

Finding Settled Accommodation

Issue 04

Advice and support for people living in temporary accommodation

In this issue we will explore

Our legal duties to you as a person experiencing homelessness



The different options for long-term accommodation



How to find settled, long-term accommodation



How to avoid rent arrears



Welcome to the fourth edition of our newsletter, brought to you in partnership with the Crawley Local Community Network (LCN), which includes the NHS, Primary Care, and local voluntary organisations.

Our goal is to support you through the transition into temporary accommodation by sharing helpful resources and guidance.

We're currently developing a full guide to temporary accommodation. In the meantime, these themed newsletters will provide key information and details about local services that can help.



Our housing duty

The council may have a legal duty to help prevent or relieve your homelessness and help you to secure long-term accommodation.

If eligible and qualifying, you may be placed on a waiting list for settled housing and provided with temporary accommodation in the meantime.



How long you stay in temporary housing depends on how long it takes you to:

- find accommodation to rent in the private sector
- successfully bid for social housing through the housing register

How long does a final housing offer normally take?

An offer of accommodation will take a long time and depends on:

- the number of properties available
- how many bedrooms your household requires
- other assessed housing needs you may have
- how proactive and flexible you are in your search



If you choose to rent privately, be mindful that you might need to provide a deposit and rent in advance. Crawley Borough Council may be able to help with these costs if needed.

Exploring housing options

A housing offer from the council could be:

- a **private sector rented** property
- **Council-managed** accommodation
- **Housing Association-managed** accommodation



Do the council consider other factors?

The council must consider if their offer of housing is:

- affordable for you and your household
- in good enough condition
- the right size for your household
- suitable if you have health issues or a disability

Private rented offers from the council must meet certain suitability requirements regarding tenancy type, landlord and condition of the home.



Your offer will be suitable for your assessed housing needs. Preferences, such as where you'd like to live, cannot always be met unless you choose to rent privately.

Social housing stats for Crawley 2024/25

371	182	2550
social housing properties became available	households moved into private sector rented properties	total number of households waiting for social housing

If you refuse your housing offer

Refusing a housing offer may mean that the council no longer have a duty to help you.

If you believe the offer is unsuitable, you can request a review. However, the council may not be required to provide temporary accommodation during the review process. If your review is successful, you will receive another housing offer from the council.

We recommend you **accept the housing offer and then request a review**. This way you:

- have somewhere to stay during the review
- can still challenge the decision after moving in
- won't risk losing council support if the review is unsuccessful

Tenancy types for housing offers

Private-rented housing offer tenancies must:

- be an assured shorthold tenancy
- have a written fixed term agreement of 6 to 12 months depending on the stage of your application

Typical **Housing Association tenancies** include:

- an assured tenancy which only ends if you choose to leave or get evicted
- a fixed term assured shorthold tenancy for at least 2 years
- a starter tenancy for a year, which can then be extended to a longer tenancy agreement

Typical **council tenancies** include:

- an assured tenancy which only ends if you choose to leave or get evicted
- a fixed term flexible tenancy for at least 2 years - the council can decide not to offer you another tenancy at the end of this fixed term
- an introductory tenancy where the council decides if you are a good tenant - usually lasting a year



bit.ly/3EJ7ZiB

Private sector renting

Renting in the private housing sector is often the **quickest route** to securing yourself settled, long-term accommodation. You will be able to:

- choose **where** you want to live e.g., close to family, work, children's schools or in a less expensive area of the country
- choose the **type of property** you live in e.g., flat, house, with or without garden, etc.
- **view multiple properties** you're interested in

Social housing properties provided on the housing register do not offer this kind of flexibility and choice.

Local housing allowance

Local housing allowance sets the maximum amount that you (a private renter) would receive in benefits to help with your rent.

LHA rates are used to decide how much you get in either:

- universal credit housing element
- housing benefit

If you still can't pay your full rent with the help of benefits, you can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) from the council.



Consider the location

Where you choose to live can have a big impact on your finances. While many people prefer to stay in Crawley to be near family or work, widening your search for a permanent home could offer benefits such as **more space, a garden, or lower rent**.

Rental prices vary by area. You may find cheaper accommodation outside Crawley, which means the amount you contribute on top of the local housing allowance (LHA) for your rent could be more affordable.

No matter where you choose to move, Crawley Borough Council may be able to help with upfront rental costs.



Affordability is an important factor to consider when renting privately. If you are claiming benefits then check the Local Housing Allowance to see how much you may be able to claim: bit.ly/4ka0UGH

Issues that affect your access to housing

Your behaviour in temporary accommodation matters. If you fall into rent arrears or engage in anti-social behaviour, your housing band may be lowered to band C, or the council may end its housing duty to you. This would also end your temporary accommodation.

Registered letting agents in Crawley

Although private letting agencies aren't formally regulated, agents who are Propertymark members must meet its best practice standards. However, private tenancies are still subject to certain legal requirements..

 bit.ly/Propertyagents

Property websites



www.zoopla.co.uk



www.gumtree.com



www.rightmove.co.uk



www.friday-ad.co.uk



www.openrent.co.uk



www.spareroom.co.uk



Ensure your rent is paid on time and in full, and that any arrears are cleared as soon as possible should they occur.

Government guide to renting in the private sector

Understand your rights and responsibilities when renting privately.



bit.ly/HowtoRent

Joining the housing register

What is the housing register?

The housing register is a list of households waiting for social housing in Crawley, provided by the council or housing associations.

If you are owed a main housing duty and are eligible and qualifying you will be placed on autobid for all suitable properties across Crawley. This means you **can't choose where you live**, and bids are placed automatically **as housing becomes available**.

The size and type of property you're eligible for is based on the composition of your household and determined by the **Housing Allocation Scheme**.



Being owed a main housing duty by the council and living in temporary accommodation **does not** guarantee you will be offered social housing.

Wait times for social housing

Due to unprecedented increasing demand and fewer available properties, waiting times for social housing are long. The unfortunately reality is that many successful applicants on the housing register are now waiting several years, with some not being housed at all.

For more detailed information about wait times, visit:



www.crawley-homechoice.org.uk/content/WaitTime

If you're offered social housing, you may need to pay rent in advance before your tenancy begins. If you can't pay, the offer may be withdrawn. It's important to start saving now to avoid missing out.

Crawley Borough Council cannot help you access social housing outside of Crawley. If you want to live elsewhere, you'll need to either rent privately or apply directly to the local council in that area.

If you are struggling to pay your rent or worry that changes in circumstances may lead to affordability problems, you can get debt advice from the following services:



www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/



nationaldebtline.org



www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en



www.payplan.com



bit.ly/StepChangeDebtAdvice



www.ageuk.org.uk/westsussexbrightonhove/

Does social housing come furnished?

Only 2% of social housing in the UK is furnished, compared to 29% in the private rental sector. If you are offered social housing you will need to provide your own furniture, carpets and appliances.

Your Housing Officer can direct you to services offering low-cost options, and some support may be available through the Household Support Fund for essential items.



You will only receive one offer of suitable accommodation via the housing register. If you refuse, the council will end its main housing duty to you, including temporary accommodation. This means you will have to find your own accommodation.

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