

Applying as homeless: immigration and residence rules

You can get homeless help from a local council if you meet immigration and residence conditions.

What the council checks

When you apply as homeless, the council asks about your immigration status and whether you have recently lived abroad. The council might call this checking if you are eligible for homelessness assistance.

The council needs to check this even if you are a British citizen or have always lived in the UK.

Who qualifies for help

You usually meet immigration and residence conditions if you:

- are a British or Irish citizen
- have refugee status or humanitarian protection
- have indefinite leave to remain or EU settled status
- are a Commonwealth citizen with right of abode
- have leave to remain with access to public funds

Access to public funds means you are allowed to apply for benefits and housing.

EU citizens

You need to meet extra conditions if you are an EU citizen and have pre-settled status. You might get help if you are working or self-employed.

If you moved to the UK after 31 December 2020, you usually don't qualify for help unless you are Irish or have settled status.

Habitual residence

You might need to be habitually resident to get help. This means you normally live in the UK, Ireland or Isle of Man.

You don't need to be habitually resident in some situations. For example if you are a refugee or fled conflict in Ukraine or Afghanistan.

If you recently moved back to the UK

You might not get help straight away if you are not yet habitually resident. Usually you can get some help with housing and benefits after three months of arriving in the UK.

You might be habitually resident immediately in some circumstances, for example if you were only away temporarily or you were deported back to the UK.

If the council say you don't qualify for help

The council must give you a written decision if it decides you don't qualify for help. You have 21 days to ask it to review this decision. Get help from a housing adviser or solicitor.

You might be able to get help from social services if you have children and you have nowhere to stay.

You can get further advice from england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice, a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice.

If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on 0808 800 4444 for advice and information on your options. Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.

