



# One-minute guide

## Housing Advice

### What is Housing Advice?

Local Housing Authority (LHA) Housing Advice teams are located throughout the country. Housing Advisors provide advice on housing problems, work to prevent people from becoming homeless and support those who are currently homeless or rough sleeping to find accommodation, where they have a duty to do so.

### What kind of issues could Housing Advice help with?

Issues that Housing Advice support people with frequently include:

- Rent arrears and affordability issues
- Households who have received notice to leave their home
- Households involved with or subject to anti-social behaviour
- Persons living in accommodation that is not suitable for them – examples include; overcrowding, accessibility issues, disrepair or environmental health issues
- Relationship breakdowns
- 16/ 17-year-olds at risk of becoming homeless or being asked to leave the-home. A referral will be made to Children's Services in this situation.
- Landlord disputes or harassment issues

This is not an exhaustive list – do contact the appropriate Local Housing Authority for your client's area with any housing related issues (see contact details below)

### What type of support could be offered by the Housing Advice Team?

LHA's offer a range of services designed to support households to maintain their current accommodation or, where necessary, move to alternate accommodation. Social Housing is in very short supply and high demand across Surrey and, as a result, the primary source of housing across the county will come from the private rented sector. Households approaching a Local Authority who are in housing need will be assessed. This assessment will inform the support and assistance that will be made available to help to resolve those housing needs\*. Examples could include:

- Landlord liaison to resolve disputes
- Financial and budgeting advice to support households to resolve affordability issues or rent arrears
- Financial assistance by way of loan or grant to help to clear or reduce rent arrears (subject to individual LHA policies)
- Assistance to resolve issues with Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payments
- Financial assistance with rent in advance/ deposit to enable households to access alternate housing in the private rented sector or housing association properties (subject to individual LHA policies)
- Referrals to partner agencies to access additional support with housing related issues.
- Provision of emergency accommodation where necessary (conditions apply)
- Support to access the housing register (subject to LHA's own Housing Registration/Allocation policy)
- Referrals to environmental health to support with disrepair or substandard housing issues
- Support with the application process for essential adaptations to properties to ensure they are safe and suitable for tenants or homeowners with additional needs.

Again, this not an exhaustive list and services can vary between the Districts and Boroughs of Surrey. The options offered will be dependent on a household's individual circumstances and will be discussed following a full assessment of a households needs.

**\*Occasionally the assessment might conclude that a housing duty is not owed to families with children who are presenting as homeless - The Code of Guidance (see link below) suggests that families in this position are referred to Children's Services if they are 'at risk' of street homelessness.**



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### Duty to Refer

In October 2018 the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 created a 'Duty to Refer' for certain organisations. This duty requires certain specified public authorities in England to notify the LHA Housing teams if they have reason to believe someone may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. **Social Service Authorities** are amongst those named.

Identifying when a referral might be required:

- Homeless, rough sleeping, roofless, sofa surfing etc
- Debt problems
- Problems with a Landlord e.g. threatened with eviction
- Experience of domestic abuse or other threats/ violence
- A history of being in care, armed forces or prison
- Availability of accommodation on approaching discharge from hospital, custody or armed forces.

In general, a referral cannot be made without the service user's consent. However, consent may be waived in order to safeguard children or vulnerable adults. An applicant can request that their referral be sent to any LHA in the country – regardless of any local connection. The reality of referring someone to a LHA where the applicant has no connection is that they are likely to be referred back to the LHA where they have a connection. It is worth explaining this to the applicant when gaining consent to refer to avoid any confusion if and when their application is referred back at a later stage. **As Homelessness – or imminent if not accepted by the housing department, is a Level 4 need, it will generally be the duty of Social Care colleagues to make referrals to the LHA Housing Teams.**

Should you wish to view more comprehensive guidance on the subject please follow this link to the **Homelessness Code of Guidance** - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

### Contact details for the LHA's (Districts & Boroughs) Housing Advice Teams:

#### NE Quadrant:

Spelthorne - [housingadvice@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@spelthorne.gov.uk) Tel: 01784 446380

Elmbridge - [housingoptions@elmbridge.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@elmbridge.gov.uk) Tel: 01372 474 590

Epsom & Ewell - [housing@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:housing@epsom-ewell.gov.uk) Tel: 01372 732000

#### SE Quadrant:

Mole Valley - [housing@molevalley.gov.uk](mailto:housing@molevalley.gov.uk) Tel: 01306 885001

Reigate & Banstead - [housing.advice@reigate-banstead.gov.uk](mailto:housing.advice@reigate-banstead.gov.uk) Tel: 01737 276790

Tandridge - [homelessness@tandridge.gov.uk](mailto:homelessness@tandridge.gov.uk) Tel: 01883 722000

#### SW Quadrant:

Waverley - [housingoptions@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@waverley.gov.uk) Tel: 01483 523188

Guildford - [housingadvice@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@guildford.gov.uk) Tel: 01483 444244

#### NW Quadrant:

Woking - [housing-options@woking.gov.uk](mailto:housing-options@woking.gov.uk) Tel: 01483 743834

Surrey Heath - [housing@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:housing@surreyheath.gov.uk) Tel: 01276 707100

Runnymede - [housingsolutions@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:housingsolutions@runnymede.gov.uk) Tel: 01932 838383

### Other useful housing links include:

Shelter - housing and homelessness charity:

<https://www.shelter.org.uk/> - [https://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_help](https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help)

Citizens Advice Bureau:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/> - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/>