

# Are you homeless?

A guide to what you should do if you are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.



本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。  
ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Na życzenie klienta, informacje te mogą być udostępnione w innych językach oraz formatach.



**NORTH AYRSHIRE**  
COUNCIL

We have certain legal duties towards people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This information explains our duties and how we can help to re-house people and prevent them from becoming homeless.

### **You are homeless if:**

- you have no accommodation that you can legally live in;
- you are forced to live separately from your family who you normally live with, because you have no accommodation that you can live in together;
- you have accommodation but can't live in it, for example, you have been illegally evicted or someone is using force to prevent you from living in it; or
- you may be at risk of violence from someone living in your home if you try to live in it.

### **Threatened with homelessness**

By law, you are 'threatened with homelessness' if you are likely to become homeless within the next two months. You should get help immediately if this applies to you.

### **Yes, I am homeless. What should I do?**

If you are homeless, or are likely to become homeless within the next two months, you should first visit our Homeless Assessment, Prevention & Advice Team based on the **third floor** of **Rivergate House**, Town Centre, Irvine.

The office's opening times are as follows:

Monday	9.00am to 4.45pm
Tuesday	9.00am to 4.45pm
Wednesday	9.00am to 6.00pm
Thursday	9.00am to 4.45pm (see note below*)
Friday	9.00am to 4.30pm

**\*note: on the second Thursday of every month the office will be closed from 1.30pm to 4.45pm for staff training purposes.**

You can drop in to speak to us during office hours but if you prefer, we can book an appointment for you. You can phone us on **01294 314700**.

When you come in we will offer you an interview, in private, with one of our trained officers. Within the office there are homelessness assessment officers and housing advice officers who will take details of your situation and decide what we have to do for you by law.

We keep all of your details confidential and we will only use your information to assess your application under the conditions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This is the law which deals with homelessness.

It is very important to give us the correct information or you could be breaking the law.

If you cannot make it to the office (for example, because you have a disability or difficulty getting to the office), then we can make other arrangements to see you.

### **What if I become homeless out with office hours?**

We run a standby service out with office hours. You can use this if you need temporary accommodation, or advice and support. You should phone **0800 0196 500** (this number is free from landlines).

### **What sort of questions will you ask me?**

During your interview, we will fill in a homeless application form for you and ask you to check it before you sign it. We will ask you lots of questions including your last address, how you came to be homeless and whether you have any medical conditions. We may also ask you to give us financial information if, for example, you have lost accommodation because you missed mortgage or rent payments. It is in your best interests to give us as much information as possible at your first interview.

## **What should I bring with me to my interview?**

It would be helpful if you could bring to your interview any letters or documents to do with why you are at risk of being made homeless, or your health or money problems. They will help us make a decision about your application much more quickly.

## **Can I bring a friend to the interview?**

Yes, you can bring a relative, friend or someone else who can help you in the interview. You may also ask to be interviewed by an officer of the same sex if you would feel more comfortable with them.

## **How will you decide how to help me**

We have a legal responsibility to assess your homelessness. This means that we need to decide:

- whether or not you are homeless;
- if you are vulnerable and therefore in need more urgently than others; (you are in priority need).
- if you chose to do something or failed to do something which resulted in you becoming homeless (made yourself intentionally homeless);or
- if you have a local connection to North Ayrshire.

How we help you will depend on the outcome of the above.

We will let you know what is happening with your homeless application every week, but you can speak to a member of the assessment team whenever you choose.

We may ask you to give us more information to help us in assessing your application. If you are having difficulty getting this information you should speak with your support worker immediately

We will send you a decision letter which explains how we have decided to help you. Either the homeless assessment officer or your support worker will go through this letter with you.

## **What help can I expect to receive?**

What support we will offer you will depend on the decision we make. If you are homeless and need temporary accommodation we will give you somewhere to stay until:

- we have made a decision on your case;
- you have found your own accommodation; or
- you have been offered permanent accommodation by us, from one of the local registered social landlords or through the Rent Deposit Scheme.

We have different types of accommodation to meet your needs including supported hostels and furnished flats situated across North Ayrshire. If you think that the temporary accommodation we have given you is not right for your needs, speak to either the homeless assessment officer or your support officer.

## **Support**

During your first week in temporary accommodation, we will introduce you to a support worker who will help and advise you while you are homeless. Your support worker will also help you move into any new accommodation that we offer you.

## **Reviewing your decision**

If you do not agree with the decision we make, you have the right to ask for a review. You can ask for a review by letter, in person or over the phone. We will include details on how to ask for a review in your decision letter.

## **Permanent offers of housing**

If we agree to find you permanent housing, we will only offer you one permanent home. If you refuse this offer, we will have met our legal responsibility and may ask you to leave your temporary accommodation.

However, you can appeal against the offer, if you have a very good reason not to accept the offer.

If you want to appeal against an offer of housing you should write to the local housing area manager who is responsible for the home that you are refusing, explaining your reasons fully. They will review the offer of housing and send you a letter with their decision.

### **Advice & assistance**

It is important you try to get help as early as possible. This makes sure that you and we have as much time as possible to find solutions before you actually become homeless.

Wherever possible we will do everything we can to prevent you becoming homeless.

We use a range of 'prevention' measures including:

- negotiating with your landlord to prevent evictions;
- using the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to help you with a deposit so you can rent from a private landlord (if you meet the requirements of the scheme);
- working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and any other agencies to help process applications for Housing Benefit and other benefits more quickly;
- telling you about other landlords in the area who may be able to help you with permanent housing, and how to apply to join the waiting lists;
- moving you nearer the top of waiting lists for housing;
- referring you to other housing providers and support agencies;
- working together with partner agencies in cases of harassment and illegal eviction; and
- referring you to support organisations such as Debt Advice, Welfare Rights Assistance or Tenancy Support.

In some cases you may be at risk of becoming homeless. We call this being 'threatened with homelessness'. Wherever possible, we will work with you to help you avoid losing your accommodation. If you give us your permission, we can contact people like your landlord or your mortgage provider, and try to negotiate with them to try to prevent you from becoming homeless.

You may be at risk of losing your home because you find it difficult to pay the rent or mortgage. We can help you to claim any benefits you are entitled to, make sure you have enough money to live on and can pay your rent. If you have a mortgage and are finding it difficult to make the monthly payments, we can put you in touch with agencies that can help you deal with this. We can also help you get debt counselling or put you in touch with a specialist agency to make sure you have all the benefits that you are entitled to.

### **Independent advice & information**

If you want help or information from an organisation not connected with us, you can get it free of charge at the Community Housing Advocacy Project based at Marlin House, Heatherhouse Industrial Estate, Irvine. Their phone number is 01294 313137.

### **Final points to remember**

- If you are at risk of losing your home, you must get help immediately.  
Acting quickly can prevent you from becoming homeless.
- If you are a tenant, your landlord will normally have to apply to the Sheriff Court for a repossession order before they can legally evict you.
- You must get advice before you decide to leave or sell accommodation that you have the right to live in.

## Useful contact numbers

- **Homeless Assessment, Prevention & Advice Team** ....01294 314700
- **Out of Hours Stand By** .....0800 019 6500
- **Barnardos North Ayrshire Families Service (BNAFS)**...01294 550400
- **Citizens Advice Bureau**
  - Irvine .....01294 278051
  - Kilbirnie .....01505 682830
  - Largs & Cumbrae .....01475 673586
  - Saltcoats .....01294 467848
  - Arran.....01770 600210
- **Community Housing Advocacy Project (CHAP)** .....01294 313137
- **Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)**
  - North Team.....01294 470010
  - South Team .....01294 323216
- **Debt Advice** .....01294 317786
- **North Ayrshire Women’s Aid** .....01294 602424
- **Other major local housing providers**
  - Irvine Housing Association .....01294 271128
  - ANCHO .....01294 313121
  - Cunninghame Housing Association (CHA).01294 468360
  - Isle of Arran Homes .....01770 303700
- **SHELTER** .....0808 800 4444

