

Housing Services – A guide to temporary accommodation



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Introduction

Wherever possible we seek to prevent homelessness. If you have no alternative accommodation and we believe that you are homeless and in priority need, we may offer temporary accommodation while we are assessing your homelessness application or when you have been accepted as homeless and are waiting for a permanent home.

Accommodation during enquiries (section188)

If the Homelessness Officer (HO) dealing with your homeless application has enough reason to believe that you may be homeless and in priority need, they should ensure that you have accommodation to occupy until they have completed their enquiries into your application.

This may involve negotiating with;

- your landlord to allow you to remain beyond your notice date;
 - your parents / relatives / friends to allow you to remain whilst enquiries are completed;
- or
- asking you whether you have anyone you can stay with on a short term basis;
- or
- the Homelessness Officer may need to obtain emergency accommodation for you.

If you then receive a decision which advises you that the council has no duty to provide accommodation for you, any temporary accommodation you have been provided with by this council may cease immediately.

Types of temporary accommodation

The Council may use different types of accommodation dependent on the size of your household, any special needs you may have and the availability of accommodation at the time you require it.

Not all the Council's temporary accommodation is furnished; therefore you may need to think about acquiring furniture at an early stage.

Bed & Breakfast

In an emergency, the accommodation is likely to be a Bed & Breakfast (B&B) where you share facilities with other residents and although not ideal it may be the only option available. The Council will aim to move families with young children out of B&B within six weeks.

As the B&B's are already furnished, you can only take your personal belongings such as clothes, toiletries and small items.

Private Sector Leased Properties

The Council has entered into an arrangement with Amicus Horizon Group Ltd. (Avenue Lettings) to lease properties from private landlords on behalf of the Council. We can then nominate homeless households to these properties for them to occupy as their temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation is available. Avenue's would be your landlord for that period of time and you would be granted a non-secure tenancy. While living in one of these properties you are expected to pay your rent, council tax, and utility costs i.e. heating, lighting, water and TV licence.

Council Properties

All Council properties are usually unfurnished and rented out by way of a non-secure tenancy agreement as temporary accommodation. While living in one of these properties you are expected to pay your rent, council tax, and utility costs i.e. heating, lighting and water.

The Council has 21 units which consist of 1 bedroom self contained flats that are already furnished, you should only take your personal belongings such as clothes, toiletries and small items.

Any offer of temporary accommodation is subject to availability at the time you are homeless.

Suitability of the Accommodation

Will the accommodation be suitable to my needs?

Although we may not be able to meet your every wish/requirement, we will talk to you about any special needs you have, where you work, where your children attend school and your ability to cope away from friends and family. Then we will match you up with the temporary accommodation we have available that best suits your needs. However, it is likely that compromises will need to be made as temporary accommodation is subject to availability at the time you are homeless.

Can I appeal against the temporary accommodation offered to me?

You can always talk to your Homelessness Officer if you have any concerns, but you need to be realistic about the availability of accommodation. There is no appeal against the suitability of the accommodation offered to you whilst the Council is investigating your application. However, as soon as you have received a decision on your application, you can appeal against the suitability of the temporary accommodation offered to you if you feel it is not suitable. You can appeal against the suitability of the accommodation whether you accept the offer or not. However, please be aware that the accommodation will not be held pending the appeal. If you do not accept the offer and then your appeal is refused, it is likely that the Council will not be able to offer you temporary accommodation again.

How long can I stay?

Initially you can stay while we make our enquiries - provided you pay your rent and comply with the agreement that you are required to sign. Staying on in the accommodation depends on the decision reached on your homelessness application.

If you are in a B&B and the council accepts responsibility for housing you we will offer you more appropriate self-contained temporary accommodation as you may have a long wait for permanent rehousing. If you refuse this accommodation then we will discharge our duty to you and ask you to leave.

If you are not owed the main duty, either because you are not eligible, not in a priority need category or because you became homeless intentionally, you will be required to leave.

We will give you reasonable notice and advice and assistance to secure other accommodation of your own.

If your application is accepted, you can continue to stay in temporary accommodation until a permanent home is secured for you, whether with the council, housing association or in the private sector.

Do I have to pay for temporary accommodation?

Yes. None of the temporary accommodation provided is free. You will be expected to pay a weekly charge. If you

are on a low income you will need to claim Housing Benefit. Even if Housing Benefit covers most of the charge you may still be liable for some charges. If you do not make sure the weekly charge is paid in full you can be evicted from your temporary housing. This may result in the Council finding you intentionally homeless. If this happens the Council will not have any obligation to house you and you will have to find your own place to live.

Moving on from temporary accommodation

You will need to vacate the temporary accommodation provided if:

- Our homelessness enquiries show that the council has no duty to continue accommodating you.
- You accept a property through the deposit guarantee scheme (Homebond).
- Find your own alternative accommodation.
- You accept an offer of permanent accommodation from the Council's HomeChoice scheme.
- You lose the accommodation because we have evidence that you are in breach of your tenancy agreement.
- If you refuse an offer of permanent accommodation which is suitable for your needs.

Home visits

All our properties are allocated a temporary accommodation officer who will be responsible for the management of your tenancy whilst you are in occupation.

Your officer should visit you within the first five working days of your tenancy (this time may be longer due to unexpected pressures of work or the officer being on leave).

The purpose of this visit is to:

- Introduce themselves to you;
- Address any queries you may have;
- Identify any repairs the property may need;
- Explain the homelessness process;
- Offer help with housing benefit or other welfare benefits;
- Explain how and where to pay your housing charges.

What about my belongings?

If you are homeless you will need to make arrangements to store your furniture and personal belongings. You can arrange storage with a private storage company at your own expense or perhaps friends or relatives will be able to help you.

If you cannot make your own arrangements the Council can assist you. The Council will arrange a storage company to put your belongings into storage. They will contact you direct to arrange collection. You may have to pay a contribution towards the cost of the removal and the weekly storage charge.

You will have to pay a charge when the stored items are delivered to your new address. You will be told how much this charge will be and you should be happy you can afford it before agreeing to have your belongings stored. You will pay this charge direct to the storage company.

If you leave the temporary accommodation you must make arrangements for collection of your belongings. Otherwise we can dispose of your belongings after we give you 28 days notice that we intend to do so.

Personal possessions, clothes, baby equipment and – where necessary – bedding, can be taken to hostels, Bed & Breakfast and refuges. Such establishments do not have space for furniture and other large items.

If you are placed in one of our larger self-contained properties you can take most, if not all, of your personal possessions with you.

Pets

It is not possible to take pets into temporary accommodation (except guide dogs). If possible, you should arrange for your pets to be temporarily looked after by friends or family. If this is not possible please speak to the Homelessness Officer who will look at an alternative.

Compliments and complaints

We welcome feedback on the service we provide and will ask you to complete a survey during your stay in temporary accommodation.

If you are not satisfied with our service, please contact the temporary accommodations officer.

If you are not satisfied with the response you can make a complaint in person at one of the council's offices, over the telephone, in writing by letter, fax or email or through this website at the address below.

For further information:

Email: customer.first@medway.gov.uk
Phone: 01634 333333
Write to: Customer Services
Gun Wharf, Dock Road
Chatham
Kent, ME4 4TR
Minicom: 01634 333111

Who to contact



Housing Solutions 01634 333600



Housing Solutions, Chatham Contact Point, Riverside One, Dock Road,
Chatham, Kent, ME4 4SL



Email: housing@medway.gov.uk

Website: www.medway.gov.uk/privatesectorhousing



Minicom: 01634 333111

This information can be made available in other formats
from **01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language
please ring **01634 335577**

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