

- You cannot live together with your partner or close family
- You have nowhere to put your houseboat or caravan

If one or more of these apply, you may be eligible for help from the Council.

The Council is committed to helping you keep your home if at all possible or, if not, to advise and guide you through getting a new home.

Who the Council can help

1. **You must normally live in the United Kingdom long term and not be subjected to immigration control**
2. **You must be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days**

If you meet these criteria, you can make a homeless application. The Council will initially work with you to try to **prevent** or **relieve** your homelessness, i.e. to help you remain in your current home of which you are at risk of losing, or to help you to secure alternative accommodation.

If the Council is unable to successfully prevent or relieve your homelessness, it will then carry out a homelessness assessment under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

To be eligible for assistance at this point you must meet the following criteria:

1. You have a priority need – you either have dependent children who live with you, you have a physical or mental health disability, or you are more vulnerable for another reason such as fleeing domestic violence
2. You must not have made yourself homeless intentionally.

If the Council says it can help you...

If the Council accepts that it has a duty to continue housing you, you may have to stay in temporary accommodation until you can be offered somewhere more long term or settled.

Temporary accommodation is often outside of the Borough of Broxbourne, but within its surrounding areas.

Long-term or settled accommodation is most likely to be a private rented property which may also be outside of the Broxbourne area. This is due to the lack of available and affordable properties within the Borough.

If the Council says it cannot help you...

You can challenge the Council's decision. This is called 'reviewing' the decision.

You should seek independent advice if this is the case i.e. the local Citizens Advice, Shelter or a solicitor.

Other support if you are not eligible

If you are not eligible for housing from the Council, you may still be able to access:

- Help from social services. If you have children or additional needs, you may be able to get support from Children's or Adult Social Services
- Short-term emergency housing
- Support in finding private rented accommodation.

You can get further advice from:

- [Shelter](#)
- [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)
- [Crisis](#)
- [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#)
- [Stonewall Housing \(LGBT charity\)](#)
- [Metro \(LGBT charity\)](#)
- [National Homelessness Advice Services \(NHAS\)](#)



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THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT - WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU



The legislation around homelessness changed with the introduction of the **Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA 2017)**. The HRA came in to force on the 3 April 2018.

It places more emphasis on the help each council in England can offer people who have experienced or are about to experience homelessness. More people will be assisted as each council will no longer consider if each person has a priority need or has made themselves intentionally homeless before they are assisted.

It also requires public authorities (such as the NHS) to **notify Broxbourne Council** if someone they are working with is facing homelessness.

The Council will make every effort to prevent or relieve homelessness after registering an application before it makes a final decision.

The two new duties:

- **Duty to take steps to prevent homelessness**

The Council has to help people at risk of losing suitable accommodation if they are threatened with becoming homeless in the next 56 days. This means people will receive assistance and advice as soon as they are at risk of homelessness i.e. rent arrears, notice from landlord.

- **Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness**

The Council has to help all those who are homeless to secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are intentionally homeless or in priority need. This should mean that all eligible households are offered help to find a home, rather than some people being turned away. It should also ensure that the true scale of homelessness is recorded.

If neither of these steps is successful and the household (person, family, couple etc) becomes, or remains, homeless, then those in priority need retain their right to be rehoused, but non-priority households will not be entitled to further help.

At the interview

You may be invited to attend an interview with a Housing Needs Officer. You can bring a support worker or friend with you to the interview.

You will need to bring the right documents to your interview. The process will be quicker if you bring the following information with you:

- Your tenancy agreement (if you have one)
- Any notices or letters given to you from your landlord
- Contact details of the people you have been living with
- Proof of identification for yourself and all members of your household
- Passport, driver's licence or birth certificate
- Proof of your household's income i.e. wage slips or proof of your benefit entitlement
- Medical information (if relevant) from the medical professional treating you, i.e. your GP.

If you cannot get all these documents before you come in, it might take us longer to provide you with full advice.

Personalised Housing Plans (PHP)

As part of the new legislation councils must write a Personalised Housing Plan with each customer. This is an agreed plan between the council and the customer which sets out the steps both parties will be required to complete to try to resolve the housing problem.

If you fail to complete the actions on the agreed plan, it could mean that the Council will have a significantly reduced responsibility to assist with your housing.

This may include the following:

- Speaking with your landlord and arranging a payment plan to clear arrears
- Attending family mediation with your parents if they are asking you to leave
- Looking for employment
- Engaging with appropriate support services
- Looking for alternative accommodation i.e. privately rented

- Placing bids on properties available through HomeOption, the Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme.

The HRA aims for councils and customers to work together to resolve the problem.

What is homelessness?

A person is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in". This means that there must be no alternative accommodation available to you anywhere in the world and not just within the Borough of Broxbourne.

Are you homeless?

You do not have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over your head to be considered homeless. Most people who are homeless are not on the streets. There are many situations where the Council must accept you are homeless, and may have a legal duty to help you with housing.

For example:

- You are at risk of violence or abuse where you are living. This can be from a partner, ex-partner or family member, or someone in your area. The Council may ask you to provide details of the incidents. Evidence is helpful, but the Council will not turn you away if you have not reported it to the police.
- You do not have a roof over your head i.e. you are street homeless
- You are at risk of losing your home
- You cannot afford to stay where you are
- Your accommodation is very temporary
- You are staying with friends or 'sofa surfing'
- You have been locked out of your property or illegally evicted
- Your accommodation is in very poor condition