



Homelessness



A summary of the Council's
statutory duties towards
people who are homeless or
likely to become homeless



Homelessness

This leaflet provides general information for anyone who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The law is very complex and you should contact a Senior Homeless Assessment Officer at Westmorland and Furness Council if there is a chance you could lose your home. The sooner you seek advice the more chance there is of preventing your homelessness.

Accommodation

Everyone who is in housing need is encouraged to complete a housing application form with Cumbria Choice. This is available at the Housing Department or you can request a form by telephone. The Council has an Allocation Policy to decide who is offered a tenancy and an explanatory booklet '*Housing Matters for Prospective Tenants*' will be provided with the application form.

Due to the high demand for Council accommodation, most families accepted as homeless are likely to be provided with temporary accommodation until a permanent home is available, this could include private assured shorthold tenancies as well as local authority accommodation.

During your stay in temporary accommodation you will be provided with support where necessary to assist you on housing-related matters to secure accommodation.

Homelessness duties

If you are eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness, your local council should give you help to secure accommodation or to prevent your homelessness

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, the Council will:

- Make an initial assessment following your approach to the service and arrange to interview you to gather further information
- Carry out a needs assessment and develop a Personalized Housing Plan with you
- Provide a written decision on your application as to which duty is owed to you by the Council
- Work with you to prevent or relieve your homelessness

Prevention Duty

If you are threatened with homelessness within 56 days the Council will have a duty to try and prevent this to enable you to stay in your home **or** to help you find alternative accommodation. If you are likely to lose your home in the next 56 days you should contact the Council's Homelessness & Advice Service on 01229 876599.

The help the Council will provide is likely to include:

- Giving you your local housing options
- Giving advice and helping you with your difficulties in finding somewhere else to live
- Assisting you to find accommodation through Cumbria Choice Based Lettings and in the private rented sector
- Considering you for financial assistance to help you to secure private rented accommodation
- Referring you for supported housing
- Develop a Personalized Housing Plan with you

This prevention duty will come to an end if you:

- are able to remain in the accommodation you are in
- accept alternative accommodation which is suitable and likely to last for at least 6 months
- reject alternative accommodation which was suitable and was likely to last for at least 6 months
- refuse to engage with the help which is being offered
- lose contact with the Council
- cease to be eligible for assistance
- become homeless
- withdraw your application

Relief Duty

If homelessness cannot be prevented the Council will have a duty to relieve your homelessness, this duty lasts for 56 days. During this period the Council will help to secure you alternative accommodation. However, only people who the Council have reason to believe have a priority need will be offered temporary accommodation.

The help the Council will provide is likely to include

- Giving you your local housing options
- Giving advice and helping you with your difficulties in finding somewhere else to live
- Assisting you to find accommodation through Cumbria Choice Based Lettings and in the private rented sector
- Considering you for financial assistance to help you to secure private rented accommodation
- Referring you for supported housing
- Develop a Personalized Housing Plan with you

This relief duty will come to an end if you:

- accept alternative accommodation which is suitable and likely to last for at least 6 months
- reject alternative accommodation which was suitable and was likely to last for at least 6 months
- refuse to engage with the help which is being offered
- lose contact with the Council
- cease to be eligible for assistance
- withdraw your application
- 56 day period comes to an end

If you are still homeless after this period the Council will make a decision on what further duties you are owed. The extent of these duties depend on whether you have a priority need or whether your homelessness was your fault. The Council's duties to help you may be reduced if you rejected suitable accommodation or refused to engage with us whilst we had the 56 day duty to relieve your homelessness.

Review of the decision

If you disagree with the decision made by the Council you can request a review of this decision. Details are provided with the decision letter.

How to get advice and information

Westmorland and Furness Council will provide advice and information to assist homeless people free of charge and attempt to prevent homelessness whenever possible. If you want to arrange an interview or require further information, call in to the Housing Department or contact one of our Senior Homeless Assessment Officers on (01229) 876599.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have children you should bring copies of their birth certificates with you to the interview, and if you are expecting a baby a letter from a doctor or EDD Certificate will be needed.

Any legal documents asking you to leave your accommodation (e.g. a Possession Order or formal Notice from your landlord) should also be brought to the interview.

Important Notice

This leaflet gives a brief outline of the law relating to homelessness and is not a complete explanation of the legislation. If you require additional information, you should contact one of our Senior Homeless Assessment Officers on (01229) 876599.

Independent advice

Independent advice is available from the Citizens' Advice Bureau (Ramsden Hall, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness tel. (01229) 830367 or a local solicitor (numbers can be found in the telephone directory or ask at reception for details).



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Housing Service

Town Hall
Duke Street
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria LA14 2LD

Senior Homeless Assessment Officers: (01229) 876599

www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk • email: dutytorefer@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

OFFICE OPENING TIMES: Monday to Friday: 9am - 4pm

Telephone enquiries : Monday to Thursday: 8:30am to 5pm* (*4:30pm Friday)

FOR EMERGENCY OUT-OF-OFFICE ENQUIRIES TEL: (01229) 833311

If you require this leaflet in large print/audio or another language please contact the Housing Service and we will arrange for this to be carried out tel. (01229) 876578