

Homelessness: 'out-of-hours' emergencies

If you become homeless at night or during the weekend you can contact your council for 'out-of-hours' assistance.

If you need to apply for help 'out-of-hours' because you are homeless, look for the emergency contact number on the council's website – usually it's in the A-Z service directory, under homelessness and then emergency housing.

If your council does not have an out-of-hours service, you can apply to a nearby council's out-of-hours service. Tell them you could not contact your own area and need help now.

Between 8am and 8pm during the week, and 8am and 5pm at weekends, you can call **Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444** – they will help you to apply for emergency assistance if you are homeless.

What happens when you ring

When you ring the council you will be asked for your name and contact details. You will probably also be asked how you became homeless and your circumstances.

Your details will then be passed to a caseworker who will call you back and ask you more questions to help them decide what help you can get, if any.

If the caseworker decides that you may be homeless, eligible and have a priority need (see factsheets in the '*Applying as homeless*' series), they should arrange immediate emergency accommodation for you and your family.

You will be told to attend an interview at the council during office hours, either the next day or soon after. It's important you attend the interview, or your accommodation may be ended.

Getting to emergency accommodation

Sometimes the accommodation will be located outside your area. In most cases, you will be expected to make your own way there, even if it's far away. Some councils might offer you some form of help, especially if you are particularly vulnerable, for example if you are aged under 18 or are severely disabled.

When you get to the accommodation, you may be expected to sign an agreement to pay rent and show documentation to confirm your identity.

The council interview

A council officer should look into your circumstances in detail before deciding what, if any, further help the council can give you.

For example, the council may be able to get you back into your old accommodation, may put you in temporary accommodation, or give you other advice and assistance so that you can obtain your own accommodation.

Street homeless

If you are street homeless and cannot contact the council's out-of-hours service, or if this service is unable to assist you, call [StreetLink on 0300 500 0914](tel:03005000914). They can organise outreach workers to see you where you are bedding down.

StreetLink can give you advice. If you are newly street homeless they may refer you to emergency accommodation.

If you are a woman or child escaping domestic abuse, you can call the **24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline** on freephone **0808 2000 247**. This helpline can give you advice and information. The service may also be able to refer you to emergency safe accommodation, such as a refuge.

Who else can help out of hours?

You might be able to get help with somewhere to stay from:

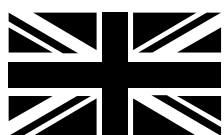
- friends and family
- hostels
- bed & breakfasts and hotels

Even if you can only get help for a night, this could give you time to visit an advice agency the following day to get help in finding longer-term accommodation.

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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