

Making a homelessness application in Bristol

What is a homelessness application and when should I make one?

A homelessness application involves getting in touch with Bristol City Council to declare that you're homeless or at risk of homelessness and therefore in need of their support.

The council have a duty to provide emergency accommodation for people who meet ALL THREE of the following criteria:

- Homeless or threatened with homelessness (please note this also includes living in very unsuitable/unsafe housing);
- In priority need (e.g., if you have a severe mental illness or have children), and;
- Eligible for assistance (depending on your immigration status, your connection to Bristol etc.).

If you're experiencing or at risk of homelessness, you need to make a homelessness application. You should do this even if you don't think you meet all of the above criteria.

The council will assess you, either in person or over the phone, to work out whether they have a duty to provide emergency accommodation for you.

Contact the council as soon as you know you could be homeless, as it can take time to get an appointment, and they may be able to help you stay in your current accommodation.

If you're ineligible or not in priority need

The council also has a duty to give advice to people who may be at risk of homelessness, even if they're not in priority need or eligible for assistance. This may include signposting you to another agency for support.



What if I urgently need accommodation?

Nowhere to sleep tonight

If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, you may be temporarily given a bed in a night shelter or a hostel.

Most night shelters and hostels only accept people who've been referred to them by another agency e.g., the council or someone from the [St Mungo's](#) outreach team.

With our partner, [Caring in Bristol](#), we've put together the [Caring Handbook](#). Here, you can find details of night shelters, hostels and other services around Bristol.

Fleeing domestic violence/abuse

If you're experiencing or at risk of domestic violence/abuse, the council must provide emergency accommodation if you need it, whether or not you have children.

You don't have to leave your home before you ask for help. Bristol offers [many different services](#) for people experiencing domestic violence/abuse. [Next Link](#) can help women and children find refuges and domestic abuse services in the area.

How can I make a homelessness application?

In-person (the best option if your situation is urgent)

If your situation is an emergency and/or you are homeless on the day, the quickest way to get an assessment is to go in-person to the [Citizen Service Point](#).

Address:

100 Temple Street
Bristol
BS1 6AG

Opening hours for homelessness applications:

- Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri: 9am-4pm
- Wednesday: 10am-4pm



By telephone

You can call the council on 0117 352 6800 - open Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm.

Out of hours help

If you need urgent help when the council office is closed (at weekends, on public holidays, and after 5pm on weekdays), you should:

- Go to your nearest police station, or;
- Call the 'Emergency Duty Team' on 01454 615 165.

If you can't make the application yourself

If you can't make the application yourself for some reason, the application can be made on your behalf by a third party (for example, a social worker, support worker or housing adviser).

What can I expect from the assessment?

Wait time

If you go in person to the [Citizens Service Point](#):

- The council will try to get you an appointment to assess you on the same day you get in touch with them.
- The earlier in the day you arrive, the more likely it is you will be seen by an adviser that day.
- Try to avoid going on a Friday, as Fridays can be particularly busy.

If you contact the council by telephone:

- When you call, they'll take your details and arrange an assessment over the phone.
- It can take up to 48 hours to get an appointment, but they will try and arrange one as quickly as possible.

What to take to your appointment

You should bring (where relevant):

- Proof of identity and immigration status (e.g., a passport or ID card);

- Eviction notice and tenancy agreement (if you have been asked to leave by your landlord);
- Proof of income (e.g. wage-slips or proof of benefits);
- Proof of relevant medical conditions or pregnancy (e.g., a letter from your doctor or midwife);
- Proof of children you're responsible for (e.g. birth certificates, adoption certificates).

Length of assessment

The assessment should take 1-2 hours.

The council's housing advisor will ask you about:

- Yourself
- Your family
- Your address history
- Your health
- Your housing situation



Personal Housing Plan

If the Council determine that you are homeless/at risk of homelessness, in priority need and eligible for assistance, the housing adviser will prepare and agree a Personal Housing Plan with you.

Your Personal Housing Plan will include the steps you and your housing adviser will each take to either stop you becoming homeless or to find housing for you if you are already homeless.

You should answer any reasonable questions from the council openly and honestly.

It is a criminal offence to make a false statement, or withhold information which the council reasonably requires, with the intent to make the council believe you are entitled to assistance.

Emergency accommodation

The council may have a legal duty to house you in emergency accommodation whilst they consider whether they have a duty to house you in the long term.

Both are more likely to happen if:

- they think that you might be homeless, and/or;
- you're in priority need (for example if you have children living with you or are vulnerable due to a medical condition)

Emergency accommodation is short-term and often basic, for example a bed and breakfast, hostel or a private rented room. You will probably have to share kitchen or bathroom facilities.

You may be moved to different emergency accommodation at short notice, depending on demand and availability.

During this period, the council will investigate whether they have a duty to provide you with long-term housing support until you find permanent housing.

Long-term housing support

The council may determine that they have a duty to support you in accessing more permanent housing.

This could be:

- Providing you with a property from their social housing stock (usually this involves a long wait time);
- Providing financial support so you can afford to live in a private rented home, or;
- Providing advice until you have secured somewhere suitable and more permanent to live.

The council's decision on whether they owe you a duty to find permanent housing will depend on things like:

- Your physical and mental vulnerability
- Your immigration status
- Your connection to Bristol (to determine your need to remain in Bristol)
- Whether or not you're responsible for children

If the council decide they owe you a duty to support you in accessing more permanent housing, you should be offered temporary accommodation until this happens.

Temporary accommodation

If the council decide they have a legal duty to support you finding permanent accommodation, you may qualify for temporary accommodation while you wait for this to become available.

Temporary accommodation is slightly different from emergency accommodation and is covered by a different legal duty.

Some people automatically qualify for temporary accommodation e.g., if you are:

- responsible for children;
- pregnant;
- a young care leaver;
- escaping domestic abuse, and/or;
- otherwise vulnerable e.g., because of disability, age or health issues.

If the council decides it has a duty to house you, you should – in theory – be moved from your emergency accommodation to a more suitable and settled place for your temporary accommodation.

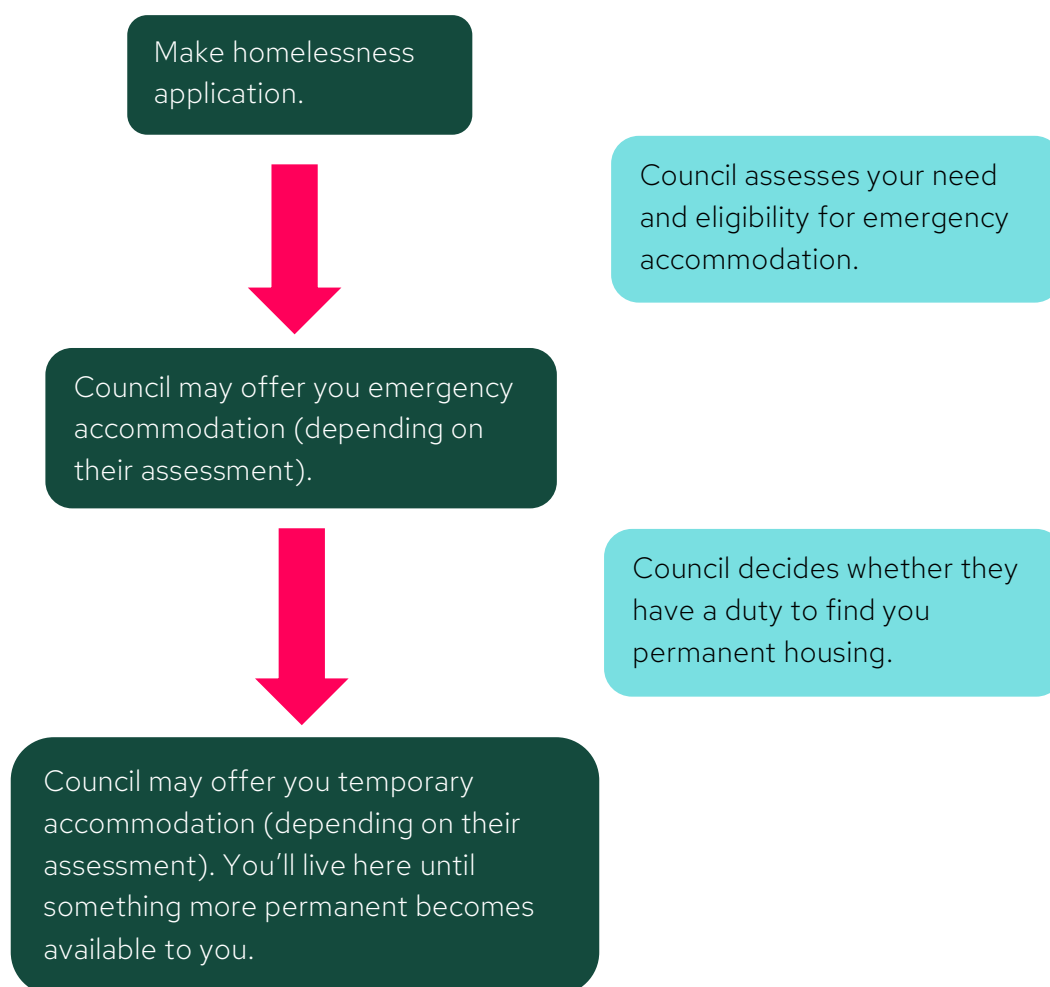
However, due to a shortage of suitable temporary accommodation in Bristol, in practice, you might just end up remaining at the same place, even though the council's legal duty to you has changed.

Although temporary accommodation is intended to be short-term, many people can end up living here for several months or years because of a shortage of permanent social housing in Bristol.

Summary of process

The diagram on the next page summarises the process that could be triggered once you submit a homelessness application. Please see the rest of this Housing Helpsheet for details on each step.





The process that is likely to be triggered once you've made a homelessness application in Bristol.

Eviction from emergency or temporary accommodation

When you move in, you will have to sign a 'license agreement'. The agreement will cover things like how you behave, and how much you're expected to pay.

Read the agreement very carefully – you could be evicted for breaking the terms of the agreement.

If you refuse an offer of more permanent accommodation that the council considers suitable for you, you could be evicted from your current emergency/temporary accommodation. It is almost always best to accept an offer. If you don't think the property is suitable, you can [challenge this within 21 days of accepting it.](#)

If you are offered permanent accommodation and are considering refusing the offer, seek independent specialist housing advice from an organisation such as [Housing Matters](#) or [Shelter Bristol](#).

If you're evicted from emergency/temporary accommodation for whatever reason, the council may decide they no longer have a duty to house you. If this happens, seek independent specialist housing advice from an organisation such as [Housing Matters](#) or [Shelter Bristol](#).

Pets

Most of the temporary accommodation the council provides won't accept pets. In these cases, you would need to arrange for your pets to be looked after by family, friends or an animal charity (e.g., [Dogs Trust](#)).

If you receive benefits

If you are claiming universal credit or housing benefit, you will need to notify the council of any change of address - even if this is only temporary.

You can do this:

- [online](#), or;
- by telephone: 0117 922 2300

Your benefits could be stopped or reduced if you do not report a change in circumstances straight away.