

HRA checklist for third sector frontline staff (1 of 2)

From the 3rd April 2018, the law (Homelessness Reduction Act) has changed in England to improve the help and support that local councils need to provide. This checklist provides some of the key questions to ask when advocating for or supporting clients to get help from their local council

1. Initial approach and making an application

- 1.1 Access & Gatekeeping** – Was your client able to easily access the council's housing options service and make a homeless application (including if they have made one previously but there is a change in relevant facts)?
- 1.2 Interim/ emergency accommodation** – Was interim/ emergency accommodation secured if they were homeless and there was 'reason to believe' they had a priority need?
- 1.3 Advice and information** – Is there clear information, advice and guidance on homelessness and the process the council will follow? Is this accessible for all and targeted for specific high risk groups, regardless of eligibility?

2. Initial assessment and decision (s.184) on duties owed

- 2.1 Timing** – Was your client promptly notified if, and what, duties they were owed? If applicable, have the council contacted them to arrange the assessment/ personalised plan if not done so already?
- 2.2 Prevention or relief duty** – Based on the facts of the case, have the council accepted the right duty for your client?
- 2.3 Local connection** – Have the council accepted your client is owed the relief duty, before looking to refer them to another council on the grounds of local connection?

3. Assessment of circumstances / needs and developing the personalised plan

- 3.1 Quality of assessment** – Was the assessment interview conducted with empathy, dignity and respect? Was it holistic and did it consider all of your client's needs?
- 3.2 Level of personalisation** – Were the preferences and desired outcomes of your client taken into account when developing the plan and is it tailored to their needs and circumstances?
- 3.3 Quality of reasonable steps** – Are the steps in the plan reasonable and will they prevent or relieve your client's homelessness? Do they meet any support needs identified?
- 3.4 Agreement of steps** – Did your client agree to the steps in their plan? If not, why?

4. Completing the steps and monitoring the assessment/ plan

- 4.1 Inequitable assistance** – Is your client receiving less help because they might not be owed the main housing duty in the future? Or any other reason?
- 4.2 Regular contact and reviews** – Did the council establish timescales for reviewing the plan that meets the needs of your client? Are there clear methods to maintain regular contact to update on progress?

Further advice

It is recommended you contact the relevant local council in the first instance regarding your client. They will advise on relevant local policies and procedures including how to request a review of a decision. The [statutory code of guidance](#) advises councils on how to interpret and apply the law in practice. [NHAS](#) (National Homelessness Advice Service) offer free advice and support to voluntary professionals on 0300 330 0517



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5. Ending the prevention and relief duties

- 5.1 Suitability & affordability of accommodation offers** – If the council is looking to end their duty with accommodation secured by them or your client, is it suitable and affordable?
- 5.2 Out of area placements** - If the council places your applicant out of area, have they included how they will help with this in the plan and how it meets other suitability requirements?
- 5.3 Use of 'reasonable prospect'** - If the council are ending the prevention or relief duty because your client has 'suitable accommodation available for occupation and a reasonable prospect of suitable accommodation being available for at least six months', is the reasonable prospect valid and realistic?
- 5.4 Lack of contact or 'deliberately & unreasonably' failing to cooperate** – If the council is attempting to end its duties for these reasons, has it followed due process and has the high threshold to end the duties via these means been met?

6. Moving onto the main housing duty (if relief duty fails)

- 6.1 Extending the prevention/ relief duties** – If the 56 day period comes to an end (of prevention or relief duty) and your client would not be entitled to further help, is the council continuing to provide help and support on a voluntary basis?
- 6.2 Timing of main housing duty decision** – If the relief duty has come to an end and your client is still homeless, were they notified within a (maximum of) 15 working days of any further duties owed e.g. main housing duty?

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