

Advice for those released from prison or youth detention accommodation



Homelessness advice and assistance

If you are homeless now or due to leave prison in the next 8 weeks and don't have anywhere to stay on release, the Council has a legal duty to provide you with advice and assistance. You can apply to any council for help but it's usually best to apply to an area where you have a local connection because you lived there before you went to prison or you have close family in the area.

Prisons, youth offender institutions and probation providers all have a duty to let the Council know before your release if they believe you may be homeless or at risk of homelessness and you have asked to be referred to us. This is called the duty to refer.

The Council will assess your housing needs and give you a personal housing plan which will set out the steps that you and the Council will take to help find suitable accommodation.

Once you are released, your probation team can also give you housing advice and may be able to refer you to a specialist hostel, supported housing or private landlords. Note that if you are released on licence, the conditions of your licence may mean that you can't live in certain areas.

Contact the Council as soon as possible to discuss your housing options. You can do so via our online [Housing Assistance Referral Portal](#) (see our Housing Advice and Homelessness Support pages at www.north-herts.gov.uk) or you can call us on 01462 474000.

When the Council will provide accommodation

The Council only has a duty to provide you with accommodation if you are in priority need. You automatically have a priority need if you:

- have children who live with you;
- are pregnant or a partner you live with is pregnant;
- are aged 18-20 and spent time in care when you were 16 or 17;
- you are vulnerable because of old age, mental illness or physical or learning disabilities for example.

You may also have a priority need if you are found to be vulnerable due to your time spent in prison. This means that you would find it harder to cope with being homeless than other people in the same situation.

If the Council has reason to believe that you are homeless and in priority need, it must provide you with emergency housing whilst we conduct inquiries into your situation. This will usually be in the district but may be further afield if local accommodation is full.

If our inquiries conclude that you are in priority need and are not homeless intentionally, we have a duty to provide you with settled housing. You are intentionally homeless if you lost your home because of something you deliberately did or didn't do, for example if you lost your home because you were convicted of a serious offence or you didn't pay rent when you were in prison.

Other support and advice

Specialist support and advice is also available from the following organisations.

NACRO (previously National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) provides support and advice on a range of issues to people with criminal records, including access to employment, housing, money and debt, addiction services and education.

www.nacro.org.uk

helpline@nacro.org.uk

0300 123 1999 (Monday to Friday)

Prisoners' Advice Service offers free legal advice and support for prisoners.

www.prisonersadvice.org.uk

advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk

Prison Reform Trust runs an independent advice and information service for prisoners.

www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

0808 802 0060 (free helpline, for prisoners only)

0808 808 2003 (free helpline for family members and friends)

Shelter is a national housing charity, providing advice, support and legal services to people struggling with bad housing or homelessness.

www.england.shelter.org.uk

0808 800 4444 (free helpline, open every day of the year)

Turn2Us provides help and advice about claiming benefits on release from prison.

www.turn2us.org.uk

Women in Prison provides specialist support for women prisoners.

www.womeninprison.org.uk

info@womeninprison.org.uk

0800 953 0125 (free helpline)