

What the changes in homelessness law mean for you

From the 3rd April 2018, the law has changed in England to improve the help and support that local councils need to provide. If you are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, the council are now likely to have a duty to help you stay in your home or find accommodation

Key Change	What you can now expect
<p>You can now access advice and information that is more informative & tailored to your circumstances</p>	<p>Local councils must provide advice and information about homelessness to everyone, free of charge. This will include your rights, the help you can expect to receive and practical advice and assistance to help you remain in your home or find alternative accommodation. If you are: leaving care or hospital, recently released from prison or youth detention, a former member of the armed forces, having problems with your mental health; or experiencing domestic abuse, you can expect advice and information for your specific situation.</p>
<p>You can get help earlier if you know you are going to be homeless</p>	<p>The new definition of 'threatened with homelessness' means if you are likely to lose your home within 56 days (before it was 28 days) the council should help. This means councils must give you earlier help and support to prevent you from losing your home.</p>
<p>Local councils have new responsibilities to prevent or relieve your homelessness</p>	<p>Every person applying for help from a local council will have an initial conversation with a housing officer. If you are eligible for help (this may affect you if you have come from abroad) then the council will have to offer you a 'prevention' duty (if you are at risk of losing your home) or a 'relief' duty (if you are already homeless).</p> <p>These are new duties and the council must help you regardless of whether you have a 'priority need' (e.g. if you have dependent children or if you are 'vulnerable') or if they think you have made yourself homeless intentionally.</p> <p>If you are currently homeless the council may have to provide you with temporary housing. Both the relief and prevention duties will last up to 56 days as you and the council work together to prevent or resolve your homelessness. If you are still homeless at the end of this time, the council will decide if you meet the criteria for temporary housing and settled accommodation.</p>
<p>Introduction of personalised plans</p>	<p>At your interview, a housing officer will talk to you about the circumstances that have caused you to be homeless or threatened with homelessness, your housing needs and any other help and support you or your family might need.</p> <p>You and the council will need to work together to list the reasonable steps that you will both take to help you to keep or find suitable accommodation. These steps need to be right for you and your situation, so your needs should be taken into account. The outcome of this conversation will be provided in writing and form your personalised plan. Both you and the council should regularly review the plan. It is important that you keep in touch with the council to discuss any changes and they should also keep you updated.</p>

Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free* housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting shelter.org.uk/advice or adviceguide.org.uk

*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.

