



Guide for households provided with temporary accommodation



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Introduction

We believe that everyone should have a suitable and affordable home where they feel safe and are able to thrive; but we know that this is not the case for everyone.

We know that facing homelessness and dealing with the reasons for your homelessness can be stressful and traumatic.

We have legal duties to prevent, relieve and address homelessness. Providing emergency and temporary accommodation are part of these duties for some people.

This simple guide is written to help you if you can't stay with family or friends and we need to provide you with emergency accommodation; or if you are currently staying in emergency accommodation. We hope it's useful to you.

Important note

For many households, being provided with temporary accommodation is a necessity. For others, it might not be the best option. For example, it may be more affordable, offer greater control of your circumstances and allow you to live in a familiar environment if you are able to stay with family members or friends.

You should also consider finding your own home to rent in the private sector before you become homeless.

You should explore the possibility of private rented accommodation with your Housing Advisor - they will outline the many financial incentives the council has to offer to assist you to find your own home.

If you have made a homelessness application and have been offered emergency or temporary accommodation while your case is being assessed, this is because we believe that you have nowhere else to stay and may be vulnerable.

What we offer you depends on your family composition and what is available at the time.

You may be asked to move from emergency to temporary accommodation one or more times before you have longer-term housing; and your TA could be in any area of Bristol or outside the city's boundaries.

Things you have to do in the first few days

- Complete a 'change of circumstances' update on your Universal Credit account and make sure that your new details are shared with the DWP for any other benefits you receive.
- Provide the documentation your Housing Adviser requests
- Make sure that a Housing Benefit claim has been made for your Temporary Accommodation (TA) AND that you've provided all the necessary information for this claim to be processed and paid.
- Read and understand your TA licence agreement
- Read and understand your TA provider's house rules and key contact numbers. If your provider has not given you a copy of their rules please ask for one.
- Look out for your email or written letter with your payment account number for paying your service or accommodation charges. The account number is specific to you and your placement. It tells you how much to pay and how to pay it on the attached method payment sheet.
- Check if you're liable for council tax. If so, apply for Council Tax Reduction from your TA address.
- Make a budget plan (including rent payments, service charges, council tax and other living expenses). This must include making sure you pay your service charges OR set up your utilities bills if you're placed in self-contained TA. It also means making sure that your Housing Benefit claim is made and that you have provided all necessary documentation for it to be processed and paid.
- Google search local services that can help you.
You could try: [Well aware service](#) and [Cost of living support \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#).
- Register with a local GP and dentist

Things to keep on top of – playing your part

Your accommodation provider – the name and contact details of your accommodation provider are written on your temporary accommodation licence agreement. It is very important for you to keep this document safe.

Licence agreement – you were provided with this on the day your temporary accommodation (TA) was booked. It is very important that you read through and keep your copy of the licence agreement in a safe place. It contains the terms and conditions and DOs and DON'Ts of your temporary accommodation. If for any reason you don't have a copy, it's important to ask your Housing Advisor for one.

Paying the rent – you will have made a Housing Benefit claim with our support at the point your TA was booked. This is essential. Please make sure that you have provided all the information necessary so that your Housing Benefit claim can be processed and paid. If you don't, you could run up rent arrears and this will result in your HomeChoice Bristol account being suspended (blocked) until Housing Benefit and/or your personal contributions are in payment; you will be liable for your full rent and if you don't pay, we may end your TA.

In short – paying the rent is your responsibility.

Methods of payment – the following should help you to keep your TA rent account up to date:
Bristol City Council sort code **56-00-05**
Bristol City Council account number **41322282**

- You will need to include your 14 digit property account when you make payments – you will have a letter which includes your property account number.
- Bristol City Council has a [24-hour secure internet payments service](#). Choose the Housing Rent Option:
- Phone - Open 24 hours a day on 0870 707 7776.
- Citizen Service Point, 100 Temple St., BS1 1AG - Open during office hours. You can pay using all payment methods.

Utilities costs – in some TA you will need to set up gas, water and electricity bills in your name. This is a priority for you. The provider of your accommodation will help you with this if you need.

Please note: if you have a weekly service charge to pay, you are not expected to set up utility bills in your own name

Service charges – Service charges are made for TA where you do not need to set up bills in your name. Again, these are for utilities, such as gas, electricity and water rates. They are not covered by Housing Benefit; and you must pay them. Service charges are likely to be much less than you would pay in your own flat or house.

Resident parking zones and parking costs – Some areas of Bristol where TA is located have resident parking zones and costs. If you need to park your vehicle in such an area, you have to pay the costs – the council won't.

Questions and answers - your rights and responsibilities

What is temporary accommodation (TA)?

There is a useful [Temporary accommodation \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk) page on our website.

What if I want to stay away from my TA?

You should always occupy the TA you have been allocated. If you don't occupy your placement will be cancelled.. Your provider will clear your room but will not be responsible for any items you leave behind. Providers may hold onto your items for up to 7 days. As an authority we are not responsible for any items you leave behind.

However, emergencies and unexpected events do happen and in these circumstances you must contact your Housing Advisor for advice.

Can I have visitors?

Not all providers allow visitors at their properties, but where they do, each has their own rules on visitors; and many have a time in the evening when visitors must leave the accommodation. You should be familiar with these and are expected to follow the "house rules". You will not be allowed to have any overnight visitors; your placement is for you and your household members agreed with your Housing Advisor. If you allow others to stay with you, it may mean we end your placement. Please remember if you do have visitors and they break your provider's house rules it will impact on you, and you may lose your placement. Remember you are responsible for your visitors' actions.

What if my household size changes?

Perhaps you have had a baby, or someone leaves your family or household?

If this is the case, you must contact your housing advisor urgently. Please provide a copy of the birth certificate for a new baby.

If you want to add a new person onto your homeless application, you will need to discuss with your Housing Advisor before they move in with you.

As an authority we may not agree to new members joining your household if they have not and do not normally reside with you.

What if I have a complaint or need to report a repair urgently?

The quality of our temporary accommodation must meet certain standards but if you feel that there are issues with the standard of the accommodation, or if there are repairs issues, you must report them to the provider as they are responsible for ensuring the upkeep and condition of the accommodation.

We suggest that you keep a record of any repairs and any photographic evidence of the issues. If the provider does not resolve any disrepair issues and you are able to demonstrate this, you are advised to contact your Housing Advisor.

If you have a concern about your provider's staff or another resident and their behaviour, **always contact your provider first.**

If you do not receive a reply and the problem continues, please contact your Housing Advisor. Ensure that you provide your temporary accommodation address and details of your problem and the providers actions.

Do I have to look after my temporary accommodation?

You are responsible for looking after your temporary accommodation. For example, ensuring you keep it clean and do not cause any damage to the property or the furnishings, including any communal areas if you are in shared accommodation.

You are also responsible for any garden or driveway and ensuring that these are kept clear of rubbish or any unwanted household items. Please remember you are responsible for any members of your household and any visitors.

You must ensure that they behave appropriately. You are reminded to read the terms and conditions of your license agreement.

If you fail to abide by the terms and conditions of your license agreement it may lead to you losing the placement and, in some circumstances, no further offer of accommodation will be made to you and you would then need to make your own arrangements for housing.

Will I have to move more than once in temporary accommodation?

There may be occasions when you are required to move to alternative accommodation at short notice. It may be that the provider needs to make repairs or has to return the property to the original owner; or because there have been changes to your household. Usually, it's because we need to make the best use of the temporary accommodation available to us. For example, if you are a family and have been placed in shared accommodation we want to move you to self-contained accommodation as early as possible.

What if I think my temporary accommodation is unsuitable?

We understand that living in any form of temporary accommodation is not ideal and it can be unsettling for adults and any children in the household. We recognise that the temporary accommodation may be in an unfamiliar area. Unfortunately, due to the demands for temporary accommodation we are unable to move people to alternative accommodation unless there is an urgent need to do so; or it has been recognised as being unsuitable for your specific needs.

If you feel your temporary accommodation to be unsuitable you may want to consider whether there are other options available to you on a temporary basis. This may be family or friends who could assist you whilst we try to resolve your housing situation. We will continue to work

with you and you will not be penalised in any way if you have found an alternative to being in our temporary accommodation.

How long will I be in temporary accommodation?

The total length of time you spend in TA will depend on how long it takes you to secure long-term accommodation. Please see the section below on longer term housing options.

Will my temporary accommodation be furnished?

There is a very limited supply of unfurnished temporary accommodation and, for most accommodation, it is likely that it will be fully or partly furnished. You will not be able to take all of your household belongings with you and should try to find family members or friends to store your extra belongings. If you need help with finding storage, we can offer advice but you will have to pay storage charges.

Can I refuse the TA offered to me?

We will make every effort to only offer you accommodation which we believe is suitable for your needs but if you have very specific needs in your household or you become homeless at short notice it may not be possible to offer you accommodation that fully meets your needs immediately.

If you refuse accommodation that we do consider to be suitable, and we don't accept your reasons for refusing it, we may discharge our duty to provide you with temporary accommodation and no further offers of accommodation will be made.

Pets?

Most TA has a 'no pets policy'. We can help with advice on kennelling if you need it, but you will have to cover these costs yourself.

Hotels

Sometimes we need to place homeless households in hotel accommodation for a short period before TA can be secured.

During this period, households need to keep to the hotel's rules. For example all hotels are smoke free and should you smoke in your room then the hotel will end the booking and the fine charged by the hotel will be charged to your temporary accommodation account.

While in a hotel you will not have access to a kitchen and may need to rely on cold or takeaway food; or eating at family or friends' homes.

Please note that where parking charges apply at hotels these will not be reimbursed by Bristol City Council and you will need to make alternative arrangements for parking.

Bristol's clean air zone

To travel to and from your temporary accommodation, you might need to use a motorised vehicle.

If you do, you might have to travel through Bristol's Clean Air Zone. Many vehicles won't incur charges to do this and there are some exemptions for vehicles that might be charged. Find out more and check your vehicle on our [Bristol's Clean Air Zone charges and vehicle checker](#)

TA charges

You will receive a letter about your TA costs very soon after moving into your TA. This sets out the full costs, including the service charges for gas, electricity, water and sewerage. It does not state how much Housing Benefit (HB) you are entitled to.

You will be told about this when your HB claim has been processed.

If you do not cooperate with the Housing Benefit claim and any requests for information, for example to provide income evidence or identification, you will be responsible for the full cost of the temporary accommodation as well as the service charges.

What if I cannot afford the service and accommodation charge?

You must email EAPreNOSP@bristol.gov.uk and contact your Housing Advisor if you are having difficulty paying your service and accommodation charges so that we can understand your circumstances and assist you.

If you fail to cover the charges for your accommodation you will be sent arrears letters regularly to tell you of your outstanding debt. We will call you if you do not contact us whilst your account is in arrears.

If you fail to make payments or do not start a payment plan to reduce any arrears you may lose the accommodation that has been made available to you, and you will then need to make your own arrangements.

Arrears on your temporary accommodation account may prevent you from bidding on Homechoice Bristol.

Please contact us and seek advice; and do not ignore our arrears letters.

Please remember many permanent housing providers will want to see if you manage your budget and pay regularly for your accommodation and service charges. We are often asked to give a reference by providers.

For some working households you may have to contribute to the cost of the accommodation, in addition to the service charge, as you may not be entitled to full housing benefit

If you need budgeting or money advice please see [ACFA - a network of advice centres in the South West of England](#)

What is EAPreNOSP?

This is the best contact for any queries regarding your rental account and service charge payments to the City Council. They cannot help with moving you to a different accommodation; benefits; etc.

Longer-term housing

Below are some main routes to securing longer-term housing in Bristol. Although the council can help and advise you, it is mainly your responsibility to follow up on and access these options. Please understand that longer-term housing will take a while to secure. If you follow the advice below, you shouldn't need to contact us unless you have big questions or problems:

Private rented sector (PRS) accommodation

This will be often the quickest route to settled accommodation. If you find private rented sector accommodation the Council's Private Renting Team (PRT) will probably help you with rent in advance, a deposit and good advice. Your Housing Adviser will refer you to the PRT.

We can provide you with a copy of our guide: How to Find Your Own Private Rented Property. We hope this is useful to you.

Also, be aware that you are not restricted to considering accommodation in Bristol. You can look anywhere in the UK for PRS housing.

Homefinder

Homefinder UK is a national scheme which helps people to move to a home in social housing in other areas of the UK depending on the household size and circumstances of the household.

It is a free service and advertises properties across the UK for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Depending on your circumstances it may be quicker for you to move into settled accommodation in a different area where demand for accommodation may not be as high as it is in Bristol.

It is straightforward to register and, once registered, you will be able to bid for accommodation through the portal.

Please see [Home Finder](#) for further information.

Bidding on the HomeChoice Bristol (HCB) system

If you are seeking social housing - as one of your housing options - you will need to make an HCB application and update it with your current address.

It isn't automatic that you will have an HCB application just because you have made a homelessness application.

You will need to log on very regularly to bid for suitable properties. How long it takes to find a home will depend on the availability of accommodation and how flexible you are about its type and location.

At the moment, the average wait between being awarded Band 2 status and making a successful bid is 2.5+ years. If you require 3 or more bedrooms, it will be longer.

Please be aware that, **if you fall into rent arrears, your HCB application will be suspended and you can't bid.** That's why it's so important that you pay your TA accommodation and service charges.

If you have been placed in HCB Band 2, we expect you to make 3 bids per week where suitable housing has been advertised.

We accept that, sometimes, there aren't 3 suitable properties that you can bid for every week.

However, please bid as widely and wisely as possible.

Some tips:

- Unless the council has agreed that some areas of Bristol can be excluded from your bidding, you should consider bidding for all suitable properties that are available on HCB.
- Please don't finalise your bids until near the end of the bidding week and, when you do, please make realistic bids – in other words please bid for properties you're interested in for which you have lower queue positions. If you are in position 33 for property A and in position 633 for property B... bid for property A!
- You may not be able to bid successfully for properties in your favourite areas. However, there are likely to be social housing (council and housing association) homes available to bid for that aren't too far away – after all, Bristol isn't a massive city.
- Of course many people want a house to live in. However, on HCB there are far more flats than houses available, which makes houses very, very popular. This means that bidding successfully for a flat will take much less time than bidding for a house.
- Remember that you should also be seeking accommodation in the private sector to resolve your housing difficulties.

Please be aware

You may have read the 'Lettings Standard' on the HomeChoice Bristol pages. If not, it's very important to remember that if you bid for or are offered Bristol City Council housing, it will be completely unfurnished so you will need to plan and prepare to make sure you have all the furniture, floor coverings, white goods etc. that you will need. You may have to borrow some items from friends or family.

This is the same experience as many people have, even when buying a home, so please don't let it surprise you.

Typical 1 and 2 bedroom flats



Living on a low income

Make a budget plan

Making a budget will help you to understand where your money goes and where you can save money. It is the first step to take control of your financial situation, including knowing

what's coming in, what's going out and when. It will also help you see whether you're living within your means.

You can use this budget planner from the Money Helper website: [Budget Planner | Free online budget planning tool | MoneyHelper](#) or you could ask your Housing Adviser for a copy of the Housing Options Service income and expenditure spreadsheet.

Maximising your income

It can be easier to decrease your spending than it is to increase your income, but you can start to check if you're receiving the right welfare benefits, even if you're in paid work, by using the council's benefits calculator: [Benefit calculator \(entitledto.co.uk\)](#)

If you are able to work and are claiming universal credit (UC), you might find that a few hours paid work per week can boost your income considerably, without losing your UC entitlement.

If you believe that you've been denied the benefits that you are entitled to, you can contact the council's Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service for telephone advice (Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri, 9:00-13:00) on 0117 352 1888.

Claiming benefits

If you are claiming benefits and have moved into emergency or temporary accommodation you must update whoever pays your benefits about your change of circumstances so that you keep getting the right payment. You will also need to make a separate claim for Housing Benefit from the Council to get support with housing costs.

If you do not report a change of circumstances to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), you might be paid too much. If you are, you will probably have to pay the money back, often by having deductions made from your fortnightly or weekly benefits payments.

You can obtain specialist debt advice and welfare benefits advice from a range of different advice services in Bristol.

You can find them by clicking 'find advice near you' at: [ACFA - a network of advice centres in the South West of England](#)

Ways to cut costs

There are simple ways to reduce your household bills, such as switching utility providers, shopping around for groceries or getting a cheaper mobile phone deal. You can find more information and ideas on how to reduce your expenses at: [Free and impartial help with money, backed by the government | MoneyHelper](#)

Emergency help to make ends meet

The Council is working with many different services across Bristol to help people manage the current cost of living crisis. There is a wealth of information available at: [Benefits and financial help](#) This includes a section titled 'Benefits, financial help and managing debt'.

Be **very** careful with borrowing. Things like payday loans, log book loans and doorstep lending can seem like an easy solution, but can make a bad situation worse. They're often a very expensive way of borrowing, so always try to find other ways - such as joining a credit union. Credit unions offer banking services to people who would otherwise find them difficult to get. Your local credit union is: [Great Western Credit Union \(greatwesterncu.org\)](http://greatwesterncu.org)

Education and childcare

Information about schools in Bristol: [Schools, learning and early years \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk)

Information about Bristol's Children's Centres: [Children's Centres \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk)

If you need help with parenting or special support for your child/ren, you can check services at [Children and families \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk)

Health and wellbeing

[Your choices in the NHS - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk) will help you work out the best GP, dentist, hospital etc. for you to register with.

GPs

If you are not registered with a GP you will be unable to see a doctor unless you have a serious emergency. In most other cases, calling 111 is a better option. If you are not registered with a GP but need treatment, you can find a GP surgery near you and register there as a temporary resident if you will be living in the area for up to 3 months.

To register, the surgery will ask you to complete a temporary registration services form.

When you register temporarily with a GP surgery you'll remain registered with your permanent GP surgery and the temporary GP surgery will pass details of any treatment you have back to your permanent GP.

They will add the information to your medical records. If your application to become a temporary patient is refused, you can still receive emergency treatment for up to 14 days.

After 3 months, if you are still living near the GP surgery where you registered as a temporary resident, you will have to apply to register with the surgery as a permanent resident.

You can find more information on the NHS website above.

Dentists

The NHS Choices website provides the most up to date information about NHS dentists near you.

If you don't have a regular dentist or can't travel to your registered dentist you can still get emergency dental care by calling 111.

Midwives

If you are pregnant and cannot travel to see a midwife at your usual GP's surgery, you can find a midwife closer to your emergency or temporary accommodation by finding and registering with a GP, as set out above.

Once you have registered with the GP, make an appointment and, at the appointment explain that you are pregnant and need a referral to a midwife.

The GP will then make the referral.

Health Visitors

Health visitors work with parents, offering support and informed advice from the antenatal period until a child starts school at five years old.

Families from all walks of life may need support and information on issues that affect their children's health and development.

If you need advice or support from a health visitor, please speak to your local GP.

Useful contacts

Subject Area	Contact name	Phone number	Contact email address
How much is my temporary accommodation going to cost?	Emergency Accommodation Team	None	eaprenosp@bristol.gov.uk
Service charge payment- online link.	Paylink.	none	Pay links
My homeless application		0117 356800, option 4	homelessnessadvice@bristol.gov.uk
My Home choice application (bidding)	Citizen Service	0117 922 2000	hcb.enquiries@bristol.gov.uk
Bins and waste.	n/a	0117 922 2000	Collection day finder

Collection dates. It may help to know when your bin day is in your temporary home.			
Schools and Early year	Education.	None	Schools, learning and early years
Children and Family Support	Children Service	0117 9222000	Children and families
Help finding an affordable home outside Bristol.	Homefinder UK	None – register online.	Home Finder UK