Factsheet: Accommodation Options – Know what's available

There are many different types of accommodation available, and you may find yourself living in more than one of these in the future.

A brief summary of the kinds of accommodation available follows:

Privately Rented Accommodation

The private rented market is extremely competitive. Properties can be found through lettings agents, newspaper adverts, notice boards or even shop windows. Because there are so many properties available, they do vary in terms of size, quality, price and additional services provided.

If you see a place which looks right for you and is within your budget, contact the landlord/agent and make an appointment to see the property. When looking at property, there are some things you need to consider:

- Do the amenities (plumbing, heating and lighting) work?
- Is it furnished?
- Are the bills included in the rent?

If you've decided to rent a property, you will normally have to put down a deposit and pay one month's rent in advance. You receive the deposit back when you move out, as long as there is no damage; otherwise the landlord will keep some or all of the deposit to cover costs.

If you are on benefits or a low income, you may be able to receive a Housing Benefit to help with the rent. When moving into privately rented accommodation the landlord may ask you to provide references. This is to check that you are reliable and are able to afford the rent. The landlord may ask for a letter from your employer confirming your employment. They may also ask for a character reference. This could come from a previous landlord, or if you are renting for the first time.

Housing Associations (HAs)

To access accommodation with a Housing Association you need to join their waiting list.

Some HAs keep their lists separate from council housing lists, and offer a wider variety of accommodation. To find out if there is a Housing Association within your area you can either contact your local authority or go to the Housing Corporation Register to find out more.

Semi-Independent Accommodation

Voluntary organisations usually run semi-independent units. They are used by services as a stepping stone for young people, before they move on to independence. Semi-independent units have staff on-site to support residents. You will have your own room but will be required in most cases to share a bathroom and kitchen. All repairs are carried out by the service provider (the local authority or voluntary organisation).

Lodging Schemes/Supported Lodgings

These are also made available for young people as a stepping-stone to independent living.

If you stay in a placement like this, plans are usually put in place to increase your independence and improve your skills base, by giving you greater responsibility within the home (for example, cooking meals and doing your own laundry).

Emergency Accommodation

This kind of accommodation is used if you are at risk of becoming homeless, and you need somewhere to stay...fast!

One option could be to stay with friends. Make sure you don't overstay your welcome though; it could ruin your friendship!

Other emergency options are hostels and night shelters. Night shelters are usually free, but are very basic, and you can only usually stay for a few nights at a time. Some night shelters only open during the winter months.

In some cases you can turn up at night shelters to see if they have a bed available for the night. To find out if one is in your area contact your local authority. Hostels are usually more comfortable than night shelters. There is the possibility of having your own room, and you can stay longer than a few nights. However, you will have to pay for your night's sleep. You can use your benefit payments to pay for your room, but in some cases that won't be enough. You may have to pay the additional costs through income support or JSA. Be warned though; you cannot just turn up at a hostel and ask for a room or bed. You usually need to be referred there by your local authority or homeless charity.

Nightstops

A Nightstop is a room in a home offered by members of the community. They are only available for young people aged between 16 and 25. As the name suggests, these are usually short-term. To see if there are any in your area, contact your local authority.

Understanding homelessness assembly

This session contains information about reducing the stigma associated with homelessness, understanding why people can become homeless, what the law says about homelessness and where to get help if needed.

1. Myths of homelessness

Using social media show different types of homeless people, who is/isn't homeless, students to raise their hands to agree/disagree (give background information on individuals shown)

Local case study shared with images – Connors story

2. What sort of risks do rough sleepers have?

Show video of assault of homeless man in Worcester.

What are your thoughts now? Was this acceptable due to his housing situation?

Facts and figures - Health and Wellbeing of homeless people

3. Homeless definitions and examples -

PowerPoint of definitions – definitions of homelessness

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/homelessness_-_an_introduction/legal_definition_of_homelessness

'Priority' Need definitions –

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_the_council_when_homeless/priority_need

4. Getting help and information –

www.HiHomie.org

Case study: Connor's story

Connor was 16 and was caught shoplifting; he had stolen some food from a local shop; the police attended and said they would give Connor a lift home. When asked where he lived he directed the police to a building site where he said he was staying in the portacabins. The police officer let Connor go and said "stay out of trouble".

Two weeks later Connor was caught shoplifting food again, he was taken to the police station where he was charged this time with shoplifting. The arresting officer was really concerned about the state of Connor was in; he was small, dirty, really skinny and smelled. He was also really hungry.

The police officer asked Connor what his home address was and Connor told him he was sleeping under the portacabins on a building site. When the builders came on site each morning he left, leaving his sleeping bag and a rucksack hidden. He said he had some friends who also were sleeping rough, one was called Jez and he had helped him get food if he helped him steal alcohol.

The police were so worried about Connor that they contacted Social Services; The Social Worker who went to see Connor at the police station already knew Connors family and went to see his Mum to explain that Connor was safe and needed to come home. His Mum hadn't told anyone that Connor was not at home, even though she didn't know where he was and said she didn't want him home.

The police and the social worker then had to find somewhere for Connor to live, eventually they got him a place in a foyer for young people aged under 18. Connor will be able to stay at the Foyer until he is old enough to get his own accommodation.

NB – At 16 Connor would not be able to get any benefits without the support of Social Services.

Case study: Nicola's Story

Nicola is the eldest of two girls (21 years old); she does have extended family with an older halfbrother that is her fathers from a previous marriage, this marriage is linked to a large travelling family in Worcestershire. I met Nicola through working with her younger sister on another programme.

Nicola's parents split up when she was a young teenager and her mother subsequently remarried. Nicola struggled in school and was Statemented her diagnosis being she had ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome and Autism. This is what Nicola believes she was diagnosed with.

Her home life was very unsettled and there was significant domestic abuse in her mother's new marriage, Nicola was a victim of abuse from her step-father and at some point Social Services did become involved with the family, Nicola said this gave her some relief.

At 15 Nicola was thrown out of the house by her step-father, Nicola had nowhere to go, so subsequently spent a week sleeping on a car park, with provisions given to her by her friend and younger sister. When asked if she was scared, replied 'not really', she had everything she needed. After a week of sleeping out a member of the public reported seeing her sleeping out and she was taken home.

This situation didn't last long and eventually Nicola became homeless again. She managed to get some support from a Housing Association, who placed her in supported housing in Worcestershire. By this time Nicola's mental health was deteriorating and risky behaviour became a large factor in her life, leading to her becoming evicted from her accommodation with the Housing Association.

Nicola's behaviour was becoming so bad that it led to her being arrested and given a prison sentence.

Whilst in prison Nicola did get some support for her Mental Health issues, she was shocked by the number of young women in prison who had mental health problems and the levels and severity of self-harm she witnessed. Nicola also self-harmed for most of her teenage years, mainly on her upper legs and on occasion her arms, describing her legs as a map of scars. Nicola was prescribed medication whilst in prison and on release from prison an appointment was made for her to see a psychiatrist.

Nicola mentioned she was glad that she could see a psychiatrist, but found that all they wanted to do was give her medication and kept increasing her dose when all she wanted was to talk to someone. Since her release from prison Nicola has not had a secure address, although I believe she gives her mother's or brother's address to her probation worker. Nicola tends to sofa surf quite a bit and on any given day could be in Pershore, Redditch or Birmingham. She has stayed with older men, people who have mental health problems, she has been offered and taken many different drugs, has slept with people she doesn't really know and when necessary has slept on the streets.

Nicola is unable to access many of the hostels in Worcestershire due to her risky behaviour, so continues to sofa surf with anyone who will have her. She has a few personal possessions as they get 'nicked' so it's not worth having them.

Case study: Connor's in trouble

Worcester Division
Worcester Police Station, Castle Street, Worcester. WR13QX
Tel: 01905 331094 Fax: 01905 331012

10th September 2015

Connor xxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxx
Worcester
WR14 1RZ
Born 08.07.98

Anti Social Behaviour
This document is being served on you to formalise our position should this matter be taken to Court.

Anti Social Behaviour causing any person Alarm, Harassment or Distress will not be tolerated.

I am concerned to have my attention drawn to reports of your bad behaviour. We have received several reports regarding your nuisance behaviour, in particular in the Hive, Worcester and at Asda Supermarket, Worcester. You have been arrested and brought to the police station at Worcester on more than one occasion because of your behaviour and have been advised by the Police several times.

On Thursday 21st July 2014 at 19.54 hours Police Officers were called to the Hive, Worcester as a report had been received that a male known as Conner was refusing to leave the facility and became verbally abusive to the staff. Officers attended and you were arrested for breach of the peace.

This behaviour is seriously interfering with the quality of life of residents and it must cease immediately.

The Police are not prepared to accept continued anti-social behaviour on your part and this letter is to advise you formally that proceedings for an anti-social behaviour order will be pursued if there is not a dramatic improvement.

It is an arrestable criminal offence to fail to comply with the restrictions in an anti-social behaviour order. The penalty for breaching an Anti-Social Behaviour Order is a fine and up to five years imprisonment.

Acknowledgement of service of document

Connor xxxxxx .....

Parent/Guardian ……

Police Representative ..... Dated

.....

Level 2

We will share information of this document with relevant partner agencies who can offer support to you.

Factsheet: Know your Legal Rights



Who is legally classed as homeless?

In deciding whether you are homeless, the council has to look at any accommodation you have access to. You should be considered homeless if:

- You have no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world
- You have no home where you can live together with your immediate family
- You can only stay where you are on a very temporary basis
- You don't have permission to live where you are
- You have been locked out of home and you aren't allowed back
- You can't live at home because of violence or threats of violence which are likely to be carried out against you or someone else in your household
- It isn't reasonable for you to stay in your home for any reason (for example, if your home is in very poor condition)
- You can't afford to stay where you are
- You live in a vehicle or boat and you have nowhere to put it.

Before it can offer you permanent accommodation, the council must check whether you deliberately did or didn't do something that resulted in you becoming homeless, this is called *intentional homelessness.*

Examples of intentional homelessness

The council may decide that you deliberately did or didn't do something that caused you to become homeless if:

- You were evicted for antisocial behaviour
- You didn't pay the rent or mortgage when you could have afforded to
- You ignored advice that could have helped you keep your home
- You left accommodation for no good reason.

Examples of unintentional homelessness

If the reasons behind your actions were beyond your control, you shouldn't be classed as intentionally homeless. For example, you wouldn't be intentionally homeless if:

- You were evicted for antisocial behaviour that was caused by mental illness
- You didn't pay your rent or mortgage because of financial difficulties which arose
- Because, for example:
- You were made redundant
- You fell ill
- Your partner who helped pay the rent moved out
- You were told that you weren't entitled to benefits when in fact you were
- You left your home to take up a new job in another area.

Read the Case study: Connor's in trouble and discuss his options.

THE homeless FOUNDATION

MYTH BUSTERS!

Being pregnant DOES NOT automatically mean you will get a house.

Asylum seekers are not given housing by the Council. The UK Border Agency (UKBA) are a special organisation that offer support and advice for asylum seekers on housing and other related issues.

Homeless people are not just people living on the streets; they include people in hostels, B&B's and those staying informally at friends houses.



Worksheet 1: What sort of risks do rough sleepers have?

Teacher note

Ask students to individually read the **Case study: Connor's story**.

When they have read this, share the additional information noted here, with the students and work through the questions below. The student versions (in the appendices) do not contain the answers.

Connor has begun to speak to other rough sleepers; Conner has made friends with a guy called Jez. Jez has been sleeping rough for over a year now.

Q. What sort of risks may Connor face now?

A. Drugs, violence, rape, ill health, involved in crime, prostitution.

Q. How might Connor be feeling / thinking?

A. Suicidal, stressed, lonely, depressed.

Q. You mentioned drugs earlier, why might Connor consider taking drugs?

A. A way of coping, it's a currency.

Q. Where could Connor go for help / advice?

A. Parents, youth worker, police, refuge, help lines, phonebook, library, The Homeless Foundation

Q. Did Connor's situation need to get this far?

A. No

Q. At what point could Connor have asked for help?

A. As soon as he realised he had a problem

Worksheet 2: Myths of being homeless

	Question	True or False?
1	It is easy to find a suitable flat to rent if you are a young single person.	
2	Rough sleepers are only found in London.	
3	Homeless people have no rights.	
4	The local council must find suitable accommodation for all homeless people.	
5	Electric, water and gas are all included when you pay rent.	
6	Begging is the only way to get money if you are unemployed and homeless.	
7	Private landlords require a deposit before you move in.	
8	All rented flats and houses are provided with furniture.	
9	Living on the streets is the only option when you are homeless.	

Worksheet 3: Homelessness - Definitions and Examples

Being homeless is much more than sleeping rough. The people you see on the streets are just the tip of the iceberg, because the majority of people who are homeless are staying in temporary accommodation until a more permanent place can be found for them to live. Having a home is about having a permanent place to live in which is habitable (windproof, water tight and not damp) warm, safe (and this includes safety within the home) and secure (both in terms of home security and security of tenure. For this reason the legal definition of homelessness covers a wide variety of circumstances.

The legal definition of homelessness includes which of these situations?

SITUATION	**True or False?**
You have nowhere you can live with your family.	
You can't gain access to your home (e.g. you are locked out and not allowed back in).	
You are not safe at home (e.g. as a victim of or threatened with domestic violence).	
You live somewhere that is overcrowded or puts your health at risk.	
You are being 'kicked out' of where you stay.	
You are being threatened with homelessness (within 2 months).	
You are living in temporary and insecure circumstances e.g. staying on a friend or relative's sofa.	

Evaluation

Do you feel you have a better understanding of what homelessness is and who it affects?

Who would you go to if you needed advice about leaving home or difficulties at home?

Did you feel that you got something out of attending the session today? i.e. learnt something you never knew?

Did anything surprise you about what you have learnt in these sessions? i.e. amount of people who sleep rough?

Would you recommend these sessions to your friends?

Is there anything you would like added to these sessions that would be useful for other young people to know?

Anything other comments you can add?