

Homelessness guide for people leaving hospital

This information is designed to help you understand how Havant Borough Council can help you if you are facing homelessness or are homeless as someone with mental health issues. This leaflet will explain to you the change in law that took place in April 2018 under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The aim of the council is to prevent you from becoming homeless and if you are homeless to assist you to find suitable accommodation. The council will do this under two duties, the prevention and relief duty.

If you are likely to become homeless

If you are likely to become homeless, the council has a prevention duty which arises if the council is satisfied that you are eligible and at risk of losing your accommodation within 56 days.

In these circumstances, housing advice should be sought at the earliest opportunity to allow you time to work with the council to prevent your homelessness.

The prevention duty comes to an end in a number of ways, but mainly if you have suitable accommodation open to you for at least six months. If you are unable to prevent your homelessness, you will be owed the relief duty.

If you are homeless

If you are homeless the council has a relief duty which arises if the council is satisfied that you are eligible for assistance and homeless. Again we would advise that housing advice should be sought at the earliest opportunity to allow you time to work with the council to help resolve your homelessness.

The relief duty lasts for up to 56 days and it is not always the council's duty to provide you with accommodation. However, the council will give you advice to help you to secure accommodation.

This duty comes to an end in a number of ways, but mainly if you have suitable accommodation open to you for at least six months.

What happens when you approach the council?

The council will carry out a Housing Needs Assessment with you if you are eligible for assistance, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Your housing officer will create a Personalised Housing Plan with you and discuss your support needs to understand your specific circumstances.

It is important to establish why you are at risk of homelessness or homeless and how you can resolve your housing situation. Your Personalised Housing Plan will record the agreed steps you and the council will take to assist you to prevent your homelessness or to find suitable accommodation.

If you do not agree with the actions within your Personalised Housing Plan, the council will put in writing why the actions could not be agreed and what steps the council thinks would be reasonable for you to take.

If the council considers that you are deliberately and unreasonably refusing to cooperate with the actions in your personalised housing plan, you will be issued a notice which ends the council's duties.

Enquiries the council will make

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 states how the council must deal with homelessness and for whom the council must find temporary accommodation. Unfortunately, this is not for everyone who is homeless.

If you meet the criteria, the council will ensure you have temporary accommodation. This is most likely to be in Bed & Breakfast or hostel accommodation for single applicants.

The council may make enquiries into your eligibility for assistance; whether you are homeless or threatened with homelessness; whether you are granted priority need status and whether you are homeless intentionally.

We may need to make enquiries from the people who have been helping you manage your mental health to make sure we know how best to help you.

Priority need

The law is very specific. Being without a home is not sufficient to grant you priority need status. If you are vulnerable as a result of mental illness, then the council must investigate and decide if you are granted priority need status. The council will also assess your circumstances under the other priority need categories set out in law.

Intentionally homeless

You would be considered to have become homeless intentionally if you are, as a result of something you have done or failed to do, responsible for your own homelessness. If you are found to be intentionally homeless, and the council has a duty to provide you with temporary accommodation then this can only be provided for a reasonable period, to give you time to find your own accommodation.

Local connection

The council will also investigate whether you have a local connection to the borough. In order to have a local connection to the borough you must:

- Normally reside within the Havant Borough Council boundaries and have done so for six of the last 12 months or three of the last five years or,
- Have full-time, permanent employment within the borough boundaries or,
- Have close family members resident in the borough or,
- Have special circumstances that exist

If you do not have a local connection with Havant Borough Council, but do with another area, you may be referred there.

Further advice

There are a number of accommodation providers specifically for people with mental illness, including the following:

- Richmond Fellowship
- Havant Housing Association

If you require a referral to mental health supported accommodation, this can be completed by your mental health team.

Local support agencies

- Hampshire County Council Adult Services (Phone: 0300 555 1386 Email: adult.services@hants.gov.uk)
www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adultsocialcare
- Community Mental Health Team (Phone: 023 9224 4140 Email: FGAMHSCTSharedMailBox.Shared@hants.gov.uk)
www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adultsocialcare/mentalhealth
- Winchester Churches Night Shelter (Phone: 01962 862050)

You are able to self-refer to Winchester Churches Night Shelter by contacting them directly.

Housing Services contact details

Address: The Public Service Plaza, Civic Centre Road, Havant, Hampshire, PO9 2AX

Tel: 023 9244 6379

Email: housingservices2@havant.gov.uk

Web: www.havant.gov.uk