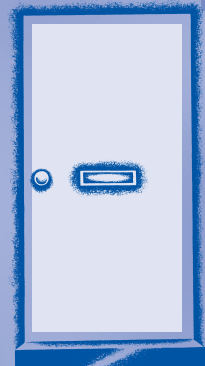




# Homelessness

HOUSING DIRECTORATE



You should read this leaflet if you are homeless, or if you are likely to become homeless in the near future. There are laws which decide how homeless people may be assisted and these are briefly explained in this leaflet. The Council's Housing Options Section must work within the law. While some homeless people may be given accommodation, others do not qualify for assistance except a right to be given housing advice. Other agencies may be able to help and there is a list of these starting on page 9.

## What does homelessness mean?

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Under the Housing Act 1996, Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, homelessness means that:

- you have no accommodation, anywhere, that is available for occupation and that you are legally entitled to occupy; or
- you have accommodation but cannot gain entry to it, or it is a mobile home and there is nowhere to park it; or
- you have accommodation but it is not reasonable for you to live there; for example if you have been in hospital with a serious health problem and would no longer be able to cope in that property, even with support.

You are considered threatened with homelessness if it is likely that you will become homeless within 28 days.

You are considered homeless if a lack of accommodation forces you to be separated from members of your family who would normally live with you.



## The Council's duty

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If you are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, the Council may have a duty to provide 'interim accommodation' for you and other members of your family. This means we will find somewhere for you to stay while a homeless enquiry is carried out on your behalf. If necessary, your furniture and some personal effects can be stored while you are in interim accommodation.

You will need to make a homeless application to us. A Housing Options Officer will explain this to you. We will then look carefully at your situation to decide whether you are actually homeless and have a right to assistance. We will also decide if you:

1. have a **Priority Need** for accommodation
2. have a **Connection with the District**, and
3. are not **Intentionally Homeless**

These are legal terms which are explained in more detail on pages 4 and 5.

Your 'interim accommodation' will become 'temporary accommodation' if we decide that you are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need, and not intentionally homeless. You can read more about **temporary accommodation** on page 6.

Normally you can only stay in your 'interim accommodation' for a month if we decide you are intentionally homeless. A Housing Options Officer will assist by giving advice to help you find other accommodation, but will not arrange it for you.

If we cannot accept you as homeless, we can still give you housing advice. If you are a single person please ask for our booklet "Housing for Single People".

## 1. Priority need

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You will generally be considered to be in priority need if:

- you are pregnant
- you have dependent children living with you
- you are vulnerable because of mental illness or a disability
- you are vulnerable for other special reasons, for example:
  - you have been looked after, accommodated or fostered within the meaning of the Children Act section 24
  - you have been a member of the forces
  - you have served a custodial sentence, or been committed for contempt of court, or have been remanded in custody
  - you have left your home because of violence, or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out
- you have been made homeless by a fire or other disaster.

Young people may also be considered to be in priority need. If you are 16 or 17 years old, and you are actually homeless, you will be in need of support. Family relationships do sometimes break down, but this could be a temporary problem. The situation may be improved through reconciliation between family members.

We would need to look at your situation to decide who is responsible for helping you, either Children's Social Care (formerly Social Services), or Epping Forest District Council (Housing Directorate).

## 2. Connection with the District

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A local connection means that you, or close members of your family, usually live in the Epping Forest District by choice or that you are employed in the district. If you have no such connection you will be referred to an area where you do have a local connection. If you have no connection with any other Council you will be treated as if your connection is with this Council.



### **3. Intentionally homeless**

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If you are homeless through no fault of your own, you are not 'intentionally homeless'.

Intentionally homeless means either:

- 1.** You have deliberately done something, or not done something, which has resulted in you becoming homeless. This includes any failure to act on advice that has been given to you.
- 2.** You have colluded (made a plan) with your family or landlord to lose your accommodation.

## Temporary accommodation

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If you are accepted as homeless you will qualify for temporary accommodation. Special arrangements may be made for applicants who have been subjected to domestic violence but, generally, the Council uses three types of temporary accommodation:

- Norway House, North Weald. This is the Council's Homeless Persons Hostel which is mostly for families. You will receive support from a housing team.
- Bed and Breakfast. This accommodation is provided in rare circumstances to single people, only in order to meet their particular requirements.
- Hemnall House, Epping. This is owned by the Council and you can continue to receive support while you are there. Hemnall House is mainly for single people.

The type of temporary accommodation offered will depend on availability, the size of your household and your needs. As it is temporary it may not be as large as you would like, and it may not be in the area in which you want to live eventually.



## **Long term accommodation**

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By law, you can apply for long-term accommodation to as many local housing authorities and housing associations as you wish. If you want Epping Forest District Council to consider you for long-term accommodation you must join the 'Housing Register'. This contains lists of people who have applied for social housing in the area.

You will be given reasonable preference on our Housing Register if you are in temporary accommodation arranged by this Council.

Homeseekers living in temporary accommodation will be able to participate in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme in accordance with the conditions set out in the full Allocations Scheme. The Housing Options Team will give you further advice should you need assistance.

Please note: You will not be allowed to join the Housing Register if we think you would be unsuitable as a tenant. We are most likely to make this decision if you have been evicted by a Council or housing association or if you are subject to an Anti Social Behaviour Order or Contract.

For more information on the Housing Register, please read our leaflet 'Moving home with the Council'.

## **How the Council deals with homeless applicants**

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It is vital, if you are having housing problems, for you to notify the Housing Options Section at the earliest opportunity. If you are homeless or likely to become so, you must make contact with the homelessness team within the Housing Options Section. A preliminary assessment of your circumstances will be made straight away. Arrangements will then be made for you to see a Homelessness Prevention Officer. If your homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved, we may advise you to make a homelessness application to the Council.

## **Homelessness Prevention Service**

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Most first appointments are with a Homelessness Prevention Officer. It is important that you bring with you evidence of your identity – either a birth certificate or a current passport – and any documentation you have concerning your accommodation. Please also bring any other information you feel is relevant.

The Homelessness Prevention Officer will consider all the facts of your case and discuss your options with you. They will consider, for instance, helping you to maintain your current accommodation by negotiating with your landlord. In some cases they may suggest a referral to a family mediation service.

Should you be advised to make a homelessness application you will be offered an appointment with a Homelessness Assessment Officer. Epping Forest District Council will ensure that the full provisions of the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII), as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, are applied.

After your interview with the Homelessness Assessment Officer, your situation will be fully assessed and a decision made as to whether the Council should arrange accommodation for you. In some cases advice may be sought from one of the Council's Medical Advisors or another source. Following the assessment, you will receive a written notification of the decision on your case.

If the decision is that the Council has no duty to secure accommodation for you, advice will be given to help you find somewhere to live.

## **Deposit guarantee scheme**

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A deposit guarantee scheme is operated through a voluntary organisation called Epping Forest Housing Aid. This helps non-priority need applicants who are looking for private rented accommodation, but cannot afford the damage deposits required by private landlords. Please phone the Homelessness Prevention Team on 01992 564165 to find out how to apply,

and to check if the scheme is operating for new referrals. The scheme is subject to limited funding.

### **If you do not agree with our decision...**

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If you are unhappy about a decision that related to homelessness, you have the right to a review. Please ask for our leaflet 'Housing Appeals, Homelessness Reviews and Complaints' which gives the full details on how to seek a review.

Please note: some people from abroad are not eligible for any housing assistance, other than advice.

### **Who to contact:**

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#### **Epping Forest District Council**

##### **Housing Options Section**

Phone: 01992 564165

- General advice on homelessness
- Assessment for temporary accommodation
- Homelessness prevention
- Housing Register applications

##### **Housing Benefit Division (Finance Directorate)**

Phone 01992 564000 (and ask for Housing Benefits) or visit [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk) and go to the benefits section

- Housing benefit to help with rent payments for people on low incomes

##### **Private Sector Housing**

Phone 01992 564348 and ask to speak to a member of the Private Sector (Technical) Team,  
or email: [privatesectorhousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:privatesectorhousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

- Advice and assistance relating to illegal evictions and harassment by private landlords

Epping Forest District Council, Civic Offices,  
High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ  
Phone: 01992 564000

## **Department for Work and Pensions**

### **Jobcentre Plus**

Benefits for people who are; ill or disabled, looking for work, bringing up children, retired, or caring for others.

If you need to make a claim for benefit call 0800 055 6688

Textphone 0800 023 4888 (if you find it hard to speak or hear clearly)

You can claim online using the money, tax and benefits section of the Directgov website: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Jobcentre Plus offices:

Phone: 0845 6043719 (all offices)

Nearest offices:

284 High Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 1RH

Beaufort House, Crown Gate, Harlow, Essex CM20 1NA

235 High Street, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN8 7BA

### **Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)**

- Information, advice and assistance on housing, benefits and legal rights

St Mary's Parish Church, High Road, Loughton, Essex, IG10 1DD

Tel: 0844 257 1909

50a Hemnall Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4PY

Phone: 0844 257 1909

Waltham Abbey Town Hall (side entrance),

Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 1DE

Phone: 0844 257 1909

All CABs open Monday to Friday 10am -1pm (Epping 10am-2pm). Telephone for information on other opening times.

### **Domestic Violence Unit**

Violence Liaison Officer  
Harlow Police Station  
The High, Harlow CM20 1HG  
Phone: 01279 641212

### **Social Care**

Emergencies out of office hours phone: 0845 606 1212

During normal working hours contact:

Older People's Team:  
Croft House, Goldings Hill, Loughton  
Phone: 0845 603 7630

Children's Social Care:  
Library Building, St. Johns Road, Epping CM16 5EB  
Phone: 0845 603 7627

For immediate concern, or if you are at risk  
phone: 0845 606 1212

### **Supporting People Essex**

PO Box 11, County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1LX.  
Phone 01245 437 858 or visit [www.supportingpeople.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.supportingpeople.essexcc.gov.uk)

For homelessness emergencies out of office hours contact Social Care or your local Police. They will contact the Council's stand-by officer.

Contact information can sometimes change. Please check your phone directory for up to date details.

## How to contact us:

### Homelessness Team, Housing Options Section

Telephone: **01992 564165**

Email: **housingoptions@eppingforestdc.gov.uk**

Write to: **Epping Forest District Council**  
**Housing Directorate, Civic Offices, High Street,**  
**Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ**

Website: **www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing**

The information given in this leaflet was correct at July 2011. Please be aware that there may have been changes since that time, such as new laws or council policies.

Please tell us if you would like this information provided in any other way, as a large print version for example.

Telephone: 01992 564292

Epping Forest District Council

Housing Directorate, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ

Telephone: Epping (01992) 564000 [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)

July 2011



The Government Standard

