether you:

- are over 60 years old
- have physical or mental health problems, or a learning disability
- had to leave your home because of violence or harassment
- have been in care, the armed forces, a young offenders' institute or prison in the past.

The council will not automatically consider you to be vulnerable if you fit one of these categories, so it is important that you tell the council about any personal circumstances that would make it difficult for you to cope with being homeless.

The council will also look into whether you have family members who you can depend on for ongoing support.

Duty owed

If the council believes or has reason to believe that you are or may be:

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

it must provide you with temporary accommodation if you need it while it continues to look into your application. If the council has no reason to believe you have a priority need, it doesn't have to house you.

If the council then decides you are homeless, eligible for assistance, and have a priority need, it may have a long-term duty to find housing for you but it will consider whether you made yourself intentionally homeless (fifth factsheet) first.

Temporary accommodation

You may be offered self-contained temporary accommodation, but often it will be a hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation.

For more information, see the factsheet *Offers of temporary accommodation*.

Reviewing the decision

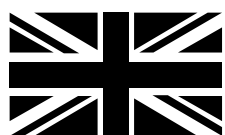
Get advice immediately if the council turns you away without making inquiries, if you receive a decision that you are not in priority need, or if you are offered unsuitable temporary accommodation.

You have the right to request a review of a decision that you do not have a priority need. You must make your request within 21 days of being notified of the decision. If your review does not succeed, get advice about whether you can appeal to the court.

Further advice

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

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



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Note
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