

# Prisoners: housing on release

**This factsheet looks at your housing options when you come out of prison**

If you are still serving a sentence of 12 months or less, 'Through the Gate' services are available in prison and can advise you how to find housing on release from prison.

**NACRO's Resettlement Advice Service** on 0300 123 1999 can advise you on your housing options after leaving prison.

## Family and friends

It is difficult to get housing on release from prison so this can be a good short-term option. If relationships with family or friends have broken down, you may need to show them that you have dealt with past issues.

## Hostels and nightshelters

Hostel places are limited, and you may need to go on a waiting list. Some hostels are restricted to certain groups, eg people with mental health problems, or under 25s. You must claim benefits to pay the rent.

Nightshelters only offer a basic mattress and food, at no charge. They are run by churches and charities and are available in the winter.

## Supported housing

Supported housing can help you address issues to assist you to live independently and adjust back into the community. Varying levels of support are provided, depending on the type of accommodation and your needs. You will probably need to be referred by someone like a support worker. Most projects have waiting lists.

## Finding homelessness services

You can search for accommodation, advice and other services for homeless people at [homeless.org.uk](http://homeless.org.uk)

## Private renting

Private rented housing is expensive in many areas. You can claim benefits to help you pay the rent. The amount of benefits you can get depends on your age and the size and location of the property. If you are under 35, benefits will usually only pay the rent of a room in a shared house.

Landlords or letting agents will want references, a deposit, rent in advance, and proof that you can pay the rent.

## Apply as homeless

The council only has to give you somewhere to live while it looks into your application as homeless if it believes you may be:

- homeless
- eligible (some people from abroad aren't eligible)
- in 'priority need'.

The council will only arrange longer-term accommodation if you pass these 'tests' and didn't make yourself intentionally homeless.

## Priority need

Some people, such as pregnant women and those with dependent children, are automatically in priority need. Others have to be 'vulnerable'. Coming out of prison does not automatically make you vulnerable, though it can be a factor.

You could also be vulnerable because you are, for example, physically or mentally ill, or elderly, or were in care. The council will only decide you are vulnerable if it agrees you are significantly more at risk when homeless than an 'ordinary person' would be.

## Not intentionally homeless

The council may say you made yourself homeless 'intentionally' if you lost your home because you went to prison after committing a crime.

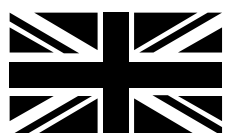
## Local connection

The council will check if you have a local connection with its area, for example if you have lived there for three out of the past five years (time in prison doesn't count), or have close family living there. If you don't have a local connection, then the council you apply to may ask another council to help you.

## Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free\* housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting [shelter.org.uk/advice](http://shelter.org.uk/advice) or [adviceguide.org.uk](http://adviceguide.org.uk)

\*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



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**Note**  
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