

Our housing advice team are asked questions on a daily basis from young people in many different situations. In this leaflet we will answer some of the most popular questions. If you are homeless or at risk then you need to know the facts.



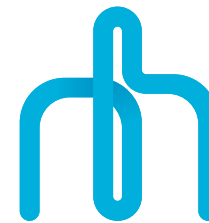
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New Horizon
Youth Centre

Homeless?
Thinking of
leaving home?

Creating Positive Futures

If you are 16-21 years old and find yourself homeless, sleeping on a mate's sofa, living in a car, sleeping rough, or on a bus, living in overcrowded conditions, don't know where to go, smoke too much weed, you don't feel right, living in a squat, can't stop drinking, kicked out by your parents, can't get a job, feel depressed, or have no hope. Then, New Horizon Youth Centre can help you.

I want to leave home. How do I go about renting a flat?

This often depends on your own finances as with most rented accommodation (even if its just a room) you will need to pay one month rent and a month's deposit in advance of moving in. The reality of independent living can be very difficult and should not be seen as an easy alternative to leaving your family home. Some London boroughs offer rent deposit schemes that can help you find a deposit for your own accommodation but this often depends on your age and is often only offered to over 25's. The easy answer to this is to get a job. However, we understand that getting a job is often difficult. You can get help with finding employment or training by dropping into New Horizon Youth Centre and speaking to one of our Lifeskills Workers.

The accommodation offered to me is too far away from my college...

The reality is you might be offered accommodation that is not close to where you are studying. Unfortunately, you will have to travel or you may have to choose between studying and your accommodation. The priority should be your housing as you can always put college on hold or enrol at an alternative college. There may not be alternative accommodation in the area you would like. Accommodation is extremely limited in central London. If you have a real housing need then we would expect you to accept the first offer of accommodation (as would most other organisations).

What benefits am I entitled to?

Your benefit entitlement depends on your age, whether you work, if you are studying and your immigration status. You can call the job centre to speak to them about your entitlement. Alternatively you can speak to a Connexions Advisor (if you are in education) or drop in to New Horizon Youth Centre where staff will be able to assist you with your questions around benefits.

How much does it cost to stay in a hostel?

Most people pay for hostel accommodation through housing benefit. However, not everyone is entitled to this especially if you are studying full time or in full time employment. As well as paying rent you may be asked to pay a service charge which may cover meals or bills. If you are paying your service charges through your benefits it can leave you with very little money to live on. Failure to pay your service charge would lead to you being evicted from your hostel accommodation. It is best to find out exactly what benefits you are entitled to by speaking to an advisor at your local job centre.

Will I get a council flat?

In an ideal world it would be great if everybody in need of a home was housed by the council. The reality is very different. You must have a connection to your local authority and have been living there for at least six months. Most local authorities will expect you to be in priority need to be considered for accommodation. This includes 16-17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, females who are over three months pregnant, ex armed services, people with serious ongoing mental health problems and homeless adults with dependants. Even if you fall under these headings you are not guaranteed accommodation. Many local authorities have different approaches to housing.

Where can I get advice on housing in London?

If you are homeless or thinking about leaving home then it is best to talk to a professional about what realistic options are available to you. If you are priority need (see above) you might want to approach your local authorities housing advice service. This service may vary from borough to borough but most boroughs offer a drop-in service where they can assess your case. You can call Shelterline to get a list of housing advice services in your area on 0808 800 4444. If you are 16-21 you can speak to a housing advisor at New Horizon Youth Centre. Come to the centre at 10am to be sure to get your name on the housing advice list. We give advice on a first come first served basis.

How long will I have to wait?

If you are homeless you will be assessed by a housing advisor and referred to an emergency hostel, if available. However, even emergency hostels often have waiting lists. You may be asked to wait a day or up to a couple of weeks before a vacancy arises. Other more long term hostels may have extremely long waiting lists. You may have to wait anything from a month or up to a couple of years. Again, this is usually dependent on your support needs. If you are considered to be a higher priority, you will be housed first and if you refuse accommodation most organisations will see you as intentionally homeless.