

Are you 16 or 17 and homeless?

Do you have nowhere to live?

Or have you been told to leave home?

Know your rights



Am I homeless?

You don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be homeless. If you are staying somewhere you have no legal right to stay, like sofa surfing at a friend's house or somewhere that is not safe for you, then you are homeless.



Who can help?

Children's Social Care must help most homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. In an emergency they can help find somewhere safe for you to stay the night.

Housing Welfare and Advice also help people who are homeless. It is part of the council too. Housing and welfare services at the Council work to help people avoid homelessness. If you are 18 years old then contact them as soon as you can to see what help they can provide.

If you are a care leaver under the age of 25yrs please contact your Personal Advisor at the Leaving Care Service 01344 354 304.



What help can I get from Children's Social Care?

If you contact us we will:

- Arrange an emergency appointment for that day if you are going to be homeless that day, or within twenty-four hours.
- Do an assessment to see if you are "CIN" a "child in need" (this legal term covers young people too). If it's agreed you are, we can help you to find a place to live, get into training and education and tackle personal issues, like drug or alcohol problems.
- In non emergency situations, arrange a convenient date for an interview at the office as soon as possible.
- Provide confidential and impartial advice on the phone.
- Respond to your immediate needs.
- Direct you to other services that can give you more assistance when appropriate.



Will I be told to go back home?

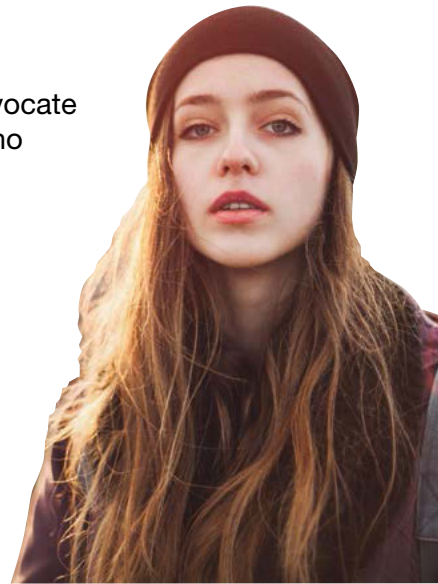
Young people often need help with homelessness because of the breakdown of relationships with parents. It isn't easy living on your own at 16 and 17 so we will want to speak to your parents to find out if there is a problem, whether they want you to leave home or to find out if you can go back home. It could be that with help you are able to sort out the problems and they might let you return home. Children's Social Care have people who can talk to you and your parent(s) to see if you can sort things out, but you cannot be forced to go back home, especially if it isn't safe for you because of violence or abuse. That is why it's very important for you to tell the worker about these things. Even if you and your parent(s) agree to talk, you should still be given a place to stay while this is being sorted out.

Does the Council have to listen to what I think I need?

If you are 16 or over your wishes cannot be overruled by your parent(s) and Children's Social Care cannot force you to go back home. We have to take your wishes into account when assessing your accommodation needs; however, this does not necessarily mean that you will be given exactly what you want. It is important to be realistic. The type of accommodation you get depends on what is available that meets your needs. We will also take into consideration your gender and your ethnic and religious background when deciding how to help you.

Need help to have your say?

You are entitled to ask for an Independent Advocate to help you have your say. This is someone who doesn't work for Children's Social Care who's job is to make sure you're views are listened to and taken into account, help you to understand information and support you at meetings if that's what you want. They can also support you to make a complaint



What are my housing options?

- If you are aged 16 or 17 and you become homeless, you will normally be entitled to accommodation from social services. The local authority has a duty to provide accommodation to a young person who meets the criteria for being homeless.
- If you are provided with accommodation you will become “looked after” which means you are entitled to the support given to all looked after children, including social work support, pathway plans which includes support with your education, employment and any personal issues. Once you reach 18yrs you would then be supported by the Leaving Care Service who can support you up to 25yrs if you are in employment or training.
- If you do not wish to be looked after the Council can nominate you to accommodation provided by a housing association called Look Ahead. You would have a Key Worker who could support you with housing, finance issues and access to education and training.
- You may wish to privately rent a room though it is very difficult to claim benefits under the age of 18 years therefore you will have difficulty paying rent.
- Bed and breakfast accommodation is not considered suitable at any time except for anything but emergency use in certain circumstances. This is because it’s unregulated and we can’t guarantee your safety.
- The Welfare and Housing Service can also give housing advice and explain how to register for Housing, although you will not be eligible to hold a tenancy until you are 18 years of age.
- You can also get support to return home if this is an option and it’s safe for you.
- If you are living with a family friend and are under 18 depending on the circumstances the family friend may be able to claim child benefit and child tax credits. Everyone’s circumstances are different so you will need to get benefits advice.

What if Children's Social Care won't help me?

Get independent advice as soon as you can. Meanwhile, go to the council and speak to someone from the Welfare and Housing Service. Tell them you are homeless.

Advice services like Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureau can help you understand your rights and challenge decisions you think are wrong. You can also make a complaint if you are unhappy with the help and support you get or with any decisions made by the council. You can ask for an Independent Advocate to support you.

What if I don't want help from Children's Social Care?

Some young people don't like the idea of being involved with Children's Social Care.

You don't have to agree to it, but they can help with all your issues, not just housing. If you don't understand what is being offered to you or your rights then get independent advice. Do not refuse help until you understand all your options.



Useful Contacts

Bracknell Forest Council Services

Bracknell Forest Multi-Agency

Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

01344 352 005

Bracknell Forest Council Children's Social Care

01344 352 020

Bracknell Forest Council Emergency

Duty Service (5pm to 9am weekdays, 24hrs on weekends and bank holidays)

01344 786 543

Bracknell Council Welfare and Housing Service

01344 352 010

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

BFC My Advice

For housing options

www.bfcmychoice.org.uk/

Bracknell Leaving Care Service

01344 354 304

www.sayitloudsayitproud.co.uk/

Bracknell Forest Council Youth Service

01344 464 731

Independent Advocacy

01344 351 546

www.actionforchildren.org.uk/in-your-area/services/childrens-rights/here4me/

Benefits, Housing & General Advice

Bracknell Job Centre Plus

0800 169 0190

Shelter's helpline

0808 800 4444

www.england.shelter.org.uk/

Look Ahead Care

Support and Housing

www.lookahead.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

03444 111 444

www.citizensadvicebracknell.org.uk/

GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/your-rights-to-housing-if-youre-under-18

National Homelessness

Advice Service (NHAS)

www.nhas.org.uk

Elevate Bracknell

01344 352 117

www.bracknellforest.elevateme.org.uk/

Childline

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk/

Unhappy and want to Complain

Bracknell Forest Council Complaints

01344 351 737

Look Ahead Care

Support and Housing

0800 389 6567

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