

Homeless when released from prison

If you were recently released from prison, find out about services that could provide practical support and help you find accommodation

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

As of April 2018, The Homelessness Reduction Act changed the homelessness duties for Southwark Council to help **all** eligible applicants – rather than just those with a ‘priority need’.

It also adds the **Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness**: We will help all those who are homeless to secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are ‘intentionally homeless’ or have a priority need. This means that all eligible households will be offered help to find alternative accommodation for themselves.

Help from Southwark Council

You can apply to Southwark council for help if you’re homeless now or due to leave prison in the next 8 weeks and don’t have anywhere to stay on release.

The council must:

- carry out an [assessment](#) of your housing needs
- give you a [personal housing plan](#) that sets out the steps you and the council must take to find suitable accommodation

They should work with the probation service, community rehabilitation company or youth offending team to decide what support you might need to find and keep somewhere to live.

You can apply to any council for help but it’s usually best to apply to an area where you have a [local connection](#). Being in prison in an area doesn’t count as a local connection.

If you apply to an area where you don’t have a connection, you can be referred to an area where you do. You can’t be referred to another area if:

- an injunction means you can’t go there
- you’re at risk of violence there

You won’t qualify for any housing or support from the council if you don’t meet [immigration or residence conditions](#).

Emergency housing

You should qualify for [emergency housing](#) if the council has reason to believe you are homeless and in priority need.

You have an automatic [priority need](#) for housing if you:

- have children who live with you
- are pregnant or a partner you live with is pregnant

- are aged 18-20 and spent time in care when you were 16 or 17

You also have a priority need for housing if you're classed as 'vulnerable'. This means it's harder for you to cope with being homeless than other people in the same situation.

You may be classed as vulnerable due to your time spent in prison. The council must consider:

- any support you get from friends or family
- your physical and mental health and how it affects you
- how long you spent in prison and when you were released
- if you've been able to find or keep accommodation since release

The council should speak to agencies involved in your support and supervision. For example, probation, youth offending team or drug and alcohol services.

Longer-term housing

The council must provide longer-term housing if you [meet the 5 conditions for longer-term housing](#).

The council doesn't have to help with longer-term housing if they decide you are '[intentionally homeless](#)'. This means you lost your home because of something you deliberately did or didn't do.

Examples of when you could be intentionally homeless include if you lost your home because you:

- were convicted of a serious offence
- didn't pay rent when you were in prison

If the council says you're intentionally homeless, you may be able to [challenge the decision](#).

What area you can be housing in if you are homeless?

When you apply to Southwark Council as homeless, the Housing Solutions service will check to see if you have a local connection with its area.

You can establish a local connection, for example, by living, working, or having immediate family (usually a parent or brother or sister) in the area.

Time spent in prison in a specific area does not give you a local connection with the area where the prison is located. However, if you have no local connection with any area or if you are fleeing domestic violence, you can apply to any council in any area. The council you apply to has to help you.

There may be restrictions placed on where you can live. For example, if an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) says you can't go to a particular area, you may need to seek help from a different council.

Find out more about punishments for antisocial behaviour here: <https://www.gov.uk/civil-injunctions-criminal-behaviour-orders>.

High risk prisoners managed by a multi agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) may be required to live in certain areas.

Help before you leave prison

Most prisons have a housing advice and resettlement service called Through the Gate. The service is delivered by charities including Shelter, St Giles Trust and Catch22.

A resettlement worker in prison can help you with things like:

- referrals to suitable accommodation if you'll be homeless on release
- [dealing with a housing benefit claim](#) while you're in prison
- [claiming universal credit on release](#)
- rent arrears or eviction

You can apply for the following grants before release:

- a £46 discharge grant
- up to £50 for your first night's accommodation (paid direct to the housing provider)

Help with housing costs

You need a suitable address to stay at before you can be released on bail or [home detention curfew](#) (an electronic tag).

If you cannot live at your usual address, court or prison staff may refer you to the [Bail Accommodation Support Scheme \(BASS\)](#).

[Contact Nacro's Resettlement Advice Service on 0300 123 1999 for further advice.](#)

Help from the probation service

You're allocated a probation officer in the area you'll be living after release. Your probation officer manages your supervision in the community.

Your resettlement worker in prison works on your resettlement plan with your probation officer.

If you're released on licence, the conditions of your licence might mean you can't live in certain areas.

Probation teams can give you housing advice and may be able to refer you to a specialist hostel, supported housing or private landlords.

Help with housing costs

You probably need to [claim universal credit](#) unless you live or move in with a partner who's already [claiming housing benefit](#).

You may also be able to get help through a:

- [discretionary housing payment](#)
- grant or loan from a local welfare scheme