



Safer Seven

Your 7 minute safeguarding bulletin



1. What is homelessness?

Somebody does not need to be sleeping rough, or have nowhere to stay that night, to be considered homeless. A person is homeless if they do not have accommodation which they have a right or permission to continue to occupy, or if the accommodation they have is not safe, affordable, suitable, or reasonable to continue to occupy.

There are many ways in which a person or their family can become homeless or find themselves at risk of losing their home. This includes being served with a valid notice by their landlord, a breakdown of a relationship or fleeing domestic abuse.

3. How to Identify homelessness

When coming into contact or working with individuals, practitioners should enquire about a person's housing status at an early stage.

Questions should be asked in order to work out whether the person has accommodation that they can return to, how long it will remain available to them, whether it is safe to return, and to ensure that any accommodation they may have is affordable, and suitable and reasonable to continue to occupy taking into account their ability to live independently and any care and support needs they may have.

5. What happens?

The legislation requires that the Council help those who are eligible and who are seeking help. The council will make enquiries about their case and if they are found to be both eligible and homeless, they will receive assistance to complete a personal housing plan.

This will identify the housing solution that is best for them and any reasonable steps that the applicant must take to either prevent the loss of their current home or to secure alternative accommodation. Please note that there is not a duty to provide temporary accommodation to everyone; this duty only arises for those who are in 'priority need'.

2. What does the law say?

The Housing Act 1996, amended by The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, imposes a legal duty upon Local Authorities to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The law says that the Local Authority must work with them to try to prevent their homelessness, but if that is not possible, to help them to secure alternative accommodation.

Please note that there is not a duty to provide temporary accommodation to everyone; this duty only arises for those who are in 'priority need'.

4. How to Refer?

Public bodies have a duty to refer homeless persons to a Local Authority under s213B of the Housing Act 1996. This is known as the 'Duty to Refer'.

Therefore where a practitioner identifies an individual or family who they consider is homeless or at risk of homelessness, they should contact the Homelessness Prevention Team on 0300 555 2345 for further advice or by email to HSGAdvice.dachs@dudley.gov.uk.

The team will advise and if a referral is required as much information surrounding the individual should be provided to speed up the assessment process, identify the most appropriate housing options advice and if referred at an early stage may assist in preventing somebody from becoming homeless.

6. What information is needed?

Local Authorities need information about homeless applicants, their household, personal circumstances, and the reasons why they need assistance, in order to assess their case and reach a homelessness decision.

They will also need the person's consent to gather and share information with others. The Local Authority will need basic personal information such as names, addresses and dates of birth, but will also need as much information as possible about where a person has previously been living and about the reasons why they no longer have accommodation.

7. What to do next

- For Public: further information surrounding homelessness, please visit <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-advice-information-and-support/homelessness/>
- For Practitioners: Duty to Refer form - <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/media/9702/duty-to-refer-form-nov18.pdf>
- Should an individual find themselves without housing or accommodation outside of office hours, including weekends or Bank Holidays, you can call our emergency housing team on 0300 555 2345 for advice. They will direct you to the most appropriate help.