

What the changes in homelessness law mean for you

On 3 April 2018 the law in England changed. The **Homelessness Reduction Act** means local councils now have to give more help to people who are homeless or might lose their homes. 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 and find accommodation.

Key change

You can get advice and information that is more specific to your situation

You can get help earlier if you are going to be homeless

Local councils have new duties to help stop you losing your home, or help you find somewhere to stay if you are homeless

Introduction of personalised plans

What you can now expect

Local councils have to give everyone advice and information about homelessness, **free of charge**. This includes information about your rights, what help you can expect to receive and practical help for you to stay in your home or find somewhere else to live. The council should give you specific advice and information if you are: experiencing domestic abuse or mental health issues, leaving hospital or leaving care, if you have recently left prison or youth detention, or if you have been in the armed forces.

Help starts sooner if you are **threatened with homelessness**. If you are likely to lose your home within 56 days the council should work with you to stop this from happening. Before the new law this help only began at 28 days.

Every person asking a local council for help will have a conversation with a housing officer. The council will decide if you are **eligible for help** (this means if you are a British national or have a permanent right to reside in the UK). If you are eligible the council need to offer help. If you are at risk of losing your home this is called a **prevention duty**. If you are already homeless this is called a **relief duty**.

This is new. The council must help you regardless of whether you have a **priority need** (for example if you have disabilities or dependent children) or if they think you have made yourself **intentionally homeless**.

If you are homeless, the council might have to provide you with temporary housing. **Both the relief duty and prevention duty last up to 56 days**. In this time you and the council will 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.

A housing officer will talk to you about what has caused you to be homeless or threatened with homelessness. They will also ask about your housing needs and any other help that you or your family need.

You and the council should work together to list the reasonable steps you will both take to help you keep your home or find somewhere suitable to live. **These steps need to be right for you and your situation, so they should take your needs into account**. The results of this conversation will be written down to form your personalised plan. Both you and the council should regularly review the plan. It's important that you keep in touch with the council to discuss any changes. They should also keep you updated.

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.



Together
we will end
homelessness