

Care and Support Factsheet

Homelessness

People become and stay homeless for a whole range of reasons and solving homelessness is about much more than putting a roof over people's heads. People often face a number of issues in addition to, but often compounded by, their homelessness. The isolation and destructive nature of homelessness means that people find it difficult to access the help they need.

Local authorities do not have to provide housing for all homeless people. Instead, they have a duty to house 'priority' homeless people and, every year, tens of thousands of people apply to their local authority for assistance.

If you're homeless or threatened with homelessness, you must always in the first instance, contact your local district or borough council.

You're in priority need if:

- You or someone you live with is pregnant
- 'Dependent children' live with you (under 16s or under 19s if they're studying full-time)
- You're 'vulnerable', eg as a result of old age or disability
- You're homeless after a flood, fire or other disaster.

Key advice

- Get in touch with your local borough or district council as soon as you can
- You can apply to your council for help up to 28 days before becoming homeless, you don't have to wait.

Who can get help

You don't have to be sleeping on the street to get help from your local council.

The council might have to help you if you:

- Are likely to be evicted within the next 28 days
- Can only stay where you are temporarily (for example, if you are staying with friends or family in an emergency)
- Have to move because of violence or threats
- Are living in overcrowded conditions
- You are homeless after leaving hospital, prison or the armed forces
- Live in a caravan or houseboat but have nowhere to put it
- Are squatting or don't have permission to stay where you are.

The council may also be able to help you if your home is in such a bad state of repair that it is damaging your health or if your household is forced to live apart because your accommodation isn't suitable for you all to live together.

Even if the council has refused to help you in the past, you can still apply as homeless. Your circumstances and needs may have changed since you last applied.

How to get help on the streets

- Find a safe place to stay as soon as you can
- Local drop in centres have food and help, and can direct you to support services (see sources of help below).

Key advice

- Even if you don't have a home, you still have rights.
- If you are homeless, your local borough or district council has to give you advice and assistance.
- You still have the right to see a doctor and vote
- You are entitled to claim benefits if you are homeless. Ask for a Simple Payment card if you don't have a bank account. Your benefits are paid onto the card and you can collect your money from any shop displaying the PayPoint sign.
- Derbyshire County Council has a Welfare Rights team who can help you find out which benefits you may be entitled to and give you details about how and where to apply for them email: welfarebenefits@derbyshire.gov.uk or phone the benefits helpline **01629 531535**.
- If you are in urgent need of help following a crisis or disaster, the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF) may be able to support you with an exceptional pressure grant or emergency cash payment.
- The First Contact Scheme signposts individuals to external partners such as drug and alcohol and housing support. The leaflet is available here. You can also contact **01629 532503**.

Where to get help

Your local council's housing options or housing advice service could help you during office hours with advice and referrals to emergency accommodation. Find your local council through [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Citizens Advice can provide confidential, impartial and independent advice on a range of issues including housing. Information online - at [adviceguide.org.uk](https://www.adviceguide.org.uk) - over the phone and face to face in their local advice centres.

Shelter's helpline – call **0808 800 4444** (8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm at weekends) for advice on finding a place to stay for the night. Staff at the helpline can give you immediate practical assistance, explain your rights and suggest services that may be able to help you.

StreetLink is a national organisation, you can contact them about homeless people anywhere in the UK streetlink.org.uk, call the 24 hour helpline on 0300 5000914, or download the **StreetLink app** on a smart phone.

Crisis - National Homeless Charity - Tel 0300 636 1967, or email enquiries@crisis.org.uk

Homeless Link - www.homeless.org.uk

The Mix - 0808 808 4994 (1-11pm every day) gives advice for young people under 25. You contact them by phone, email, text or webchat. They can support you and talk through your options.

Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Service - 01246 540444/555549

Derbyshire Recovery Partnership—for substance and alcohol misuse—0845 308 4010