




# HOMELESS?

A photograph of a dark brown, paneled door. The door has a brass knocker in the center and two brass handles on the left side. The door is set against a light-colored wall.

**This leaflet explains what happens if you make a homeless application and the rules we use.**

**This leaflet can be supplied in community languages, large print, audio tape/CD or Braille.**

**Contact the Communications Team:**

 **020 8583 3535**

 **[hcscommunications@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:hcscommunications@hounslow.gov.uk)**

**This leaflet explains what happens if you make a homeless application and the rules we use. The information in this leaflet is for information and guidance, it is not a complete statement of the law or of your rights.**

## **Introduction**

We have a legal duty to prevent homelessness wherever we can. This may be by helping you stay in your current home, helping you find private accommodation, or, in the most urgent cases, that are eligible for direct assistance, by arranging accommodation for you.

The Housing Act 1996, amended by Homelessness Act 2002, sets out the legal duties councils have towards homeless people.

**Under this Act, we have a legal duty to make sure you have somewhere to live if you:**

- are homeless;
- are eligible for help;
- are in priority need;
- are not intentionally homeless; and
- have a local connection to Hounslow.

These rules are complicated and sometimes difficult to understand; we will talk to you about your housing problem and explain how we can help you. We will ask

you questions about your situation and ask you for proof of your and the members of your households identity, where you live, your immigration status in the UK (if applicable) and your connection to Hounslow, for example where you lived in Hounslow and for how long.

## **Am I homeless?**

**You will be considered homeless under these rules if you and your household:**

- cannot access accommodation available to you, anywhere in the world, which it is reasonable for you to live in; or
- have accommodation, but it will only be available to you for a period of less than 28 days; or
- have accommodation available to you but it is not reasonable for you to live there for example, because of domestic violence, severe disrepair, health and safety reasons, or a disaster such as fire or flood.

## **Am I eligible for assistance?**

**You may not be eligible for assistance if:**

- you are an asylum seeker (most asylum seekers are able to get help with their housing from the Home Office);
- you are from abroad and have limited rights to remain in the UK or you have stayed longer than the time you were allowed;

- you are from abroad and you are not entitled to claim 'public funds';
- you are a UK citizen, but you have not lived in the UK for a long time;
- you came to the UK illegally (we can make enquiries of immigration authorities if we think you came to the UK illegally);
- you are a European national, from outside the European Union, who has no right of residence in the UK; or
- you are a European national or a person from an A8 Accession country, but are not a 'worker' in the UK.

If you are not eligible for assistance we can only provide you with information to help you find accommodation.

You may also be referred to a more appropriate agency for assistance, for example Social Services, if you are unable to live independently, even with appropriate professional support.

## **Am I in priority need?**

**You may be considered to be in priority need if you are homeless if:**

- you or someone you live with is pregnant;
- you have dependent children in your care under 16 (or under 19 and in full time education);

- you are aged 16 – 17;
- you are a care leaver who is under 21 years of age;
- you are homeless because of a disaster, for example a fire or flood; or
- you are considered to be vulnerable, this might be as a result of mental or physical ill health or disability, old age, or other special reason.

## **What if I am not in priority need?**

Even though you may not be in priority need, a Housing Prevention and Advice Officer can discuss with you the all housing options that are available. They will be able to give you advice about what to do next, ways to find somewhere to stay and who else can help.

For more information please ask for the booklet called **Helping you find a home.**

## **Intentional Homelessness**

You may be deemed intentionally homeless if you deliberately do, or fail to do something, which causes you to lose your home.

### **This might include:**

- failing to pay your rent or mortgage;
- failing to follow advice given by the Council or a legal adviser;

- being evicted because of nuisance or harassment to your neighbours;
- because you have damaged your landlord's property; or
- because you are a perpetrator of domestic violence.

If you are found to be intentionally homeless, you will not be eligible for direct assistance with rehousing and will only be entitled to advice and assistance to help you find your own accommodation.

## **Local connection**

Finally, to be accepted for homeless assistance by the London Borough of Hounslow, you must have either a local connection to the Borough, or no local connection with any other housing authority area.

**You may have a local connection to Hounslow if you:**

- have lived in the Borough for six out of the last twelve months, or three out of the last five years;
- have close family who have lived in the Borough for the last five years; or
- have a permanent job based in the Borough.

If you do not have a local connection with the London Borough of Hounslow but do have a connection with another authority, we will normally make a referral to

that authority to provide housing, unless you would be at risk of domestic or other violence in that area.

## **What documents do you need to see?**

Your Housing Officer will ask you questions about your situation so we can find out if how we can help you. This is called a homelessness investigation.

**To help with the investigation we will ask for a number of documents. They are:**

**Proof of Identity for each person applying for accommodation, for example:**

- passport;
- driver's license;
- child's full birth certificate;
- marriage certificate; or
- identity card.

**Proof of homelessness, for example:**

- eviction notice;
- court possession order or bailiff's warrant; or
- a letter from the landlord, property owner or tenant where you are staying.

## **Proof of eligibility, for example:**

- passport;
- travel or immigration documents;
- proof of benefit entitlement; or
- proof of being registered as a 'worker' under the Worker Registration Scheme.

## **Proof of priority need, for example:**

- maternity certificate;
- hospital ante-natal card;
- doctor's letters or reports;
- residence order for children in your care;
- full birth certificates of children and letter from the school/college;
- pension book;
- social worker's report; or
- probation officer's report.

## **Proof of residence for the last 5 years, for example:**

- official letters received at your address/es;
- tenancy agreements;
- medical cards;
- bank statements;
- letter from employer/s; or
- council tax documents.

## **Proof of employment, income and savings, for example:**

- letter from your employer;
- P60 or P45;
- bank or building society statements;
- benefit book or proof of claim;
- National Insurance card or number;
- wage slips; or
- self-employment accounts and tax returns.

## **How will you help?**

It is important that you arrange to see us as soon as possible and bring the documents we need to see so we can help prevent you from becoming homeless and, if you meet our rules, arrange somewhere for you and your family to stay.

If you have nowhere to stay tonight or while we investigate your homelessness application and you meet our rules of being eligible for housing and in priority need we may provide you with short term interim accommodation. If we decide not to, we will explain the reasons why.

If we do provide you with short-term interim accommodation it may be bed and breakfast accommodation and could be located outside of the Borough. You will be expected to pay for the cost of

this, though you may be eligible for help if you are on benefits or on low income.

If your homelessness application is approved, the Council will write to you to confirm that it has accepted a legal duty to secure accommodation for your household.

If your homelessness application has been accepted and we accept a duty to secure longer-term temporary accommodation for you, we will make sure this accommodation is suitable for your needs. This may be in a hostel or self-contained property either owned or leased by the Council and licensed to you temporarily.

## **If I am not happy with the Council's decision on my homelessness application, can I appeal?**

You have the right to appeal if you feel your homelessness application was unreasonably rejected. You have 21 days to contact your case officer and request a formal review of the decision.

## **Long term housing**

The duty of the Council is to ensure that temporary accommodation is available to you. This can be a property owned and/or managed by the Council, a housing association or other organisation.

## **We will owe this duty to you until one of the following applies:**

- we offer you suitable temporary accommodation and you refuse it (we must have told you what will happen if you refuse it and that you have a right to ask for a review of the suitability of the accommodation);
- you stop being eligible for assistance;
- you become homeless intentionally from your temporary accommodation, for example because of anti-social behaviour or causing nuisance to your neighbours, or because you owe rent;
- you accept an offer of permanent Council or housing association accommodation;
- you stop occupying your temporary accommodation as your only or main home;
- you refuse a final offer of permanent accommodation (we must have told you what will happen if you refuse it and that you have a right to ask for a review of the suitability of the accommodation); or
- you accept a qualifying offer of an assured short-hold tenancy made by a private landlord.

Permanent social housing is allocated through our housing register and by bidding through Locata, the West London choice-based housing allocation scheme, along with all other 'homeseekers'.

There are currently over 12,000 households on Hounslow's Housing Register and last year (2007/2008) there were only 822 properties available to rent.

When you apply to us as homeless we will also apply to the housing register and we will confirm your Locata number, band and priority date in your homeless decision letter so you can bid for properties.

You will receive a Locata user guide which explains where to find and bid on the properties we have available to rent permanently.

You do still have a choice of a range of housing options available to you, such as moving to a privately rented home with our Letstart Scheme, renting through the intermediate rent scheme, low cost home ownership or the Seaside and Country Homes scheme that allows applicants to relocate to a seaside or country location.

You can find out more about the Council's legal duties and your options from your Homeless Officer or for our full range of housing options ask for a copy of our leaflet **Your housing options**.

## Where are you located?

We are based at the Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow, TW3 4DN. We are open from 9am to 4.15pm, Monday to Friday.

## Do I need an appointment?

Please make an appointment to see someone whenever possible, as this avoids a long wait at reception. If you do not have an appointment, you must wait to be seen on a 'first-come first-served' basis. If you arrive without an appointment and we are very busy, we may have to arrange an appointment for you on another day.

Depending on your circumstances, we will make an appointment for you to see a Housing Prevention and Advice Officer, a Housing Officer (Homelessness) or an officer from our Special Needs Team. We will give you an appointment letter, which you will need to bring with you on the day of your visit.

Call us on **020 8583 3842** to make an appointment or write to the address above. If you cannot get through when phoning, please keep trying as the line is often very busy.

## Who can I contact outside the normal opening times?

If you are made homeless after 4pm or on a Saturday or Sunday, and you have nowhere to stay that night, please call our emergency number **020 8583 2222**.



# HOMELESS?

## **Prevention & Housing Advice Team**

Civic Centre  
Lampton Road  
Hounslow TW3 4DN

**Telephone: 020 8583 3842**

Lines are open weekdays between 9am and 5pm, or come to the Civic Centre and ask to see an adviser, Monday to Friday, 9am - 4.15pm.

The service is 'first-come first-served'. You may have to wait to be seen at busy times.

**[www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)**