

Applying as homeless: priority need

The council's duties are stronger if you have a 'priority need'.

Who has a priority need?

You have an automatic priority need if you:

- are pregnant
- are homeless because of domestic abuse
- have a dependent child who normally lives with you
- have been made homeless by a fire, flood or a similar emergency
- are aged 16 or 17 (but social services will usually have the main duty to accommodate and support you)
- are aged 18, 19 or 20 and were 'looked after' (even for one day) by social services when you were aged 16 or 17

You can also be in priority need if you are vulnerable.

Who is a 'vulnerable' person?

You are in priority need as a vulnerable person if you would suffer more harm from being homeless than an 'ordinary person' would suffer. In particular, the council looks at whether you would suffer harm because you:

- are over 60 years old
- have physical or mental health problems or a learning disability
- had to leave your home because of violence or harassment
- have been in care, the armed forces, a young offenders' institute or prison in the past

Tell the council how being homeless would affect you. The council must look at your whole situation, including whether you have family members who you can depend on for ongoing support.

You usually have a priority need if someone in your household has it.

Factsheet

The council's duty

The council must set out the steps that you and the council will take to help you keep your home or find somewhere else to live if you:

- are homeless or in danger or becoming homeless within 56 days, and
- meet immigration/residence conditions

If you are homeless and the council thinks you may have a priority need, it must find emergency housing for you while it considers your application. Depending on the outcome of the council's enquiries, it may have to find long-term housing for you. If you don't have a local connection with the council you applied to, it might refer you to a council where you do.

Temporary accommodation

You may be offered a hostel place, bed and breakfast accommodation or a self-contained flat or house.

The council's decision

The council must give you a decision in writing. You have the right to ask for a review if you disagree. If your review does not succeed, you may be able to appeal to court. If you are on a low income you may qualify for [legal aid](#) to help you with a review or an appeal.

You can get further advice from england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice, a 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.

