

Your guide to temporary accommodation

Introduction

Wherever possible we seek to prevent homelessness. If you have no alternative accommodation and we believe that you are eligible, homeless and in priority need, we may offer temporary accommodation while we are assessing your homelessness application or when you have been accepted as homeless and are waiting for a settle home.

What is emergency or temporary accommodation?

When you make a homeless application, you will be offered emergency accommodation while your case is being assessed.

We have a duty to provide temporary accommodation if you are:

- Eligible for assistance
- In priority need
- Not intentionally homeless

If shared accommodation is offered this means you will have reduced self contained facilities and may have to share a kitchen or bathroom.

Most emergency accommodation providers operate a 'no pets policy' and therefore you will need a temporary arrangement for pets and if you require kennel you need to cover this cost. Of you are faced with hardship, then you can discuss options with your homeless officer.

How long will I be in temporary accommodation?

The length of time you spend in temporary accommodation will depend on how long it takes you to secure long-term accommodation. To find long-term accommodation, you can:

- Bid on the housing register

To bid for any social housing properties you must be on the housing register. If you are eligible you'll need to log on regularly to bid for suitable properties. Finding a suitable home will depend on the availability of accommodation and how flexible you are about the type and location. Please be aware that, if you fall into rent arrears or have any housing related or council debt, your housing register application will be suspended and you can't bid. That's why it's so important that you pay your rent regularly. For more information and to find out if you are eligible visit Kent Homechoice.

- Find privately rented sector accommodation (PRS)

Private rented sector accommodation will often be the quickest route to resolve your housing issues. If you find private rented sector accommodation please contact your homeless officer and our Landlord Liaisons Team via ilo@gravesham.gov.uk or call 01474 337759 as soon as possible. If there are financial barriers, we can discuss potential financial support such as rent in advance and deposit. Please be aware that you are not restricted to consider accommodation inside the borough.

Will I be moved into accommodation that is not shared?

As your homeless application progresses, the temporary accommodation officer will regularly review your accommodation options to ensure that where possible we move you into self-contained accommodation. Priority will be given to households with dependent children and the Council will aim to move you out of any shared environment within six weeks. There is a shortage of accommodation options and moves will be dependent on what is available at the time.

How long will I be outside of the borough for?

Gravesham Housing Team will look to move you back to the borough as soon as possible (where appropriate), however, it is likely that you could be outside for some time. Moves are usually prioritised based on how long a household has been outside of Gravesham. Other factors such as support needs may also be taken into account.

Can I refuse emergency accommodation?

We will only offer you accommodation in line with the Temporary Accommodation policy and before an offer is made we believe the accommodation to be suitable and meet your needs. If accommodation is refused we would expect the applicant to provide reasons for refusing a property to then determine the next steps. If the Council believes that the accommodation we have offered is suitable, and we don't accept your reasons for refusing it, the Council will discharge our duty to provide you with emergency accommodation and no further offers of accommodation will be made whilst your application is being assessed.

Who should I contact if there is a problem with my accommodation?

Once you have been allocated accommodation, the accommodation provider will contact you to arrange sign up and collect the keys for the property. Remember to ask how to contact your landlord directly because this is who you will deal with about maintenance issues in your accommodation. The Temporary Accommodation Officer will call you within the first few days to ensure that you have settled. If you have any issues or difficulties contacting your landlord, please contact the Temporary Accommodation Team on ta@gravesham.gov.uk or phone 01474 337759.

Your license agreement

Your Homeless Officer or the Temporary Accommodation Officer will go over the terms and conditions in your license agreement and you should ask them to explain anything that you don't understand. If you are unsure how to contact your Homeless Officer, you can email housingneedsteam@gravesham.gov.uk

Will my temporary accommodation be furnished?

Some nightly paid temporary accommodation providers offer accommodation that has basic furnishing. However, there are some that will not and this means you will need to provide your furniture and white goods. This should be discussed with your Homeless Officer at the time of the placement.

Do I have to pay for temporary accommodation?

Yes. None of the temporary accommodation provided is free. You will be expected to pay a weekly charge. If you are on a low income you will need to claim Housing Benefit. The liability will be equivalent of the local housing allowance rate therefore if Housing Benefit does not cover this cost you will be liable for some charges.

If you fail to provide information for housing benefit to proceed an application or you do not make regular payments you could lose your accommodation. Officers will be regularly monitoring your temporary accommodation charge and will provide reminders and arrears letter. If you fail to engage and do not resolve your charges then this will result in the Council finding you intentionally homeless. If this happens, the Council will not have any obligations to house you and you will have to find your own place to live.

Moving on from temporary accommodation

You will need to vacate the temporary accommodation provided if:

- Our homelessness enquiries show that the council has no duty to continue accommodating you.
- You accept a property via private sector with the assistances from Landlord Liaison Team.
- Find your own alternative accommodation.
- You accept an offer of permanent accommodation from the Council's Homechoice scheme.
- You lose the accommodation because we have evidence that you are in breach of your tenancy agreement.
- If you refuse an offer of permanent accommodation which is suitable for your needs