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A company with a passion for communities

Are you homeless?



Here to help... 0800 915 1600

Other

If you would like this document in another format or language, please tick as required and return to East North East Homes Leeds, FREEPOST RRJX-YRTK-TACE, Leeds, LS7 3YY.

Your name:

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Another language (write in the box)

For more information call us on 0800 915 1600.

Where can I find help?

Leeds City Council has a specialist Homeless Service. On weekdays between 9 am (10 am on Fridays) and 4 pm, you can get help at Great George Street Housing Advice and Prevention.

Telephone advice is available between 9 am and 4 pm. Outside those times you can telephone the Social Services Emergency Duty Team or any one of the Council's hostels that are continuously staffed. Addresses and phone numbers for them are at the back of this booklet.

How can the Homeless Service help?

Homelessness law is very complex. However, the Homeless Service has a legal duty to help you if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It can help you by:

- Preventing you from becoming homeless, if that's possible.
- Assessing whether the Council has a duty to offer you accommodation.
- Helping you find somewhere to live.
- Helping you to keep the housing you find.

Preventing Homelessness

The Housing Advice and Prevention team can give you advice and help to prevent you becoming homeless if you:

- Are a homeowner with mortgage arrears.
- Are a Council tenant with rent arrears.
- Are a private tenant with rent arrears.
- Are a private tenant given notice by your landlord.
- Have other reasons to think you may become homeless.

The earlier you contact us, the more likely it is that we'll be able to help.

Homeowners

If you have mortgage arrears, your lender can get an outright or suspended possession order from the County Court. An outright order means you can be evicted from your home in a short period of time. A suspended order can be imposed if you agree to terms of how to pay your arrears. Failure to comply with the terms may mean the lender returns to Court to seek a warrant to evict you from your home.

Housing Advice and Prevention team can advise you on how to avoid your home being repossessed. They can help you work out your income and outgoings in a budget plan, which will tell you how much money is left to pay off your arrears. They can also check to make sure you are claiming all the benefits you're entitled to. For example, if you're claiming Income support, the Benefits Agency may pay the interest on your mortgage.

The Homeless Service may also negotiate with your mortgage lender for them perhaps to agree to:

- Pay off any arrears in instalments.
- Pay 'interest only' for a certain period of time.
- Extend the length of your mortgage.
- Change the type of your mortgage.

Depending on your circumstances you may be able to get legal aid from a solicitor. Housing Advice and Prevention team will advise you.

Council tenants in arrears

If you have rent arrears, the Council can get a possession order from the County Court to evict you. Your local Housing Office or the Housing Advice and Prevention team can help to prevent you being evicted.

'The earlier you contact them, the more likely it is that they'll be able to help'

The Homeless Service can work out your income and outgoings in a budget plan. This will help you identify how much money you have available to pay off your arrears. Staff can also help you make arrangements to pay off your arrears, and can check you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to. You can also contact organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau if you want advice from a non-Council source. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to get legal aid from a solicitor - Housing Advice and Prevention team will advise you.

Private tenants in arrears

If you're in arrears with your rent, your landlord can apply to the County Court for a possession order to evict you. Housing Advice and Prevention team can give you confidential advice on budget planning and benefit entitlement. If you want, they can contact your landlord to see if he or she will make an agreement for you to pay off your arrears. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to get legal aid from a solicitor - Housing Advice and Prevention team will advise you.

Private tenants given notice by landlords

Housing Advice and Prevention team staff can check you:

- Are being legally asked to leave with the correct type of notice.
- Really need to leave - you may have 'security of tenure'.
- Aren't being illegally evicted or harassed.

Your landlord is committing a criminal offence if they attempt to evict you from your home without a Court order or by harassing you. Examples of harassment include cutting off the water or electricity supply to your home and entering it without your permission. The Council has the power to prosecute your landlord if they commit these offences. The remedies for harassment or illegal eviction could include compensation and an injunction to allow you to get back into your home.

Other support

If you have or may become homeless due to relationship problems, the Homeless Service can organise some mediation sessions.

Housing Advice and Prevention team can prevent you becoming homeless if you're leaving a job that has tied accommodation, such as the armed forces.

You can also contact organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau if you want advice from a non-Council source

Assessing duty

The law says the Council has a duty to assess your needs if you approach us saying you are or could become homeless and to give you advice and help. **However, that doesn't mean the Council must find you somewhere to live.** The law says the Council must be satisfied that you fulfil certain conditions for it to have a duty to find you a home. The conditions are:

- You are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- You qualify for help.
- You have not become homeless intentionally.
- You have a local connection.
- You are in priority need.

The Homeless Service will interview you to decide whether you satisfy the conditions. Staff may also need to get information from other sources such as your doctor, but would only do so with your consent. They call this a Homeless Investigation. As this may take some time, they would offer you accommodation if they believed you were homeless, qualified for help and in priority need. The accommodation would be available until they have completed your Homeless Investigation.

Part of the Homeless Investigation is to fill in a Leeds Housing Register application form. The form is an application to be rehoused by the East North East Homes Leeds and a number of local housing associations. It allows you to choose which of them you want to consider you for rehousing.

Homelessness

You are considered to be homeless if you:

- Have no accommodation you can occupy anywhere.
- Have accommodation, but can't gain entry to it.
- Face threats of violence or actual violence from living where you are.
- Find it's not reasonable for you to continue living where you are.
- Live in a mobile home (such as a boat or caravan) but have nowhere to park and live in it.

You are threatened with homelessness if you are likely to become homeless within 28 days.

Eligibility

After the Homeless Service has looked at whether you are homeless, staff next need to decide if you qualify for help. Some people who are in this country temporarily may not automatically qualify for housing. If that applies to you, staff will discuss with you what it means and how they can help.

Priority Need

You are in priority need if:

- You have dependent children.
- You are or your partner is pregnant
- You've become homeless due fire or flood.
- You may be vulnerable because:
 - Of pensionable age (over 60).
 - Of impairment.
 - Of physical disability.
 - Of learning disability.
 - You are 16 / 17 year old.
 - You are a care leaver.
 - You are young and at risk for other reasons.
 - You are fleeing violence.
 - You have an institutional background (prison, armed forces).

Intentional homeless

If the Council feels you have become homeless through your own actions, it could decide you are intentionally homeless. For example, eviction due to anti-social behaviour or selling your house when there was no risk of losing it.

If the Council decides you are intentionally homeless, the Council has no duty to find you somewhere to live, even if you were homeless and in priority need.

The Council's looks at each case very carefully so it can take all your circumstances into account.

Local connection

You have a local connection to Leeds if you:

- Have lived here for three out of the last six months, or three out of the last five years.
- Have close family who live in the Leeds area.
- Work in Leeds.
- Have special reasons to live in Leeds.

The Homeless Service looks at each case very carefully

If you don't have a local connection to Leeds, the Council may send your application to be rehoused to another council where you do have a connection. If you have a connection with more than one council, you'll have a choice of where your application is sent. Leeds City Council would not expect you to return to another area if you're at risk of violence there.

If you have no connection to any other area, it will consider that you have a connection to Leeds. That may be relevant if you've recently come to the United Kingdom from another country.

The Council's duty

If you satisfy the above conditions, Leeds City Council will have a duty to find you temporary housing. There is no duty to find you permanent housing, but you will be placed on the Leeds Housing Register as a 'homeless and in priority need' household.

The decision

The Council will tell you in writing of its decision about your homeless application. Your letter will detail the reasons why and how a decision has reached and will be in your language. Your decision letter will be given to you within three working days of the Council completing its investigations.

Housing options

The range of housing options open to you will depend on whether the Council has a legal duty to find you somewhere to live (see above).

Homeless Service Hostels

If the Council has space and you are homeless, in an emergency the Homeless Service can admit you to one of its access hostels.

Richmond Court / Brett Gardens

- for families

The Hollies / St Michael's Lane

- for single women

Pennington Place

- for single men

Prospect House

- for single men aged 16 -25.

Bed and Breakfast accommodation

Sometimes, there are no vacancies in the hostels. However, if the Homeless Service has a duty to offer you somewhere to stay, it must find you an alternative. The Council has an arrangement with a bed and breakfast provider to offer emergency housing.

If the Council has a duty to accommodate you, and there's no room in the hostel, Housing Advice and Prevention team can refer you to the bed and breakfast accommodation.

You'll only be able to stay at the bed and breakfast accommodation until the Housing Advice Centre reopens. You should go to the Housing Advice Centre when it reopens to see if staff there can find you somewhere else.

Voluntary sector provision

Leeds has a number of hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation that other organisations manage. Housing Advice and Prevention team may refer you to one of them if it's more appropriate. If the Council has no duty to house you, one of those projects may be able to help. Housing Advice and Prevention team would make the referral to one of them for you.

Longer - term temporary accommodation

The housing options mentioned above are all short-term. However, it may not be possible to offer you Council or housing association tenancy in such a short time. Leeds has a wide range of longer-term temporary housing options provided by the voluntary sector, including hostels, shared houses and self-contained properties. The Homeless Service has a stock of supported furnished properties where you might be able to stay until you are offered your own tenancy.

Permanent housing

The law says the Council doesn't have a duty to offer you a permanent home. But, if you are 'homeless and in priority need', it may be able to offer you a permanent tenancy. The length of time before it can do this will depend on where you want to be rehoused and the type of property you want. The housing application form you fill in includes a number of local housing associations that may also be able to rehouse you. Leeds City Council has nomination rights with a number of them. This may mean they're more likely to be able to help you.

Even if you're homeless but not in priority need, Leeds City Council may be able to offer you a property. Again, the length of time this will take will depend on where you want to live and the type of property you want.

Leeds City Council properties are allocated using a system called 'Choice Based Lettings'. Properties that are available for letting are advertised in a leaflet called 'Leeds Homes' available at all local Housing Offices and Leeds Housing Advice Centre. Details are also on the internet at www.leadshomes.org.uk. If you see a property (up to 3 a week) you place an 'expression of interest'.

The customer in the highest priority band will, except on rare occasions, be offered the home. If two or more customers have the same housing need, generally the person who was awarded their housing need first will be made the offer.

Helping you keep the home you find

The help the Council can give doesn't have to end when you secure your home. It is committed to support you when it can, so you can keep the home you find.

The Homeless Service has a specialist team that supports people to stay in their home, and they can offer wide ranging support. It could be budgeting, paying bills, checking benefit entitlement, shopping, cooking and looking for work or training. It can even be just someone to talk to. You'll get a support worker who will visit you in your home.

One of the biggest problems you may face when you're offered your own home is getting furniture for it. There are several options to help you get furniture.

The help the Council can give does not necessarily end when you find somewhere to live ...

Furniture stores

Leeds and Moortown Furniture Store and St Jude's are two charitable organisations that offer some items of furniture to people in need. Both depend on donations from the public.

You'll need to be referred by a Homeless Service worker or one from another agency (such as a social worker) to get furniture. There'll be no charge for the items given except for 'white goods' such as cookers and fridges, where a small charge may be made.

However, the items offered will depend on what items they have in stock. If you're on benefits, you may need to apply to the Benefits Agency.

State benefits

The Benefits Agency may be able to offer you of a Community Care Grant if these circumstances apply:

- You're moving out of institutional care (such as a hostel or supported housing).
- You'd have to go into institutional care if you don't get one.
- You get Income Support or income-based Job Seeker's Allowance.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO REPAY THIS GRANT

Or the Benefits Agency can offer you a Budgeting Loan if:

- You've been getting Income Support or income-based Job Seeker's Allowance for at least 26 weeks; and
- The Benefits Agency is convinced that you can repay the loan. They will look at whether you have any outstanding loans with them.

If you're offered a Budgeting Loan, you'll have to agree a repayment plan. It's likely that the money will be taken of your benefit before you get it.

If you don't qualify for a Budgeting Loan, the Benefits Agency may consider you for a **Crisis Loan**. Again, you must repay this loan. The Benefits Agency will consider whether you can repay it by checking whether you have any outstanding loans. Repayments will usually be taken off your benefit before you get it.

There are other rules and the claim forms are complex. The Housing Advice and Prevention team can help you fill them in and explain other rules if needed.

Other charities / organisations

Leeds has a number of charities and other organisations that can help you obtain furniture.

This could be by donating furniture or money to help you buy it. Housing Advice and Prevention team can give you more details.

Address and phone numbers

Homelessness advice and prevention team

2 Great George Street
Leeds, LS2 8BA
Phone 0113 247 76919

Social Services Emergency Duty Team

Phone 0113 240 9536

The Hollies Hostel

Weetwood Lane,
Weetwood
Leeds, LS16 5NZ
Phone 0113 214 4594

St Michael' Lane Hostel

9 St Michael's Lane
Headingley
Leeds, LS6 3AN
Phone 0113 214 4598



Are you homeless?

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