

Homelessness

Being homeless or at risk of homelessness is a worrying and stressful time. We are here to listen to you and do our best to help you. This leaflet should help you understand the process of working with us. If you have any questions, just ask us, we're happy to help.

I'm homeless or about to lose my home - What can the Housing Solutions Team help me?

- If you are at risk of homelessness, you have the right to be assisted at an early stage.
- In order to assist you, we need to ensure that you are 'eligible'. If you live in the UK, are a British citizen and have not recently spent time living in other countries you will almost certainly be eligible. Please ask a member of staff for more information about the eligibility test.

The assessment

The assessment is the first step for everyone we help. We need to understand your situation to be able to help you.

- To begin with, we will listen to you and find out all the information we need to know about your situation.
- We will complete an assessment of your situation and we will work with you to identify what steps need to be taken to solve your housing problem.
- We may ask you to provide items of paperwork. To be able to help you, we need you to be open and honest with us and help us by giving information we ask for. We will also be open and honest with you. We will also keep you informed about how your case is going.
- If you have any particular needs you think we should be aware of (for example debt, learning difficulties, mental health problems or anything that you think is important) please don't be afraid to mention it to a member of staff.

What steps can the Housing Solutions Team take to help prevent me becoming homeless?

This depends on your situation. If you are at risk of homelessness, it might be that we help you to stay in your home. However you won't be forced to stay if it isn't the right option. We may also help you by looking for other accommodation.

- We will try to **prevent** you becoming homeless by helping you to remain in your own home where possible. If this is not possible we will help you find somewhere else to live that suits your needs.
- We will work with you to draw up a Housing and Support Plan which will include all the steps that need to be taken to solve your housing problem. Then we will help you put the Plan into action.
- We may not be able to identify all the steps for the Housing and Support Plan straight away. If we cannot draw up the Housing and Support Plan immediately, we promise to get back to you as soon as we can.
- The exact steps in the Housing and Support Plan will depend on your situation. Your Plan may include actions such as talking to your landlord to try to sort out any problems; mediation to resolve family arguments; help with start-up costs for a new tenancy; or referral to support services.
- If you need somewhere else to live, we may look at whether there is private rented accommodation that is suitable and affordable for you.
- We will ensure that your accommodation is likely to be available for you for at least six months.
- If we accept that you are at risk of being homeless, we have to inform you in writing that we will help you.

What steps can the Housing Solutions Team do if I am homeless right now?

If we agree that you are homeless we will work with you to find you somewhere suitable to live that you can afford. We have 56 days to do this.

- We will help you find somewhere else to live that suits your needs. To do this, we will work with you to put together a Housing and Support Plan. As part of the Plan, we may include looking at suitable and affordable private rented accommodation. We will ensure that the accommodation is likely to be available to you for at least six months.
- If you need somewhere to stay immediately, we will need to consider whether you qualify for temporary accommodation. We will provide temporary accommodation to you if we think you might be in a 'priority need group'.
- 'Priority need groups' are certain groups of people who according to the law have a particular need for assistance. Please ask a member of staff if you would like to know what the groups are.
- We might refer you to another council to help you if you have a local connection to that area and none in the Bridgend area. For us to do this, you

need to fit the referral criteria. Please ask a member of staff if you have any questions about this.

- If we accept that you are homeless, we have to send you a letter saying that we will help you. We also need to send you a letter if we offer you temporary accommodation.

What if the Housing and Support Plan doesn't solve my housing problem?

If we haven't been able to help you find a home after 56 days, we might be able to offer you a home. Our ability to do this depends on your situation.

- After you become homeless, the law states that we have up to 56 days to work with you to solve your housing problem. If we are not successful in doing this, we will consider what else we can do to find you accommodation.
- You may have a right to accommodation if you fall into a 'priority need group'. This may be in social housing or it may be in the private rented sector. We will ensure that you can remain in the accommodation for at least six months.
People in priority need groups do not automatically get social housing. Please be aware that social housing is in very high demand.
- If we agree to offer you accommodation, we have to send you a letter confirming this.

What if I want a second opinion?

- If you do not agree with what we have done, you have the right to ask for a review of the steps we have taken. Before you do this you may wish to speak to Shelter Cymru or Citizens Advice, who will give you free, independent advice on the best course of action.
 - Shelter Cymru - 0345 075 5005
 - Citizens Advice Bureau - 03444 77 20 20
- If you reject an offer of accommodation we have made, this will in most cases end our duty to help you. **Please take independent legal advice before rejecting any offers of accommodation.**
- We might also end our duty to help you if we feel you haven't been cooperating with us, for example if you make no effort to complete a task you agreed to do.

We are happy to consider your input into the service and we may contact you for feedback at some point. We would hope that you will spare the time to assist us in improving our service.