

USING THE HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE

When should I see a Housing Options adviser?

If you have been asked to leave - or think you may be asked to leave - where you currently live, and you have no other accommodation available to you.

What should I bring with me?

You will need to bring the following documents;

- ✓ Proof of identification for you and every other member of your household such as a passport or driving licence
- ✓ Birth certificates for you and every other member of your household
- ✓ Home Office documents (if you are a person from abroad)
- ✓ A Notice To Quit from your landlord or similar notice from friend or family member
- ✓ Proof of Income Support, JSA or similar (if you are receiving benefits)

What will the Housing Options advisor ask me?

Your adviser will take photocopies of all the documents you have supplied. You may be asked to obtain and bring back any missing documents (if you can reasonably do so) before they are able to conduct a full interview.

Your adviser will ask you a number of questions about your situation, including questions about you (and your household) and about your current accommodation.

They will need to establish the following details;

- The type of tenancy or living arrangement you currently have
- The reason why you have been asked to leave, or the reason you cannot return to your home
- The legal rights you have to remain at the property, if any

For further information and advice contact:

Housing Options Service

Herbert Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EQ

To contact us: tel 01452 396504, fax:01452 396560

Email: Rehousing@gloucester.gov.uk or visit our website at: www.gloucester.gov.uk

If they consider that you have lost - or may lose - your current accommodation they will also need to know the following information;

- The members of your household and dates of birth
- Current immigration status (for persons from abroad)
- Any physical or mental health problems you (or your family) have
- Any other health issues you (or your family) have
- Whether you are in or have left an institution or form of care

What is the purpose of a Housing Options adviser?

Housing Options advisers are fully trained officers who have a very detailed knowledge about housing and the law. They are there to provide you with information and advice on housing matters and to prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible.

Because of this, they will always try to find a solution for you that avoids you having to make a homeless application.

What happens next?

Using the information you have provided, your adviser will explain the best options available to you and the reasons why.

In some cases it may be necessary to refer you to a specialist caseworker, or another agency designed to support your particular circumstances.

The options we can offer you do depend - to some extent - on whether we consider you are in 'priority need'. Priority need is a legal term that means you may need additional help because you have children, are elderly, have left an institution or form of care, have physical or mental health problems, or any other reason that means you might be vulnerable.

We also have to consider whether you are eligible for housing (for persons from abroad), whether you have become homeless intentionally, and whether you have a local connection to Gloucester

Will the Council rehouse me?

Due to the acute shortage of housing stock available, it is not possible to offer you rehousing directly into a Council or Housing Association property.

In the immediate term (if your accommodation is no longer available), your adviser will ask you if there are any family or friends you can stay with whilst we are resolving your housing need.

This does not make any difference to the way we will help you, and it does not mean it will take any longer.

If you do have someone to stay with, this is normally much less disruptive for you and other household members - especially children.

If you are not able to make arrangements, then your adviser will give you a list of local hostels, agencies or refuges as emergency accommodation.

If the Council has a statutory duty to provide accommodation to you, this will be arranged by the Homelessness Team. At this point, it would be necessary to make a homeless application.

What type of housing will I be able to get?

The most usual way of resolving your housing need is through the private rented sector. Your adviser will provide you with information about the following;

- ✓ Landlords
- ✓ Available property to rent
- ✓ Housing and other welfare benefits
- ✓ Rental deposits and rent in advance
- ✓ Agencies who can help with financial assistance

If your adviser considers you are in a 'priority need' group, you could get help with paying the deposit and rent in advance if you are unable to find it yourself.

If the Council have already provided you with emergency accommodation, and accepted a homelessness duty, they will find a rental property for you through their Private Sector Leasing Scheme.

Applicants with specific needs, or those needing additional support may not be suitable for a private rented tenancy.

Can I apply to the Housing Register?

Anyone can apply to join the Council's Housing Register. Your priority for rehousing will depend on your current housing need, and on other medical and personal factors.

Do homeless applicants get priority on the Housing Register?

The law says that we must give reasonable preference to people who we have accepted through the homelessness route. However it also allows us to give similar - or greater - preference to people with medical problems, people needing adapted or ground floor housing, and people living in overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing conditions.

Therefore it does not necessarily mean that applying as homeless will enable you to be rehoused more quickly – those in greatest housing need, whatever their situation, will have the most priority.

Can I make a homeless application?

Everyone has the right to make a homeless application.

The purpose of the Housing Options interview beforehand is to establish the facts of your housing situation, and provide advice about the best housing options available to you.

Your Housing Options adviser will always look for ways to prevent homelessness occurring.

Because of this, they will only suggest that you make a homeless application if there is no other way of resolving your housing problem.

What should I consider before I make a homeless application?

The Council has a duty to provide housing advice and assistance to everyone.

However they only have the responsibility to accept a homelessness duty to certain groups of people, and in certain circumstances.

Your adviser will be able to tell you the likelihood of whether the Council would accept a homelessness duty to you, before you make one.

As stated earlier, being accepted as homeless does not necessarily mean that you will be rehoused from the Housing Register more quickly than other people in housing need.

How quickly can I be rehoused from the Housing Register?

The Housing Options Newsletter explains how long you may have to wait for an offer of affordable social housing. It is updated quarterly, and available at the council offices located at the docks or via the internet at www.gloucester.gov.uk

For more information about applying to the Housing Register, or about priority for housing, please contact the Housing Options Team on the following number: 01452 396504

Housing Information sheet 1