

Suitable accommodation: what does it mean?

Accommodation the council offers you when you make a homeless application must be 'suitable'. This factsheet looks at what that means.

If the council owes you the full housing duty (first factsheet) because you have made a successful homeless application, it must offer you suitable accommodation until its duty ends.

Suitable accommodation means that the council must comply with minimum legal requirements regarding the condition of the property and must consider your circumstances before it makes an offer. It does not mean the accommodation must meet all or even any of your wishes.

Location

As far as possible, the council should offer you accommodation in its area. If this is not possible, the council should try to find you somewhere nearby, but it might offer you accommodation anywhere in England.

The council must take into account the effect of the accommodation's location on you and your family. For example, would it:

- make it very difficult to get to work
- be too far away from your children's schools and disrupt their education
- leave you isolated because it is far from shops or local facilities
- make it hard to get to your GP or hospital, or to maintain your support network
- put you at risk of violence, harassment or discrimination?

Affordability

The council must take into account what you can afford to pay. If you have to go without essentials like food or heating in order to pay the rent, the accommodation will be unsuitable.

Your needs

The council must take into consideration all of your needs, including medical and social needs, especially if you or a member of your family are disabled. If you have pets, the council should consider offering you a place where you are allowed to keep them.

Housing conditions

The accommodation you are offered should be in reasonable condition.

Bed and breakfast

There are rules about when the council can offer bed and breakfast accommodation. Get advice if you are expected to live in bed and breakfast for more than a very short time, especially if you are pregnant or have children.

Offers to end the full housing duty

A 'final offer' of settled accommodation to end the full housing duty must also be suitable. Where the final offer is of long-term accommodation with a private landlord:

- electrical equipment must be safe
- precautions to ensure fire safety and to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning must be in place
- there is a current gas safety record and a valid energy performance certificate
- the accommodation should be large enough so that you and your family are not overcrowded. If the accommodation is a HMO (a house in multiple occupation in which more than one household shares a basic amenity, such as bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities) which is subject to HMO licensing, the council must check that it is licensed.

Challenging an unsuitable offer

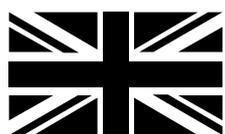
You should get advice straight away if you feel the council is offering you unsuitable accommodation. If you turn down the offer, it might mean that the council's duty ends.

It is usually best to accept the offer and move in, and ask for a review of it at the same time. You must ask for the decision to be reviewed within 21 days of the offer. Do this in writing, giving reasons why you don't think the accommodation is suitable.

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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