

Homelessness: 16 and 17 year olds

This factsheet looks at the help you can get from your local council if you're 16 or 17 and homeless.

If you're under 18 and homeless, you are a 'child in need'. Children's services (part of social services) must find you somewhere to stay and provide you enough money to live on. This applies regardless of your nationality or immigration status.

Must you be sleeping on the street?

You don't have to sleep on the street to be homeless. You are legally homeless if where you're staying is unsafe, unsuitable or if you have no legal right to stay there. You could be homeless if you're staying with friends temporarily because, for example, you're escaping from abuse or the risk of violence.

Housing or children's services?

You can go to either children's services or the homelessness department for help. You are likely to get a wider range of support, including accommodation, from children's services. If you contact children's services, ask to speak to the duty social worker.

If you go to the homelessness department, they should arrange for children's services to help you. In an emergency the homelessness department should find you somewhere to stay for the night, as well as telling children's services that you need a 'child in need' assessment. Whichever department you go to, you must not be left on the streets for even one night. Get advice if you are passed around between departments.

Which council?

The council where you usually live is the one that has a duty to help you. In an emergency, you can go to any council in England, but you might later be referred back to your original area if it's safe to do so.

What will the council do?

Children's services or the homelessness department will talk to your family to see if you can go home, but they shouldn't do this if it would make things worse. You may be offered 'family mediation' to try and improve the relationship with your family. You can still be housed while this happens. They can't force you to live where you are not safe.

What kind of place will you get?

You could be offered a place with a foster family, in a hostel for young people, or in more independent accommodation. Your wishes must be taken into account, but you might not get exactly what you want. The accommodation must be suitable for your needs. Get advice if you think you are being offered unsuitable accommodation.

Support from children's services

If children's services become responsible for you, they can:

- pay for your accommodation and your living costs
- provide you with a personal adviser to advise and support you
- help you make a plan for the future, covering your education, training and employment, known as a 'pathway plan'.

What happens after you turn 18?

If you have been 'looked after' by children's services for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 18, including at least one day after your 16th birthday, some of their duties, including providing you with a personal adviser, could continue until you are 21, or 25 if you remain in education or training.

Finding the right support

Services that support homeless young people vary between different areas. The following organisations help young people with housing and/or advice:

Centrepoint: 0808 800 0661

Coram Voice: 0808 800 5792

Depaul Nightstop UK: 0207 939 1235

ChildLine: 0800 1111

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 or adviceguide.org.uk

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



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Note
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