

FAQ's - Help for Homeless households



If you are at risk of losing your home, the local authority has a legal obligation to make inquiries into your situation.

The [Homeless Reduction Act 2018](#) means councils across England now have new responsibilities to help homeless people.

These FAQ's will outline some of the main parts of the new Act. It will tell you what help you can expect from AVDC if you are homeless, will have to leave your home in the near future, or what to do if it is not reasonable for you to continue to live in your current home.

"I may have to leave my home soon"

If you have been asked to leave your home or are not able to remain in your current accommodation, you may be '**threatened with homelessness**'. If the Council think you may be homeless within 56 days they have a statutory duty to provide you with advice and assistance. Assistance includes:

- Working with the Council to identify and take reasonable steps to prevent your homelessness from happening. This this could mean that the Council will help you to remain in your current home or help you to find alternative suitable accommodation, such as a private rented tenancy.
- You will be expected to work with your caseworker and follow their advice and guidance to prevent you losing your home. Where your home is not at risk within the next 56 days you may be referred to a support worker to help you manage your current home, with your permission, if necessary.
- If you are having financial difficulties you may be required to see a budget advisor who will assess the affordability of your home and or future home, this will include looking at how you can maximise your income and help with managing debt as well as assessing how you currently spend and receive household income and how this could be managed better, for example arranging for housing costs to be paid direct to a landlord.
- Your caseworker will help you to explore all of your housing options and what is realistic for your circumstances.

If you think you need help, you should contact **Housing Pathways on 01296 585168** urgently for further advice. The earlier you contact our Housing Team, the better the chances of preventing the homelessness from occurring.

"I have already lost my home and have nowhere else to go"

If you have already lost your home and have nowhere else you can stay and are homeless you should contact our Housing Team so that we can work with you to help you to find a new home.

You will be expected to work closely with your caseworker and to agree 'reasonable steps' to try to relieve your homelessness. These could include:

- Helping you to find suitable accommodation with a private landlord
- Helping you to access suitable accommodation with support, if required
- Helping you to join the Council's housing register
- Help for you to move into a suitable room or home that you have found yourself
- Working with support workers
- Referring you to our debt advice team if you are having trouble with your finances

Your caseworker will agree your personal housing plan with you and you are expected to take all reasonable steps in the plan. This help could last for up to 56 days from when you become homeless.

"What happens if I'm still homeless after 56 days?"

AVDC expects to find solutions for the majority of homeless households before they become homeless, or within 56 days from they point they have become homeless. It may be that the accommodation available is not the preferred option however it may be deemed suitable by the Council.

If you have refused an offer of suitable housing, or you have not followed the list of actions in your personal housing plan, then you may not be entitled to further help.

If you have done everything that you have been asked to do by your caseworker and have still not been able to find suitable housing, then AVDC will make enquiries to decide if you are in one of the ['Priority Need'](#) groups, and if there is no other good reason for your homelessness other than something you have done (or should have done) which has resulted in you becoming homeless.

If your caseworker is satisfied that you are in one of the ['Priority Need'](#) groups and are not homeless [intentionally](#), then you will continue to be assisted in looking for a new home.

"Where can I stay if I have nowhere to live?"

If you have nowhere safe to stay, AVDC will do all they can to try and find you somewhere to stay on a temporary basis whilst you are working with the council to find a longer term solution to your housing problems.

This may be finding a space in a hostel, supported housing, with friends or family, or temporarily returning to your previous home.

If you are eligible, homeless and in one of the ['Priority Need'](#) groups and the Council cannot find a solution for you in the short or medium term, then they may provide other forms for temporary housing such as a B&B or temporary flat with support. Where possible this will be in the local area but this is not guaranteed.

Where AVDC does not have a duty to provide accommodation, or decides that it no longer has to continue to provide interim accommodation to you to you we will let you know. These reasons could include

- Breaching the terms of your occupation agreement
- You have refused an offer of suitable accommodation (including private rented properties)
- You have made yourself homeless [intentionally](#)
- You have not done everything that is considered to be reasonable within your personal housing plan
- You have suitable housing available to you somewhere else.

"Who can I talk to if I think AVDC haven't done all that they should be doing?"

It is important to remember that when you ask AVDC for help, your caseworker will offer help and advice, and to help you to agree reasonable steps to resolve your homelessness.

Where you do not disclose all of the facts about your circumstances, the type of assistance agreed with you may be affected. You should always be open and honest with your caseworker, they are here to help and work with you. Where you may have had a change in circumstances it is your responsibility to notify us as soon as they happen as they may have an impact on the help and advice we can offer.

If you think your caseworker isn't doing what they should be doing, you should firstly contact your caseworker to ask them to explain the reasons for this. If you think you have a cause for complaint that cannot be resolved with your caseworker directly, then you can speak to someone in Housing Options about the complaints procedure, however, this is only if you have a complaint about the way you have been treated by members of staff.

Any legal decisions made about your case will be delivered by us in writing to you. If you think the decisions that have been made about your homelessness are wrong, then you have the right to request a review of this decision, the details of which will be included with the letter.

Any review of a decision must be made within 21 days of the decision being made. The decision will then be looked at again by a senior officer that has not been involved in your case.. Please ensure that your request is, where possible, made in writing and offer as much information explaining why you think AVDC have not done all they could or have made the wrong decision about your housing. You should keep a copy of what you have given to AVDC for future reference then.

You may not be confident in asking the Council to do this yourself, or if you have a particularly complicated set of circumstances, you may want professional independent advice from someone else such as Shelter, Citizens' Advice Bureau or a solicitor.

If you think the decision is still wrong then you can ask a judge in court to decide if this decision is correct. A professional independent adviser will tell you the process for this, and whether they think there is a chance of success.



Housing

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