

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 listed 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.

You can call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444 between 8am and 8pm on weekdays, and 8am and 5pm at weekends. They can help you 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 about your circumstances.

Your details will then be passed to a caseworker who will call you back. The caseworker will ask you lots of questions about what your options are, and how much money you have, before deciding what help you can get, if any.

Emergency accommodation

If the caseworker agrees that you have no other options, and that you meet the immigration and residence conditions and have a priority need (see factsheets in the 'Applying as homeless' series for these tests), they should arrange immediate emergency accommodation for you and your family.

You will be told to attend an interview at the council's offices 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.

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

The council interview

The council must assess your housing and support needs at your interview. It must then draw up a personal housing plan setting out the steps you and the council must take to stop you being homeless.

The council must continue to provide you with emergency accommodation if, after interviewing you, it agrees it is likely that you:

- are homeless
- meet immigration and residence conditions
- have a priority need.

The council will continue making inquiries into your case while you are housed.

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](tel:03005000914) on 0300 500 0914. 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](tel:08082000247) 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.

Further advice

You can get further advice from 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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Note
Information contained in this factsheet is correct at the time of publication. Please check details before use.