



Northumberland  
County Council

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for Northumberland 2022 - 2026





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# INTRODUCTION

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the findings from the review.

The Housing Act 1996, Part 7 was amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which fundamentally amended the existing homelessness legislation. It introduced new requirements to prevent and relieve homelessness and, in that context, sets out a range of new duties which came into force in April 2018.

This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out what we intend to do over the lifespan of the strategy and the priorities we will be focusing on.

The Council has also taken this opportunity to review and refresh our current priorities, services, and support, to ensure they meet the needs of households in Northumberland who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

In November 2021, an online consultation using the Council's Citizen Space Consultation platform was carried out with partners and stakeholders to establish whether our current objectives were still relevant and that they would enable the Council to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the county and meet the requirements of the Act. This refreshed strategy reflects the consultation input.

# BACKGROUND

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Northumberland has been developed in the context of a wide range of national, regional, and local policies, strategies, and plans.

Homelessness legislation is set out in part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). When carrying out their duties under this legislation local authorities must have regard to the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

Since 1977 local authorities have had a duty to make enquiries when they become aware that a household is at very real risk of homelessness. If, on completion of their enquiries, they decide that a household is eligible for assistance, in a priority need category and unintentionally homeless then the local authority has a duty to secure accommodation for them. This duty is known as the Main Homelessness Duty. Eligibility for assistance is linked to immigration and/or residence status.

The categories that determine whether or not an applicant falls into a **'priority need category'** are set out in the 1996 Housing Act (s189) and include:

- Households that include dependent children or pregnant women.
- People who become homeless as a result of a fire, flood, or other disaster.
- All 16 and 17 year-olds and 18-20 year-old care leavers.
- Households that include someone who is vulnerable because of old age, mental illness, physical disability, or other special reason.
- Vulnerable care leavers, former members of the armed forces and former prisoners.
- People who are vulnerable because they are fleeing violence.

The issue of vulnerability can be very difficult to assess and over the years has been the subject of much case law.

## Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) was implemented on 3rd April 2018 and placed two new duties on local authorities. The legislative changes are as follows:

- Extending the period where someone is threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days
- Introducing a 56 day 'Duty to Prevent' homelessness
- Introducing a 56 day 'Duty to Relieve' homelessness
- A requirement that all households have a comprehensive housing assessment where they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- The introduction of Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs)
- A Duty to Refer those households who are threatened with Homelessness within 56 days placed on various named bodies such as Probation and Children's Services
- New extended review rights for applicants
- Earlier referrals to other local authorities for those households without a local connection who are at the relief stage of homelessness
- A duty to cooperate on applicants.

This change in legislation did not require a wholesale change in approach for Northumberland as we had pursued a prevention approach towards homelessness since 2011, engaging with households facing homelessness as early as possible and attempting to find innovative ways to prevent homelessness.

## Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (CoG 2018) was published in February 2018 and must be considered alongside the legislation when assessing and dealing with applications for assistance under either the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

The Government's strategy **Ending Rough Sleeping for Good**<sup>1</sup> was published in September 2022. This strategy outlines the ongoing plans to end rough sleeping, detailing 4 primary outcomes:

- Prevention
- Intervention
- Recovery
- Transparent and Joined-up System

It identifies funding opportunities and expectations on local authorities to tackle rough sleeping with its vision of more effective support to prevent rough sleeping happening in the first place, and a tailored offer of support where it does happen, so people can build an independent life off the streets.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

# THE PURPOSE OF OUR STRATEGY

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy seeks to tackle all forms of homelessness, including those who are owed a statutory duty of assistance, as well as people who are staying in supported housing, sleeping rough on the streets, or have other transient arrangements (e.g., sleeping on a friend's sofa).

The Strategy sets out how the Council will work with partners to deliver services to households in Northumberland who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It sets out the key challenges that exist in Northumberland, and the context in which the Strategy is delivered. This Strategy refresh was informed by a consultation event held with partners and stakeholders with which took place from November to December 2021.

Respondents of the consultation thought that previous priorities were still relevant but that some of them could be updated and merged with others. There was also a recommendation to include a section for specific areas of support such as domestic abuse and armed forces veterans.

The Strategy will be accompanied by a refreshed Action Plan which will set out what the Council hopes to achieve and by when. The Action Plan will be agreed with partners, stakeholders and service users and will be used to monitor progress over the period of the strategy.



# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this strategy is to support those households in most need to find, secure, and retain homes by ensuring the best use of the housing stock within the county across all tenures. To achieve this ambition, we will require a multi-agency approach to ensure that the necessary support to be provided to those tenants or residents who need it.

We aim to support the most vulnerable members of our community with their accommodation needs and to reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping in Northumberland.

The Corporate Plan 2021-2024 has two overarching themes which help inform the priorities of this strategy:

- Ensuring the Council does all it can to support economic recovery and growth across the county; and,
- Tackling inequalities within our communities, supporting our residents to be healthier and happier

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will contribute to the delivery of these primary priorities, to ensure Northumberland is a stronger place both economically and socially.



# NATIONAL CONTEXT

There have been several Government interventions aimed at assisting those who are homeless and sleeping rough.

## Everyone In

The Government aim was to ensure that the 37,000 vulnerable people and rough sleepers had somewhere to stay during the Pandemic. About 26,000 of those supported by the programme are now in long term accommodation.

## Next Steps Accommodation Programme

Funding has been allocated for 3,300 new homes for rough sleepers. Over £150 million has been made available across England to provide a permanent place to live for some of those who are the most vulnerable.

Through NSAP funding in 2020 the Council secured £18,000 capital funding and £52,500 revenue funding to support the delivery of a dedicated Tenancy Support Worker and 3 units of accommodation to support entrenched rough sleepers, providing them with supported, transitional accommodation.

## Protect and Vaccinate Programme

A scheme to help protect vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19 which provided extra support to areas that needed it most. £15 million was allocated to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic, aimed at the areas that required additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter. The Council was awarded £57,861 under this scheme in January 2022.

## Rough Sleeper Initiative

Rough Sleeper Initiative fund is for short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping. In September 2022 DLUHC announced funding available from a £500m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme.

In a joint bid co-ordinated by Durham, the north-east region Local Authorities secured £3,777,842 from RS15 funding 2022 to 2025. Of this Northumberland has been allocated £815,568 over 3 years (or £271,856 per annum) to support the delivery of the Homeless Response Service and the Somewhere Safe to Stay scheme.

## Housing First

Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West Midlands are supporting around 800 vulnerable people off the streets and into secure homes; 600 are now in permanent accommodation. Over 2,000 other Housing First places have been created, many funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

# VISION FOR OUR STRATEGY

To provide a coherent vision for housing, planning and homelessness on a countywide basis, this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is informed and influenced by a number of other Council documents particularly the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036, the Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2022 (which is currently being reviewed), and the Northumberland Private Sector Housing Strategy 2021-2023.

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland defines how the Council, working with partners, will deliver its statutory duty and requirements. It sets out the Council's ambitious plans for meeting people's housing needs through the delivery of new affordable housing, improvements to existing housing stock and the provision of housing support to those who need it.

## Key challenges

Delivering this strategy will be a key priority for the council and we will need to do so against a backdrop of local and national challenges and policy areas. Key challenges are

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels are currently frozen which has a knock-on effect on housing benefits, and this presents a challenge for individuals on a low income who rent privately. This has an effect on the numbers of affordable properties to rent available in the county and limits the council's ability to negotiate with private landlords who seek to charge rents at a local market value.
- There is a limited amount of social rented housing in parts of the county and a high demand for affordable homes to rent both generally and more acutely in smaller rural and coastal settlements.
- A challenging, and often expensive, private market for housing, making it difficult for households to access housing due to the prohibitive costs, either for rent or purchase.
- Ensuring that we continue to support victims of domestic abuse in the most appropriate way whilst also meeting the requirements of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

More recently and particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased emphasis on assisting rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping with opportunities to provide specialist support and accommodation. Successful Rough Sleeper Initiatives and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme Services will continue to play a key role in ending rough sleeping.

# LOCAL CONTEXT

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2022 states:

***Having a decent roof over your head is fundamental to health and well-being. None of you should be forced to live on the streets, or in a “home” that is a health hazard or physically impedes independence.***

The priorities within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy have been developed and informed around themes which council colleagues, partners, agencies and residents helped to identify.

These priorities have been identified as key areas which impact people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including rough sleepers.

We have identified some of the specific challenges that can increase the threat of homelessness and rough sleeping for people.

The recent impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis, as well as the ongoing after-effects of the pandemic, are likely to compound the existing challenges faced by individuals already in precarious housing situations as well as statutory and third sector organisations managing finite resources.



Our strategy will aim to put in place interventions and support to help reduce the impact of these issues. Our themes include:

- Prevention of homelessness across all client groups
- Provision of suitable temporary and emergency accommodation
- Reduce/end rough sleeping
- Meet the needs of individuals with health and social care issues impacting on homelessness
- Target groups requiring specific support, including those who have fled their home due to domestic abuse, young people, and Armed Forces Veterans.

Underpinning all of this we will endeavour to take a strengths-based approach reflecting the Northumberland Inequalities Strategy and action plan.

There are substantial challenges ahead. The demand for affordable suitable homes for some of our most vulnerable residents continues to outstrip supply. These needs can be met by providing new houses and by bringing empty properties back into use.

We also need to deal with an increased demand on housing and housing-related support services. Homelessness is not just a housing issue, and many homeless people have complex needs which require a varied and tolerant approach. We aim to continue to work with partners to forge strong working relationships to deliver bespoke and effective packages of support, advice, and accommodation to clients to ensure they get the help and support that they need.

We can meet these challenges with five priority areas defining our focus over the period of this strategy:

1. Improve services and accommodation options for rough sleepers and single homeless people
2. Early intervention, prevention, and relief of homelessness through effective partnership working
3. Improve access to affordable and quality permanent, temporary, and emergency accommodation across all sectors
4. Link health, well-being, and housing together to improve the life chances and aspirations of those affected by homelessness
5. Develop homelessness pathways for specific groups including victims of domestic abuse, young people, prison leavers and armed forces veterans

## Priority 1

### Improve services and accommodation options for rough sleepers and single homeless people

Sleeping rough is the most obvious and harmful form of homelessness, especially when it becomes long term in nature. It can be difficult to address for a host of reasons, especially when those who are impacted feel disenfranchised and have never had a settled home of their own. Additionally, there can be background circumstances such as trauma or an undiagnosed mental health illness, and these often lead to illicit drug use, which is often a gateway to dependency. Addressing this needs to involve each person and an understanding of their strengths, needs and aspirations.

Respondents to the consultation thought that rough sleeping should remain a priority. The consultation also recommended that this priority should be broadened to include single homeless people as lack of services and accommodation for this group will lead to an increased number of rough sleepers.

#### Key issues and challenges:

- Lack of accommodation for clients with complex multiple needs where the use of shared accommodation is not appropriate
- Client group can be difficult to engage with services due to past trauma and previous experience of trying to achieve stability
- The County covers a large geographical area which can mean the outreach services are over stretched

To improve services for rough sleepers and single homeless people the Council will:

- Ensure effective partnerships are built and maintained to tackle rough sleeping and known rough sleepers
- Ensure a rapid response to rough sleeping reports across Northumberland
- Ensure that support is offered or provided to rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping that meets their needs identify strengths and goals that the person wishes to work towards and placing the individual at the heart of the process.
- In times of severe weather, all efforts are made to ensure nobody is sleeping rough in Northumberland
- Increase the amount of flexible emergency accommodation options for homeless people, including those with pets
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding practices are embedded across the Homelessness Partnership, inclusive of further developing a robust multi-agency safeguarding approach for rough sleeping
- Develop ways to work with individuals who have lived experience of multiple and complex needs: homelessness, offending, substance misuse and mental health but also building on their assets
- Work across the region to establish reconnection policies and develop cross boundary services and policies
- Ensuring people with lived experience of homelessness are at the heart of finding solutions.



## Priority 2

### Provide early intervention, prevention, and relief of homelessness through effective partnership working

Early intervention not only prevents homelessness and reduces its impact, but also prevents and reduces a lot of the harm that is often caused or results from the related impact.

Consultation with partners and stakeholders identified that improved intervention and support to vulnerable households would enable them to remain in their current home where they may have established support networks and community links.

#### Key issues and challenges:

- Difficult to engage landlords of any tenure to participate in early identification protocols for tenants at risk of homelessness
- High demand on the homelessness and housing options service means upstream prevention work is limited

To provide early prevention, intervention and relief, the Council will:

- Work alongside landlords to create robust early alert systems and ensure protocols are in place for tenancies at risk or when properties are going to be removed from the market
- Develop a web-based housing advice platform for anyone seeking advice, guidance, and support if homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Provide flexible approaches, according to need, and ensure that no one is left behind or falls between provisions
- Use data, feedback, and evidence to understand ways to work smarter to manage demand and to inform how we improve prevention and relief intervention services
- Work in partnership with other organisations such as health services (including mental health and drug and alcohol services); advice agencies; money advice; voluntary and community sector groups; the Police and other emergency services; and domestic abuse services to set up an early warning system to identify those at risk of homelessness
- Understand the client groups that services work with and how they can work more closely with the Council.

## Priority 3

### Improve access to suitable, affordable, and quality permanent, temporary, and emergency accommodation across all sectors

There are many obstacles to gaining suitable accommodation, especially for those with significant mental ill-health, or cumulative support needs (i.e., substance misuse issues) clients can be viewed by supported housing providers as being too high need for their services. In turn, they may be perceived as being below the threshold for specialist mental ill health / adult social care funded beds.

#### Key issues and challenges:

- Accessing accommodation is difficult for clients with complex needs, rent arrears or criminal behaviour. Clients can be excluded from both permanent and temporary accommodation
- Service providers offering high needs support often exclude clients with the most complex needs
- Personal housing plans need to be used to address these issues on an individual basis
- There are few options for people who are homeless with pets and do not want to be separated from them

The Council will:

- Ensure homeless applicants are being appropriately prioritised using the social housing allocations schemes
- Ensure that homeless clients are assisted and are enabled to access suitable accommodation in the private sector
- Ensure that the temporary accommodation offered in Northumberland is of a high standard
- Increase the amount of flexible emergency accommodation options for homeless applicants, including those with pets
- Improve the availability of suitable supported accommodation
- Work with Adult Social Care to provide more accommodation through the Complex Housing Panel.



## Priority 4

### Link health, well-being, and housing together to improve the life chances and aspirations of those affected by homelessness

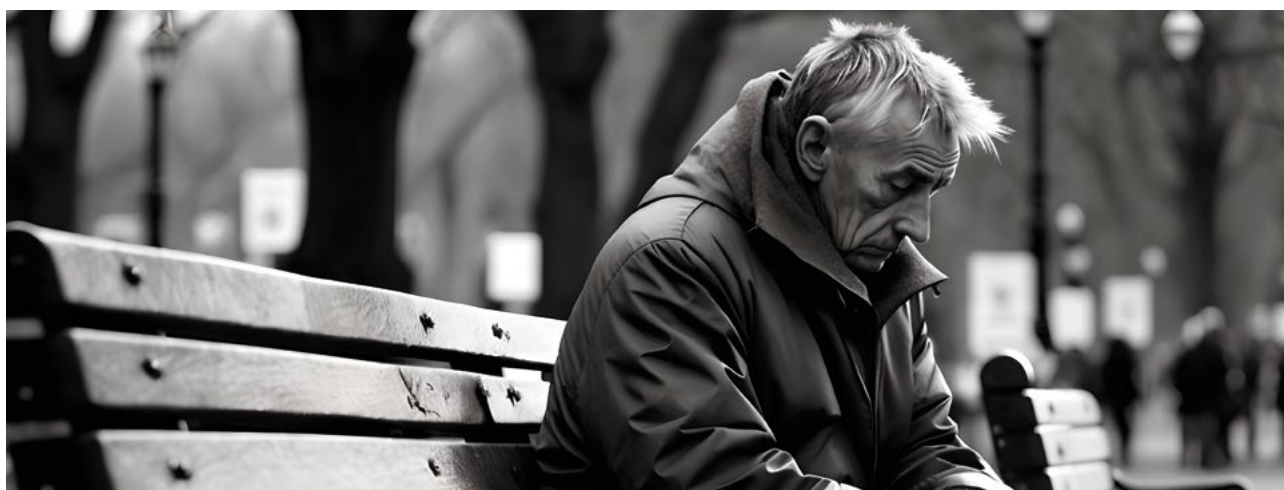
Poor health can lead to increased risk of homelessness, and likewise health can be affected by the risk of losing a home. People can lose their jobs due to being unable to work, particularly in the case of longer-term health conditions. This can exacerbate existing mental health conditions and lead to poorer mental wellbeing due to the often-constant pressure caused by conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

#### Key issues and challenges:

- Finding accommodation is often seen as the only solution to an individual's chaotic and traumatic life, however, underlying health issues, especially mental health, can exacerbate their housing situation and lead to multiple exclusions from all providers
- We will look to build upon the health and social care partnerships strengthened during the COVID-19 response, to ensure a holistic response to tackling common challenges.

To link health, well-being, and housing together, the Council will:

- Ensure the health implications of homelessness are understood and are part of our strategic and operational approach taking also into account the wider determinants of health such as poverty and loneliness
- Ensure that the Domestic Abuse Act is fully implemented across Northumberland
- Ensure effective links are built and maintained between the Homelessness and Housing Options Team and health and social care teams
- Ensure that support needs are identified in all homeless households
- We will work with our partners in homelessness to ensure all local services are flexible and responsive in terms of local need, and are willing to consider amending practice, if necessary, to ensure strategic relevance and to offer the most effective solutions to those at risk of homelessness.



## Priority 5

### Develop homelessness pathways for specific groups including victims of domestic abuse, young people, prison leavers and armed forces veterans

To prevent homelessness for people at the point of leaving care or on discharge from the armed forces and other institutions there is a need for timely intervention to ensure they do not become homeless or rough sleeping.

#### Key issues and challenges:

- Too many people are leaving institutions without a forward plan in place for housing and other support services
- Lack of specialist support in some cohorts of homeless people

The consultation confirmed that youth homelessness should remain a priority, however other priority groups were identified as requiring specific support.

- Provide timely housing options planning and support advice to all care leavers, and other relevant under 19-year-olds, which supports their pathway plan
- Provide targeted support and early intervention to all groups at greater risk of homelessness, including the 'hidden homeless' and those in precarious accommodation and relating to health, frailty, and complex cross-cutting challenges
- Ensure any victim of domestic abuse has somewhere safe to stay and receives support
- Provide early advice and housing options services to people leaving the armed forces and prioritise veterans for housing and support
- Improve our understanding and service offer to ethnic minorities, the LGBT+ community and other minority groups.

By delivering against these Priorities, we will ensure that we support people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness to secure and retain, safe, warm accommodation ensuring that their health and wellbeing needs are met.



# MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF NEW LEGISLATION

To ensure that the Council is fully compliant with the new duties, new procedures, and measures to prevent and relieve homelessness have been developed and implemented. All internal processes and procedures have been updated to ensure they are compliant with the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) whilst communication with customers has been key, ensuring that they know how and where to approach the service and what to expect.

In addition, the updated Strategy introduces a priority focussed upon the needs of rough sleepers, reflecting the requirements of the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018.

To ensure that the Council meets all requirements of new legislation the Council will

- Continue developing and improving the Council's Homelessness Prevention Service to continue to provide free advice and assistance
- Allocate funding for homelessness prevention and relief measures and pursue additional funding as it becomes available - ensuring that funding which is intended to prevent or relieve homelessness is used in the most effective way
- Review the Northumberland Homefinder Policy to ensure that it contributes positively to homelessness prevention and relief, enabling access to social housing for households that require it to prevent or relieve their homelessness; and
- Engage with public bodies that have the Duty to Refer, in order that appropriate advice and support can be put in place to prevent homelessness.

# MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

An Action Plan will be developed which will be reviewed and updated to detail the actions that the Council proposes to undertake under each of the five priorities. It will focus upon the outcomes the Council would like to achieve and will clearly set out how progress will be measured for each action.

The Council will use the Action Plan to direct its workload and will report annually on the progress made; this will be reported to Members.

The Action Plan and the corresponding targets will also be reviewed annually and where necessary changes made to meet changing priorities and to ensure effective delivery of existing priorities. In addition, a quarterly monitoring group will be set up to review progression against the Action Plan.

If changes occur that significantly affect the Council's ability to deliver on the priorities (for example new legislation) then the Strategy will be reviewed following an annual review.



# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Strategy and Action Plan will be tested to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

# APPENDIX 1

## Definitions

Homelessness means not having a home. A home is a place that provides security, and links to a community and support network. It needs to be decent and affordable. Under the law, even if someone has a roof over their head, they can still be homeless. This is because they may not have the right to stay where they live, or their home may be unsuitable to live in.

Someone is homeless if:

- They have no accommodation that they are entitled to occupy
- They have accommodation and they are entitled to occupy it, but it is so bad that they cannot reasonably be expected to occupy it.<sup>2</sup>

Rough sleeping is defined by the Government as 'people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes')<sup>3</sup>

A Household is defined as *"one person or a group of people who have the accommodation as their only or main residence and for a group, either share at least one meal a day or share the living accommodation"*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Housing Act 1996

<sup>3</sup> Shelter England

<sup>4</sup> ONS





# APPENDIX 2

## The Legal Framework

This is the legal framework, which we must follow to meet our statutory obligations to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. Below is a summary of the legislation along with a link to the full legislation.

### Housing Act 1996

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>

The Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996) came into effect 20 January 1997. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 is the overarching piece of legislation that relates to homelessness. The Act has been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and more recently by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

### Homelessness Act 2002

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents>

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced the following amendments to Part 7 of the HA 1996:

- Changes to appeals against the suitability of accommodation;
- Exclusion from eligibility for assistance of anyone refused housing benefit on eligibility (immigration) grounds;
- Provisions relating to Allocations;
- Right of Appeal against the refusal by the Local Authority to provide accommodation pending an appeal to the County Court on the homelessness decision;
- Cooperation between a local housing authority and a social services authority; and
- Late appeals to the County Court

### Localism Act 2011

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>

The Localism Act 2011 amended Part 7 of the HA1996 with effect from 9 November 2012. It introduced powers for a Local Authority to end the main housing duty, owed to applicants where a homeless duty had been accepted, by arrangement of a suitable offer of accommodation through the private rented sector.

### Welfare Reform Act 2012

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/contents>

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 (WRA 2012) came into effect 1 April 2013. Amongst the provisions of the WRA 2012 are the introduction of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments, the benefit cap, under-occupation reduction in entitlement and changes to the 'Social Fund' now known as Local Welfare Assistance.

## The Care Act 2014

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents>

The Care Act 2014 prescribes that local authorities must promote wellbeing when carrying out their care and / or support functions when working with clients. One of the areas, which the Act details is the suitability of living accommodation, therefore, we should consider the suitability of living accommodation in line with this Act.

## De-regulation Act 2015

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/20/contents>

The Deregulation Act 2015 came into effect 1 October 2015. It aims to prevent notices being issued in retaliation for complaints made about the condition of the property. It also introduced more stringent rules around the validity of notice, ensuring notices could only be served, if certain processes had been followed by the landlord at the beginning or during the tenancy.

## Housing and Planning Act 2016

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/contents>

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced several changes and new initiatives. These include measures to tackle rogue landlords within the private sector, extension of Right to Buy to include tenants of housing associations.

## Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents>

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 details the primary duties for Local Authorities. These are:

- Duty to prevent homelessness
- Duty to relieve homelessness

All Local Authorities are required to provide or secure services to give people free information and advice on:

- Preventing homelessness;
- Securing accommodation if homeless;
- Housing Rights; and
- Help that is available to resolve their housing crisis and how to access that help

Services need to be designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people who are deemed to be more likely to become homeless. These groups include care leavers, victims of domestic abuse, people leaving the armed forces, people leaving prison or those who suffer with a mental illness or impairment.

There is also a duty to assess all applicants and agree a personal plan, which must be provided to the client in writing and outline the steps that they and the Authority will need to take to ensure accommodation is either retained or alternative accommodation secured.

Local authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to prevent or relieve homelessness and these must be written down in a personalised plan, which must be regularly reviewed and updated.

The duties can be discharged if accommodation is secured and has a reasonable prospect of being available for the next six months.

The Duty to Refer came into effect on 1st October 2018. This places a duty on a specified list of agencies to refer someone (with their permission) to a Local Authority of their choice for advice if they are at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

### **Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (CoG 2018) was published in February 2018 in readiness for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The CoG 2018 must be considered alongside the legislation when assessing and dealing with applications for assistance under either the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or Part 7 of the HA 1996.

If you need this information in large print, braille, audio or in another format or language please contact us:

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