

WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU NEED TO MAKE A HOMELESS APPLICATION

Am I Homeless ?

If you're homeless it is our legal responsibility to help you. We have a legal duty to give advice and information about homelessness, how to prevent it and any need to provide temporary accommodation.

You don't have to be sleeping on the street to be homeless. You might have a roof over your head and still be homeless.

How will we treat you?

- We will listen carefully to everything you tell us, treating your concerns with understanding
- We will be sensitive about any personal information you tell us
- We will not discriminate against you because of your:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
- We will treat you with consideration and respect the confidentiality of your situation

Homeless Prevention

The housing officer who speaks to you will always do what they can to prevent you from becoming homeless in the first place. For example if you stay at home we may ask to speak to the person you stay with to see if you can stay longer. If you are in a private tenancy we will look at all your documents and do what we can to keep you in the property if it is appropriate to do so. Being homeless can be very unsettling and whilst you wait for somewhere permanent to stay you may have to move to an area you don't know, therefore it may be best to try and stay where you are to give us time to help you move in a planned way.

Our Housing Officer should never refuse to take a homeless application from you if you ask them to do so.

What happens next?

If you want to make a homeless application, we will assess your situation. We will offer you an interview at the earliest possible opportunity, usually within 3 working

days. If you are roofless or have no accommodation available to you, you will be interviewed the same day wherever possible. If this is not possible you will be offered temporary accommodation until this can be carried out. The council have a separate leaflet about what happens with temporary accommodation, and you will be given a copy of this if you go into temporary accommodation or on request.

If you currently live in Aberdeenshire, we will speak to you about your situation by telephone to save you having to try and get to a council office. If you prefer, we can meet you at a housing office if this is easier for you although this may take some time to organise as most of our staff work from other locations.

In most instances if you currently stay outwith Aberdeenshire you will need to make a homeless application at a council office in Aberdeenshire.

Your housing officer will take information from you and record this. It is important to give as much accurate information as you can as we will check this to make sure everything is correct. During the discussion the housing officer will ask if you:

- are homeless, about to become homeless or if it's not possible for you to stay in your home
- The circumstances why you are homeless
- If you have a connection to the area although this may not be considered in any decision we make.

They will then use this information to decide how best to consider your case.

What happens after I have made my application?

We try to make a final decision on each application within 28 days. It doesn't always take this long and we can make very quick decisions if all the information we need is available. At other times we may need to wait for information which can take longer than 28 days. During this time, we will be checking on the information you have given us to check your homeless circumstances properly. We may speak with other parties, and we may also use a fraud checking system to check the information provided is correct. If fraudulent information is provided this may mean, we will suspend your application and report information to other authorities. We will keep you regularly informed on the progress of your application.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your application, you have the right to request a review. The review process is explained within your homelessness decision letter.

What happens if the Council has made the decision I am Homeless?

If your case has been given homeless priority you will be given one reasonable offer of a property. You will be given a band A award which is the highest council banding and this ensures your application is treated as a priority. Band A applicants include homeless people but also include other priority groups like people who are overcrowded. The council have an allocation policy where all information is available

about how we allocate properties. There is no guarantee you will be offered a council property however and you may be offered a property from another housing provider like a housing association or a private landlord. You are unable to decide what housing provider you would like to be housed with due to pressures on council housing.

What type of permanent property will I be offered and where will it be?

The council have made sure their allocation policy meets the requirement of the Scottish Government's rapid rehousing transition plan. This means it is important you spend as little time as possible in emergency temporary accommodation and you are housed somewhere permanently as soon as possible. Council Housing in some areas of Aberdeenshire is under huge demand and although we would like to, we are unable to provide council housing in every area. This is made especially difficult due to the number of small settlements in Aberdeenshire, and in some places we don't have all types or sizes of properties.

All applicants including Band A are able to bid for available property via our choice based letting system. Once you are awarded a Band A we will do additional things to ensure we move you to permanent housing as soon as possible.

- A property could be provided in a range of locations. You are unable to select a particular area. We will do everything we can to keep you as close to where you want to be but due to the geography of Aberdeenshire this won't always be possible. We will tell you what areas we will be looking to find you a property. These are normally in settlements within close proximity to larger locations and are linked to secondary school catchment locations for transport connections.
- A property could be a flat or a house with or without a garden. If you have a need for ground floor property this could still be a ground floor flat.
- Many settlements in Aberdeenshire have no mains gas. The property you are offered could have any type of heating and there will be no choice offered.
- We are able to give you a direct offer of a property even if you may not have bid for it as long as it reasonably meets your need. We would encourage you to keep bidding for properties that meet your needs but Aberdeenshire Council receive around 1000 homeless applications per year in addition to other applicants who are in high need and there are normally many people bidding on the same property.
- If we have been unable to find you a property within 6 months we will then consider a property anywhere in Aberdeenshire that matches the size of your household. We will sometimes give you a property bigger than you need however we won't give you a property smaller than you need unless you agree.

What If I Need to Stay in a Particular Place?

We understand some people may need to remain somewhere for a number of reasons. Sadly this does not mean there are any more council properties available and we still have to help you find somewhere to stay. Because of this if you need to stay somewhere where the council can't help quickly enough we will work with you to look at all housing options in the area including helping contacting private landlords and offering help with deposits. If this is still not successful, we will need to look at other locations or you will need to resolve your own housing situation.

Furniture and Decoration.

Although our temporary accommodation is mainly carpeted and furnished normal council properties are unfurnished and normally don't have carpets. Although you can ask for help from the Scottish Welfare Fund with furnishings this can take several weeks and they won't provide everything you need. It is therefore important whilst you are waiting for an offer of permanent housing you save money and look for charitable donations. We will help you with this. You will not be able to stay in temporary accommodation until the permanent property is fully ready as this can take a long time unless you are able to pay for rent for the temporary accommodation as well as the permanent offer. It is unlikely you will get any financial assistance to have a temporary property and a permanent property at the same time.

What if I Refuse a Property that is Offered?

If you refuse an offer you will need to find your own accommodation. The council will no longer need to provide you with permanent housing and you will be asked to leave the temporary accommodation you are staying in. We will continue to try and help you find a private tenancy and any other suitable housing options.

How long will it take?

We aim to resolve all homeless cases within 6 months. It doesn't always take this long and many times we can find a quick solution. If you have particular needs and require adaptations this can sometimes take longer.

Housing Support

If you would benefit from additional housing support a referral can be made at any time. In addition we can also help with specialist support for young people, victims of domestic abuse and the LGBTQ+ community. Please speak to your housing officer if you would like a referral to be made.

Can I look for my own property?

It is important to consider all your options and ensure that you bid for suitable properties advertised through Aberdeenshire Council Housing Register (Housing Online) and advertised by Housing Associations at These Homes or directly via other Housing Associations.

You may identify a private rented property that meets your needs and you should contact the Housing Officer dealing with your homeless application to discuss this. We can assist by providing a rent deposit guarantee and offer further advice and assistance.

What if I am unhappy about something?

If you are unhappy with the way your case is being handled you should try and speak to your housing officer in the first instance. If you don't want to do this or are not happy with the response you should ask to speak to the Senior Housing Officer or Team Leader. If you remain unhappy you can ask for the Housing Service Manager to review your case or alternatively make a complaint via the council's complaints process that any member of the team will share with you. Any review will be based on our allocation policies.

What if I have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) or Do Not Have Settled Status?

This can be very complicated. If you have NRPF or do not have settled status the Homeless team are unable to provide homelessness assistance or housing advice. All situations are different however and you should still ask us for guidance and advice. If we are unsure about your status we will help until we are able to confirm the correct status.

Emergency Situations such as Fire, Flood, or other Natural or Man Made Disasters

During times of a major incident such as wide scale flooding or other emergencies where the council needs to deal with a lot of homeless people at the same time it may not be possible for the council to meet the standards within this leaflet and timescales may change.

Contact details

Housing Options & Homelessness Advice – 01467 530577

Homelessness Emergency Help – 03456 081206