

If you are homeless or likely to become homeless you may try to get help from the Council. How much help the Council can provide will depend on its assessment of your personal situation. You are unlikely to be offered anything more than advice and assistance unless there are exceptional circumstances. The process is described in our leaflet “What to do if you are homeless”.

You must seek advice as soon as you are asked to leave your home. Even if your landlord has told you to leave the property, this does not mean that you have to vacate immediately. As soon as you receive any written communication from the landlord or the Court, such as a notice or a possession order, you should seek advice immediately. See the list of advice agencies in Leaflet 1

Your right to remain in your home depends on whether you are a tenant, licensee or lodger. See Leaflet 5 “Security of Tenure in Privately Rented Homes”

If you have nowhere to stay tonight, and the Council has said it cannot help you, you may find, at least initially, that the only type of accommodation available is a B&B hotel or a hostel.

Bed and Breakfast hotels

Bed and breakfast hotels (B&Bs) are privately run businesses and they tend to be comparatively more expensive than hostel or nightshelter accommodation.

The hotel may offer you a single room although you should be prepared to share a room with one or more persons of the same sex. You will usually have to share the bathroom and WC. You will probably need money for rent in advance.

The condition of some B&Bs may be of a poor standard. Some have no cooking facilities or services such as room cleaning. Some hotels do not allow residents to stay in the hotel during daytime while others do not accept people who are claiming housing benefits.

The Council keeps an up to date list of hotels in the area, which is included in your pack.

Hostels

Hostels are predominantly run by charities, which provide accommodation on a temporary basis to those who are in need. It is important to check what they offer with the particular hostel you are contacting. Some hostels provide separate rooms; others have dormitory style accommodation. Some provide cooked meals, whilst others have kitchens where you can prepare your own food. You are likely to have to share a bathroom. Certain hostels will only accept a specific client group, such as single women, students or long-term rough sleepers recovering from drug or alcohol dependency. Some hostels will take immediate and direct referrals whereas others have a waiting list, and others will only take people referred by certain agencies. See the list of hostels near Hackney in Leaflet 1, and the separate leaflet on Direct Access Hostels throughout London.

Hostels also can be categorised by the length of time you can stay, for example:

Emergency hostels

These hostels usually provide accommodation for single people, generally only for a few nights. They might accept people without money; however they expect you to claim benefits for the rent and other charges. If meals are provided, you will have to pay for them.

Short stay

These hostels provide accommodation for between a few weeks and a few months for homeless people until they can find alternative long-term accommodation

Medium to long term stay hostels

These hostels provide accommodation for people who are homeless, although the level of support given to residents is minimal. Many of them offer single rooms and the average length of stay is around two years, whilst some impose no time limit.

Semi-supportive hostels

These hostels offer greater levels of support to their homeless residents, ranging from practical help, counselling and education to training. Their aim is to prepare residents to cope with living independently and to help them find alternative and often permanent housing, for which there is usually a waiting list.

Women's refuges

These are for women who have had to flee their home because of threats of, or actual violence, and need a safe place to stay. These refuges are often ordinary houses shared by women and children. The address is usually kept secret in order to protect women from violent partners.

The council has produced a leaflet of hostels and other agencies that may be able to offer you accommodation, as well as details of agencies that can help you with food, health, clothing, and employment issues. See Leaflet 1, and the separate leaflet on Direct Access Hostels throughout London.

