

# Applying as homeless: local connection

**This factsheet looks at the reasons why you might have a local connection with a council's area, and what it means if you don't.**

You can apply to any council for help if you become homeless. Most people apply to their local council. You might want to apply to another council, for example, because you are at risk of violence in your own area.

## What the council looks at first

A council can't turn you away or tell you to apply to another council because you don't have a local connection with its area. It's against the law. Get advice if this happens.

The council will look into whether you have a local connection with it after deciding if you:

- are homeless
- meet immigration and residence conditions

## What is a local connection?

To decide if you have a local connection, the council has to look at whether you (or anyone in your household):

*Live (or lived) in the area:* for 6 out of the last 12 months, or 3 out of the last 5 years. You must have chosen to live in the area. Being in prison or in hospital does not count. Staying in emergency housing or a women's refuge does count.

*Have family in the area:* your close family must have lived in the area for at least 5 years, and you must want to live near them. Close family is normally limited to parents, children, brothers or sisters.

*Work in the area:* full- or part-time work (paid or unpaid) count. Casual work doesn't.

*Have a special reason to be in the area:* this could include if you need to live in the area to receive specialist health care, or because you lived there for a long time in the past.

*Were in care in the area (homeless applications made on after 3 April 2018 only):* you have a local connection with a council:

- that owes you leaving care duties
- where you were in care for 2 continuous years before your 18th birthday, some of which was before you turned 16.

A local connection because of being in care will last until your 21st birthday, or sometimes until you finish your education.

## If you have a local connection

If you have a local connection with the council you apply to, that council must help you.

## If you *don't* have a local connection

If you don't have a local connection, then the council you applied to will probably refer you to another council where you do have a connection. If the second council accepts the referral it will have to help you.

The first council can make a referral at an early or later stage. It must give you a letter explaining that a referral has been made.

If the first council has provided you with emergency housing it will have to keep doing so until the second council has agreed to help you.

Even if you don't have a local connection with the council you have applied to, it can't refer you to another council if you:

- 1) are at risk of violence in the area of a council where you do have a local connection, or
- 2) don't have a local connection with any other council.

## Challenging a decision

You have the right to request a review of a decision that goes against you.

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.

If you are on a low income you may qualify for [legal aid](#) to challenge the council's decision.

## Further advice

You can get further advice from [england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice](http://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice), local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice. If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on **0808 800 4444** for advice and information on your options.\*

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



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