

The Homelessness Reduction Act– what it means for you

The new Homelessness Reduction Act increases the requirements for Copeland Borough Council to help all eligible applicants – rather than just those with a ‘priority need’.

It builds on previous Acts by requiring public authorities (such as the NHS) to notify Copeland Borough Council if someone they’re working with is facing homelessness.

It adds two new duties:

1. Duty to take steps to prevent homelessness: Copeland Borough Council will have to help people at risk of losing suitable accommodation as soon as they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This means people should get help on receiving a valid notice from their landlord if they are struggling to find a letting, rather than being told to come back when they have a bailiff’s date.

2. Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness: Copeland Borough Council will have to help all those who are homeless to secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are ‘intentionally homeless’ or priority need. This should mean that all eligible households are given tailored advice and offered help to find a home, ensuring that the true scale of homelessness is recorded. If neither of the above steps work and the household becomes, or remains, homeless, then those in priority need retain their right to be rehoused, but nonpriority households will not be entitled to further help.

You don’t have to be on the streets to be homeless

Are you homeless?

You don't have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over your head to be considered homeless. Most people who are legally homeless are not on the streets. There are many situations where the council must accept you are homeless, and may have a legal duty to help you with housing.

For example:

- You're at risk of violence or abuse where you are living. This can be from a partner, ex-partner or family member, or someone in your area. The council may ask you to provide details of the incidents. Evidence is helpful but the council will not turn you away if you haven't reported to police.
- You don't have 'a roof over your head' i.e. you are street homeless
- You're at risk of losing your home
- You can't afford to stay where you are
- Your accommodation is very temporary
- You are staying with friends or 'sofa surfing'
- You've been locked out or illegally evicted
- Your accommodation is in very poor condition
- You can't live together with your partner or close family
- You have nowhere to put your houseboat or caravan

If one or more of these apply, you may be eligible for help from the council.

The council will make an appointment for you to be interviewed by a housing officer. This should be the same day if you have nowhere to stay that night. You can bring a support worker or friend with you in to the interview.

At the interview

You need to take the right documents to your interview. The process will be quicker if you bring your ID and notice of eviction or a letter from the person you have been staying with. For more information on the homelessness interview, you can look at the **Shelter** website in the 'How to apply as homeless' section.

If the council says it can help you...

If the council accepts that it has a duty to continue housing you, you'll probably have to stay in temporary accommodation until it offers you somewhere more long-term or 'settled'.

If the council says it cannot help you...

You can challenge the council's decision.

If you think the council's decision is wrong, contact an independent local advice centre like Citizens Advice Bureau as soon as you can.

Other support if you are not eligible

If you are not eligible for housing from the council, you may still be able to access:

- Help from social services when homeless: if you have children or additional needs you may be able to get support from Children's or Adult Social Care.
- Short-term emergency housing.
- Support in finding private rented accommodation.

You can get further advice from:

- Shelter
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Crisis
- National Domestic Violence Helpline

Copeland Borough Council Housing Options Service

The council's housing options service can help you with either finding or keeping a safe and suitable home for you and your family.

We have a team of housing advisors who will work with you to explore all your options.

Housing Options Services

Market Hall,
Market Place
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7JG

Phone:

01946 598300

Out of hours phone:

01946 598300 Option 4

Email: housing.options@copeland.gov.uk

