

# housing options

in Shropshire 

**advice and assistance  
for your housing need**



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**This information might be helpful to you if you:**

- face losing your home in the very near future
- think you might lose your home in the next 3 to 6 months
- have to rethink your housing options because of a change in your circumstances
- are homeless now

# Contents

Act early and increase your housing options	1
Contact our Housing Options Service	2
Emergency out of hours contact	2
Who we help	3
How we can help	4
Getting in contact with us	4-5
What happens after you have contacted us	5-6
What are the options to help you stay in your home	7-10
What are the options to help you find a new home	11-15
If you need to make a homeless application	16-22
Important contacts	22-25
What to bring with you for a Housing Options interview	26-27
Shropshire customer services map	28

Shropshire Council works in partnership with support agencies and housing providers to give advice and assistance to help people explore their housing options and to help people who face losing their home.

This leaflet tells you about the help we offer and how to make contact with us.

## Act early and increase your housing options

If you want more information about your housing options or if you think you might be homeless or in danger of losing your home then contact us.

**DO NOT WAIT** until you are actually homeless or about to become homeless before you call us.

The Housing Options Service is there to help you if you:

- **want general housing advice**
- **are worried about losing your home in the future**
- **are faced with losing your home now or in the very near future**
- **are already homeless**

If you are not sure that this is the right service for you make contact anyway and together we can assess your situation.

If we can not help you we can usually put you in contact with other services that might be able to help.

# Contacting our Housing Options Service

If you are in need of housing advice please contact us, do not wait until it is too late.

You can contact us by:

- Calling the Shropshire Council Customer Services on **0345 678 9005**
- Calling in at one of the **Customer Service Access Points** (listed at the end of this leaflet)
- Emailing your query to **housingoptions@shropshire.gov.uk**

When you ring us or call in at a customer service access point the customer services staff will make sure you get through to the right part of the Council as quickly as possible.

## Emergency out of hours contact

**0345 678 9005**

During weekends (and evenings) we provide an emergency service for people facing immediate homelessness.

If you want some advice or information but do not need an immediate response then it is also possible to email us your questions and we will respond within 3 working days.

# Who we help

The housing options service is there for you:

- **if you want general information about your housing options**
- **if you are facing debt or money problems that might affect your housing**
- **if your circumstances have changed and you need to rethink your housing options**
- **if you are living at home with family and need to think about moving out**
- **if your tenancy with a private landlord is coming to an end**
- **if you are in dispute with your landlord**
- **if you are struggling to pay your mortgage**
- **if you are threatened with violence or are being harassed where you live now**
- **if you are being threatened with homelessness now or in the near future**

If in doubt, call us and if we cannot help we will be able to put you in contact with someone who can.



# How we can help

Everyone is entitled to advice and assistance from the Council's Housing Options Service relating to any aspect of housing.

For example, we can give you advice and support on:

- **Your options to help you keep your present home**
- **Your options for managing debt and mortgage problems**
- **Your options if you are planning a move from your family to your first independent home**
- **Your Options to help you find a new home**
- **Your legal rights as a tenant or home owner**
- **Emergency accommodation if you are homeless**

We can also give you details of other organisations that can help you with any other housing-related matters (for example, we can refer you to agencies for money or legal advice). Some of these organisations are listed at the end of this leaflet.

In some cases where a person is judged to be homeless we will offer emergency or temporary accommodation as part of a plan to help you find yourself secure accommodation.

## Getting in contact with us

Telephone: **0345 678 9005**

Email: **housingoptions@shropshire.gov.uk**

Out of hours: **Mon-Thurs after 5.00pm. Friday after 4.00pm**

A list of customer access points is shown at the end of this leaflet and on our website at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

Once the Customer Service Advisor has asked you a few key questions about your current situation they will do one of the following things:

- **forward your details onto the Housing Options Team**
- **connect you directly to the Housing Options Team for emergency advice**
- **give you information about other services you might contact**

The Customer Service Advisor will not assess if you are homeless; they will help you make contact with the right service or person as quickly as possible.

## What happens after you have contacted us?

After you call Customer Services or call in at one of our offices you may be invited to come for an interview with one of our Housing Options Officers, or in some circumstances they can arrange to visit you at home. They will ask you more detailed questions about your current housing situation.

If you come for an interview you will need to bring any documents that help explain your current housing situation; for example, details of your mortgage account or a landlord's notice to quit. A list of these documents is shown at the end of this leaflet.

When we speak to you we will explore:

- 1. The options to help you stay in your current accommodation**
- 2. The options to help you find yourself new accommodation**

If you contact us and tell us that you are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, we will need to make detailed enquiries to find out exactly what type of help we can give you.

If you are about to become homeless and this cannot be prevented, you maybe asked to complete a homelessness application form and we will use all the information you give us to make our enquiries.

We can offer you an appointment or in some circumstances we can offer a home visit.

To recap:

Do not delay making contact with us:

Make contact with us through Customer Services on **0345 678 9005** or by coming to one of our Customer Service access points. We will either offer you an interview or direct you to another source of help.

At the Housing Options interview we will discuss:

- **your current housing and related circumstances**
- **your needs and how they affect your housing situation**
- **how you might be able to keep your current accommodation**
- **how you might be able to move in a planned way to new accommodation**
- **making an application for you to be judged as homeless**
- **any emergency help you need**

Following these discussions you will receive advice and information and we may make further enquires regarding your potential homelessness.

## What are the options to help you stay in your home?

It is usually less stressful and disruptive if you can continue to live in your current home if it is safe to do so. We have a number of ways we can help and advise you.

### Debt Advice

We work in partnership with Citizens Advice Shropshire (CAS). Citizens Advice Shropshire is a registered charity and is part of the national Citizens Advice Bureau. They are part of an independent network, which give free, confidential and impartial help and advice to anyone.

Citizens Advice Shropshire can offer advice and help on:

- **Debt problems (including housing related debt)**
- **Personal finance**
- **Welfare benefits**

Citizens Advice Shropshire provides a range of services and has offices and other services across the county. You can get details from [www.citizensadviceshropshire.org](http://www.citizensadviceshropshire.org) and we have put the key contact details at the end of this leaflet.



## Mortgage Difficulties

If you are struggling to pay your mortgage or you think you face difficulties in the near future (e.g. as a fixed rate mortgage comes to an end), or your circumstances change which will impact on your repayments, you need to seek advice from the Housing Options Team.

The Government has set up a comprehensive package of support to help with mortgage problems and this includes help with debt and money advice. You can discuss whether you will be eligible for the Government scheme ('mortgage rescue') or other support by contacting us. You will have the most options open to you if you contact us as soon as you start to get into difficulties with your mortgage repayments.

We will talk through the various options with you as part of our advice and support.

## Mediation

Mediation is a way of resolving disputes. Mediation between family members can often be very helpful in making it possible for a young person (16-25) to leave home in a planned way and avoid the need for them to become homeless. The focus of the mediation will be aimed at preventing the relationship from breaking down between the parent / guardian and young person.

The aim of the mediation is not to resolve a dispute to the benefit of either party, rather to find a resolution that can be agreed by both parties and allow young people to stay at home or make a planned move from home.

Mediation often ends up with the young person being able to stay at home for longer and the whole family to get on better whilst the young person makes a planned move into their own accommodation. The quicker you talk to us about these issues the quicker we can find the help you need. If mediation is relevant we will contact the most appropriate service on your behalf.

## Housing Rights

The Citizens Advice Shropshire service helps people resolve their legal, housing, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.

Citizens Advice Shropshire provides a range of services and has offices and other services across the county. You can get details from [www.citizensadviceshropshire.org](http://www.citizensadviceshropshire.org) and we have put the key contact details at the end of this leaflet.

## Domestic Abuse

In some cases of domestic or family abuse, you may wish to remain in your present home if you are offered extra support and if security measures are put in place to keep you safe.

This may be an option if you are being affected by violence from someone who does not actually live with you. In conjunction with the police and other agencies, we may be able to offer you various support and security measures to enable you to remain in your own home. For example, we may be able to:

- **Add or change locks on doors and ground floor windows**
- **Change or reinforce external doors to the property**
- **Provide extra security lighting**
- **Provide a fire-resistant letterbox (for arson attacks), smoke detectors and fire escape ladder**
- **Provide you with personal alarms**

To discuss your situation further, and for advice on whether remaining in your present home with additional security and support measures may be the best option for you, please contact our Housing Options Service, the police or Women's Aid using the contact details you will find at the end of this leaflet.

## Discretionary Housing Payment - help with rent or council tax

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) can provide additional short-term help to benefit customers who are unable to meet either or both of their Council Tax and reasonable rent costs. Each request for DHP is assessed on its own merits but there are some specific circumstances when DHP can not be used.

To find out more contact our Housing Options Service or Benefit Services using the contact details at the end of this leaflet.

## Prevention Fund

The 'prevention fund' is money set aside that can be used in a range of circumstances to prevent homelessness. Each case is assessed on its own merits and can be used where there is no other way of preventing homelessness happening.

An example may be to offer an interest free loan to address low level arrears where this would directly lead to the prevention of homelessness. However this could only be considered where there is no other history of rent arrears and the debt is unlikely to build up again. We will talk through the various options with you as part of our advice and support.

## Housing Related Support

Floating Support is temporary help for people who may be experiencing difficulties such as budgeting, setting up a home, or managing a tenancy. There are a number of floating support schemes in the county, which can help single people, lone parents, council tenants, victims of domestic abuse and refugees. We will talk through the various options with you as part of our advice and support.

## What are the options to help you find a new home?

If you cannot stay where you are currently then we will try and offer help and advice in the following ways.

### Private renting

Many people looking for a new home choose to go into private rented accommodation. The advantage of renting privately is that you can secure self-contained accommodation in an area of your choice, which may be close to schools, family support, specialist medical facilities or other centres of interest.

We can offer you advice to help you find affordable private rented accommodation. We may also be able to put you in touch with prospective landlords.



## Advice and the Rent Deposit Scheme through Shropshire Housing Alliance

If you consider yourself to be homeless or threatened with homelessness and are unable to afford the cost of a deposit for private rented accommodation, we may be able to help you.

Advice and the 'Rent Deposit Scheme' are offered by the Shropshire Housing Alliance. Shropshire Housing Alliance (SHA) is a new charity that is built through the merger of 3 already existing charities. The aim is to help more people in housing need throughout the whole of Shropshire with housing advice and support.

You can approach The Shropshire Housing Alliance for help if you are...

- **Sleeping rough**
- **In insecure housing**
- **Living temporarily in a Hostel or bed & breakfast**
- **Threatened with eviction**
- **Asked to leave by family /carers**
- **Staying on friends' floors or sofas**
- **Thinking of moving on to independence**

SHA can help by...

- **Giving free and independent advice**
- **Finding prospective properties / landlords / tenants**
- **Assistance with form filling / budgeting**
- **A loan for a deposit**
- **Explaining your rights and responsibilities**
- **Providing legally drawn up tenancies**
- **Offering ongoing support once housed**

SHA can provide support to help set up and maintain a tenancy whilst you develop the skills needed to live independently and successfully run a home. The Rent Deposit Scheme can help by providing you with an interest free loan, which can be repaid in regular instalments. They may also offer 'Rent In Advance' or 'Rent Bonds'. This can be used to assist people who may find private renting too expensive and need financial assistance to access this sector.

To find out more about the scheme, please contact the Housing Options Service or Shropshire Housing Alliance using the details at the end of this leaflet.

## Social Housing

The providers that predominantly operate in the central, north and south of Shropshire are detailed below but there are other providers within all areas.

AREA	REGISTERED PROVIDERS
Central	Sevenside Housing
North	Meres & Mosses and Shropshire Council's Landlord Services
South	South Shropshire Housing Association and Shropshire Council's Landlord Services

As of the 1st of June 2009, Shropshire will have a new affordable housing allocation policy. From this date, housing applications will be held on a Shropshire housing register by Shropshire HomePoint, and the majority of properties across Shropshire will be let through a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme.

Applicants will be able to 'bid' for properties they would like to live in, as long as the property is suitable to their needs. Most social housing in the County will be covered by the CBL scheme. The scheme includes rented and shared-ownership housing.

Your housing need will be assessed based on the information you provide on your application form. It is important you tell us about anything you feel may help us to place you in the correct band for your circumstances. HomePoint staff and staff from any of the partner agencies can help you to complete your application form.

## Home Ownership Schemes

The government funds a variety of schemes to help first time buyers who can not afford to buy a home on the open market. The schemes are sometimes called 'shared ownership' or 'low cost home ownership'. To find out more about the scheme, please contact the Housing Options Service using the details at the end of this leaflet.

## Housing Related Support

The Supporting People programme aims to help people with support needs to live more independently through tenancy and other housing related support.

If you are over 16, are entitled to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and need extra support to help you keep your tenancy or housing then you may be entitled to receive support services funded by Supporting People.

To find out more about these schemes please visit:  
[www.shropshire.gov.uk/supportingpeople.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/supportingpeople.nsf)

## Supported Housing

Supported housing is accommodation designed for people who need help with everyday living. Supported housing is generally provided by local councils, housing associations (registered social landlords) or voluntary groups (charities). The type and level of support offered will vary.

Some supported housing offers high levels of support and 24 hour staffing cover, whereas in other places the support will be of a much lower level and may only be offered occasionally.

## Supported Housing Rent Deposit & Rent In Advance Scheme

If you live in a hostel or short-term accommodation service funded by the Supporting People Programme and are now ready to move to independent housing, you may be eligible for a grant to help you fund a deposit and rent in advance.

There are schemes in the County which provide housing for the following groups of people:

- **Homeless people with support needs**
- **Young parents**
- **Women in need of refuge from domestic abuse**
- **People with mental health issues**
- **People with learning disabilities**
- **People with physical or sensory disabilities**
- **People in need of support with substance abuse issues**
- **Ex-offenders**

To find out more please speak to your support provider make contact with Supporting People on **01743 254043** or visit:  
[www.shropshire.gov.uk/supportingpeople.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/supportingpeople.nsf)

We are always developing new approaches to helping people with their housing issues so there maybe ways we can help that we have not mentioned in this leaflet.



# If you need to make a homelessness application

There are some important things you need to know about who we help and why.

The law that governs our work sets out the guidelines we need to use to make sure we provide you with a fair and consistent service.

We have to give everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness some form of help. The help we offer will vary depending on your circumstances we will not always offer accommodation but we will always offer advice and information.

## Our Enquiries into your potential homelessness

We are required by law to investigate all homelessness applications. While we make these enquiries, we may have a duty to find you temporary emergency accommodation. During our enquiries we will need to find out:

- 1. If you are homeless (or about to become homeless)**
- 2. If you are eligible for assistance**
- 3. If you are in priority need**
- 4. If you have made yourself intentionally homeless**
- 5. If you have a local connection with Shropshire**

# Am I eligible for assistance?

Housing Options can accept a homelessness application from any person who is legally in the UK except for people whose age, learning disability or illness means they cannot understand the application process. It is up to the council to decide whether a person is able to understand the application process.

Someone without any recourse to public funds i.e. state benefits (marked in their passport) are usually not eligible. This is a very complex area of homelessness law so please contact Housing Options.

## Will I be classed as homeless?

You do not have to be 'roofless' or sleeping rough to be considered as homeless. You may be considered as homeless if:

- You have nowhere to live in the UK or anywhere else in the world**
- You are forced to live apart from someone you normally live with**
- You have left home or are about to leave because someone living with you has been violent or has threatened violence to you or your family**
- You have nowhere else to live together with all your family**
- You are being harassed in a way which may lead to you leaving home**
- Your home is a boat, caravan or mobile home and you have nowhere legally site it**
- You can no longer afford to stay where you are**
- It is not reasonable for you to stay in your present home because of its condition**

These are the main categories we work from but there may be unique circumstances that do not fit neatly into the categories above. If your specific circumstances are not listed above we may still consider you as homeless.

## Will I be a priority for help and assistance?

We want to work quickly with those people that need help and are the most vulnerable so we use the following categories to help us focus that help. You are likely to be assessed as being a priority for help if:

- **You or your partner are pregnant**
- **You have dependent children living with you**
- **You are made homeless because of a flood, fire or other disaster**
- **You are 16 or 17 years old**
- **You are between the ages of 18 and 21 and were looked after, accommodated or fostered by the local authority**
- **You can no longer live in your home because of violence or the threat of violence and are vulnerable**
- **You or someone in your family is elderly, disabled, has a mental illness or is vulnerable in some other way**
- **You have recently left the armed forces and are vulnerable**
- **You have recently been released from prison and are vulnerable**

## Making a homelessness application

You do not have to make a formal homeless application to get our help. If it is possible we will try to help you avoid homelessness by providing practical help and advice.

## At the interview

At this stage there are a number of options we will explore with you:

- **can we help you to keep your current accommodation and avoid becoming homeless altogether**
- **can we help you to find alternative accommodation to help you avoid becoming homeless**
- **if you cannot avoid homelessness what other help we can offer you**

You do not need to come to the Housing Options interview on your own. You can bring along a friend, support worker or advisor to help you.

You will be asked questions about yourself and your family and about the circumstances that led to your homelessness or the threat of homelessness.

It is important that you tell us all the facts so that everything can be taken into account. Bring along any documents that you think may support your application, a checklist can be found at the end of this leaflet.

The council has a legal duty to carry out investigations into your homeless application to satisfy itself that you pass the tests previously mentioned.

If your circumstances change between the time you apply and when we make a decision you must let us know immediately.



# What happens once you make a homelessness application?

## Emergency Accommodation

If we have reason to believe that you are homeless and in priority need, Shropshire Council must arrange emergency accommodation whilst your case is being investigated. This is usually in bed and breakfast, hostel or other short-term/temporary accommodation.

The emergency/temporary accommodation may not be in the part of Shropshire you live in now.

If we offer you emergency/temporary accommodation you may be asked to meet part or all of the costs depending on your income.

If you are claiming Income Support and /or Housing Benefit then it is important to make a claim from your new address straight away.

If you are in emergency/temporary accommodation and have any problems or complaints please let the Temporary Accommodation Officer know.

# What happens if you are accepted as being homeless?

If we decide that you are homeless, that you are in priority need, are unintentionally homeless, and that you have a local connection with Shropshire the Housing Options Service will assist you to get re-housed in one of the following ways -

- **In a Council property, in accordance with the Council's Allocation Policy**
- **In a Housing Association property, in accordance with their Allocations Policies**
- **With a Private Landlord**

If you refuse a reasonable offer of accommodation that was suitable for your households' needs we may discharge the homeless duty that was owed to you. This will mean that you will no longer be owed a housing duty by the council. Before you reject any offer of accommodation it is important to get advice first.

# What happens if you are not accepted as being homeless?

We may decide after our investigations that you are:

- **Not homeless or**
- **Not in priority need or**
- **Homeless intentionally**

You will be informed of this decision by letter and of any action, which we can take to help you. This help may include:

- **Continuing to provide advice and assistance**
- **Providing emergency accommodation**
- **Referring your case to another Local Authority that maybe able to help you**

# Asking for a review of our decision

If you disagree with our decision or think that relevant information has not been taken into account you can request a review of your case.

Before you request a review check the Section 184 decision letter for the full reasons we have given to explain the negative decision.

You have 21 days from the date of the Section 184 decision letter to apply for a review.

Your application for a review can be requested either by discussion with your Housing Options Officer or can be in writing and should be sent to:

Housing Options Manager, Community Services, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY2 6ND.

The review should normally be completed within 56 days and you will be sent a letter explaining the review decision with full reasons for that decision.

After this you have a further Right of Appeal to the County Court within 21 days if you consider that Shropshire Council has not applied the homelessness legislation correctly to your situation.

Citizens Advice Shropshire and Shelter will offer you advice and guidance on this aspect of homelessness legislation.

## Important Contacts

The number to call if you think you maybe at risk of becoming homeless: **0345 678 9005**

# Shropshire Council

## Housing Options Service

Email: [housingoptions@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@shropshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 0345 678 9005

Website: [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

## Housing Benefit Services

Email: [benefits@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@shropshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 0345 678 9001

Website: [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

## Local Centres and offices in your area

(See Customer Service map on back page)

# Advice & Support Agencies:

## Shropshire Housing Alliance

SHA offers a range of independent and confidential advice and support services including:

- Housing Advice
- Help to Access Private Rented Accommodation
- Financial Support to Access Private Rented Accommodation
- Furniture Schemes
- Tenancy Support

Tel: 01743 341900

Roy Fletcher Centre  
12 - 17 Cross Hill, Suite A  
Shrewsbury SY1 1JE

Tel: 01743 341900

Email: [shrewsbury@SHAlliance.org.uk](mailto:shrewsbury@SHAlliance.org.uk)

Website: [www.shalliance.org.uk](http://www.shalliance.org.uk)

## Citizens Advice Shropshire

Citizens Advice Shropshire offers a range of independent and confidential advice services including:

- Housing
- Welfare benefits
- Employment issues
- Debt
- Family and personal matters
- Legal problems
- Immigration

Tel: 08444 99 11 00

Website: [www.cabshropshire.org.uk](http://www.cabshropshire.org.uk)

## Shelterline (Free housing advice helpline):

Information and advice on housing-related problems, including:

- Homelessness
- Disrepair
- Housing rights and legal issues

Tel: 0808 800 4444

## Domestic Violence

Information and support for people experiencing domestic violence:

Hereford & Shropshire Helpline

Tel: 0800 7831359

Free phone 24 hr National Domestic Violence Helpline

Tel: 0808 2000 247

## Housing and landlords:

### Shropshire Council

Bridgnorth: 01746 713206

Oswestry: 01691 677279

### Shrewsbury:

Sevenside Housing Association: 0845 234 2424 or 01743 285000

### North Shropshire:

Meres & Mosses Housing Association: 0800 434 6289

### South:

South Shropshire Housing Association: 01588 676200

### Across the county:

Accord Housing Association: 0121 568 3900

Beth Johnson Housing Association: 0800 131 3329

Bromford Group: 0845 605 0603

Equity Housing Group: 0800 733233

Habinteg Housing Association: 02078 228700

Jephson / Marches: 01568 610 100

Mercian Housing Association: 0121 322 7373

Midland Heart: 0345 60 20 540

Raglan Housing Association: 0845 070 7772

Shropshire Rural Housing Association: 01743 874848

The Wrekin Housing Trust: 01952 217100

### Over 55 years of age:

Anchor Retirement Housing: 08457 758 595

Trident: 0121 633 4633

Housing 21: 01691 659 198

# What to bring with you for a Housing Options interview

This is a checklist of useful items you should try to take with you when you attend your interview. Try and take as many things as possible that apply to you and your circumstances, as this can help to speed up your application.

Not every item on this list will apply to you or you may not have the document, but still attend your interview and explain everything to the officer.

## Proof of identity

- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Driving licence (photo-card and paper-copy)
- National Insurance card
- Proof of immigration status

## Evidence of why you are homeless or about to become homeless

- Tenancy agreement
- Notice to Quit
- Notice of Possession
- Mortgage Statement or most recent correspondence from the lender
- Court orders or details of court proceedings
- Letter from parents/friends/relatives saying you have to leave

## Proof of income

- Income details
- Bank Statements
- Entitlement to benefits
- Mortgage agreement
- Secured loan(s) agreements

## Other evidence of your circumstances

- Name, Address & Telephone Number of your landlord/ estate agents
- Birth certificates of your partner/children
- Marriage certificate
- Child benefit/Tax Credit letter/book
- Residence order from the court
- Wage slips
- Details of previous addresses
- Details of social workers/support workers
- Proof of pregnancy
- Relevant medical information

The Homelessness Officer or Homeless Prevention Officer, will not keep any original documents - unless written specifically for the Homelessness Officer by name - but he or she will take copies with your permission.

# Shropshire Customer Services Map

# Notes



For more information about Customer Service points, Telly Talk and Broadplaces, including opening hours, go to [www.shropshire.gov.uk/customerservice.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/customerservice.nsf) or call **0345 678 9000**.