

Homeless Assessment

A Guide for Applicants



Homelessness Assessment - A Guide for Applicants



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Your Homeless Interview

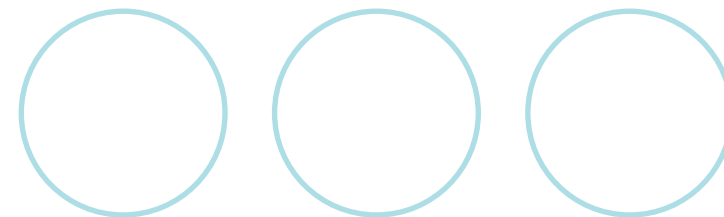
This leaflet tells you:

- *what will happen during your homelessness interview*
- *how your homeless application will be assessed*
- *the legal responsibilities the Council has to you.*
- *what will happen next*

We hope that it will answer some of the questions you may have. However, if you have any other queries, please ask your Assessment Officer when you see them.

Who will interview me?

You will be seen interviewed by an Assessment Officer who has specialist knowledge of homelessness and housing options. Attending a homeless interview is very important as it allows you to talk to an Assessment Officer about your housing situation. The interview will be held in private and anything you say will be treated as confidential. The same Assessment Officer will deal with your case from start to finish so you will always know the name of the person dealing with your case and how to get in touch with them. You can be interviewed by a member of staff who is the same sex as you if that is what you want. We try to offer this choice to everyone wherever



possible. You have the right to bring a friend, relative or support worker along to your interview.

It is very important that you are honest and frank about your circumstances during the interview. If you don't tell the Assessment Officer certain information it may take us longer to make a decision on your homeless application or it could mean that you are not offered temporary accommodation which you are entitled to.

Your Assessment Officer will ask you a number of questions about your personal circumstances. They may ask you to provide information or ask for your written permission to contact other people for more information or to confirm what you have told us. If you have been asked to provide other information it is important that you do this as quickly as possible.

To be entitled to permanent housing, you have to meet the following four conditions, which are set out by law.

- *You must be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within the next two months*
- *You must be in priority need*
- *You must not have become homeless or at risk of becoming homeless intentionally*
- *You have a local connection*

Under each of these conditions there are a number of definitions saying what each actually means.

The following sections will explain what these definitions mean.

Are you Homeless?

You don't have to be living on the streets to be homeless.

You are homeless if:

- *You have no accommodation which you are permitted or entitled to occupy*
- *You are sleeping rough*
- *You are unable to get access to housing*
- *You live in a night shelter, refuge or other emergency housing*
- *You are experiencing violence, harassment, racial harassment or are threatened with violence from someone you live with or used to live with*
- *You live in a mobile home or houseboat and there is nowhere for you to pitch or moor it*
- *Your household is overcrowded in terms of housing legislation and this is causing physical or mental health problems*
- *Your household is forced to live apart*
- *You have somewhere to live but it is unreasonable for you to do so, for example your house is in a poor state of repair*
- *You are living with friends or relatives and they have asked you to leave*

You are at risk of becoming homeless if you are likely to fall into one of the above categories in the next two months.

Are you in Priority Need?

We may find you to be in priority need if:

- *You have dependent children living with you*
- *You or a member of your household are pregnant*
- *You or a member of your household are 16 or 17 years old*
- *You have lost your home because of an emergency such as a fire or flood*

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- You are vulnerable due to old age (60 years or older)
- You are experiencing or are at risk of domestic abuse
- You are under 21 years old and were in care on or after your 16th birthday
- You or a member of your household are mentally ill or physically disabled or vulnerable for another reason.
- You have been discharged from hospital, prison or any part of the regular armed forces.

If you are homeless and in priority need, we may have to find you somewhere to live but this will depend on whether or not you have made yourself intentionally homeless.

Are you Intentionally Homeless?

You may be intentionally homeless if:

- Your house was taken away from you because of your own actions, for example, not paying your rent or mortgage or behaving in an antisocial way
- You voluntarily left your house without a good reason
- You were aware that your action would make you homeless.

If we decide that you are in priority need, but that you are intentionally homeless, we have a duty to give you temporary housing for a short time (if you need this) and advice and assistance to help you find somewhere else to live.

Do you have a Local Connection with the Falkirk Council Area?

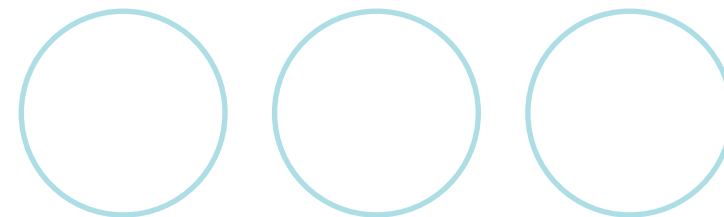
As a general rule, you will have a local connection with the Falkirk Council area if:

- You have lived in this area for a significant length of time
- You work in the Falkirk area
- You have close family links in the Falkirk area
- You have special circumstances, for example you need to continue your education or provide care for a member of your family
- You are fleeing domestic abuse
- You have recently left the armed forces

If you are in priority need but have no local connection with the Falkirk Council area and there are no special circumstances, we will refer you to another Council area to which you have a local connection. However, we must give you temporary housing until the other Council agrees to help.

Assessing your Homeless Application

We must let you know, in writing, what our duties are towards you under homeless legislation. We aim to assess your situation within 28 days of the date of your application. This may sometimes take longer depending on the circumstances of your homeless application. While we are assessing your case you have the right to temporary housing if you need this.



Housing Support Needs Assessment

As part of your interview, your Assessment Officer will complete a housing support needs assessment. This will look at your current circumstances and your ability to manage independent living. They may decide that you will need some housing support in your new home.

Housing support can offer practical assistance if you are having difficulties maintaining independent living and covers a range of activities such as help with applying for benefits, sorting out debts, setting up utility bills / payment plans, and accessing other services to meet your needs. Housing support aims to help people to maintain their accommodation, meet their duties and responsibilities as a tenant and get involved in the local community.

Housing support will only be provided if you have housing problems such as rent arrears or tenancy issues. Housing support is a free short term service for residents of the Falkirk Council area aged +16 in any type of accommodation.

If you have no housing support issues but would benefit from a different type of help (for example - mental health services), we will signpost or refer you to a relevant agency.

If you think that you would benefit from housing support, please speak to your Assessment Officer at the ARC to discuss with them the suitability of a referral to the housing support service.

Supported Accommodation

If your Assessment Officer considers that you need to specialist housing support they will refer you to the support team in the ARC. The Support Team may refer you to one of our supported accommodation units in the Falkirk Council area. They will ensure that you access supported accommodation that

will meet your needs. The information below provides details about our supported accommodation units.

Castings

Castings provides supported accommodation for 21 single males aged 25 and over. The accommodation consists of flats with 3 or 4 bedrooms that share communal facilities. The service aims to provide practical support in the transition from homelessness to permanent accommodation.

Young Persons Supported Accommodation

There are two supported accommodation units that provide young people with support during their transition from homelessness to permanent accommodation.

Garry Place, part of the Loretto Care organisation, provides supported accommodation for 15 young homeless people aged 16-25 years in flats with 3 or 4 bedrooms with shared communal facilities.

Seaforth House, part of the Y-People group, provides supported accommodation for 14 young homeless people aged 16-25 years in flats with 3 or 4 bedrooms with shared communal facilities.

Both services aim to support young people to gain important skills and the ability to manage their own tenancy independently and develop a range of life skills appropriate to their needs. The Young Persons Supported Accommodation takes a positive and proactive approach to multi agency working which ensures that service users are supported to engage with external agencies across a range of disciplines.

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What Happens Next?

Offer of Permanent Housing

If the Assessment Officer finds that you are in priority need, unintentionally homeless and have a local connection, you will be entitled to an offer of permanent housing and will be awarded Home Seeker Band 1 status within Falkirk Council's Allocations Policy and a Gold pass on Link Housing Association's Home Hunt Scheme. More information about Falkirk Council's Allocations Policy and choice based letting scheme is available in the Homespot information booklet.

You will be expected to bid for Falkirk Council properties once you have been awarded your Home Seeker status, however please note that we may also nominate you for any suitable vacancies with local housing associations. You are also expected to register with Link Housing Association's Home Hunt scheme. During this time you will be offered temporary accommodation from Falkirk Council if you need it.

It is important to bid for properties.

As a Home Seeker with Band 1 priority we expect you to bid for all properties which meet your household needs. This is a high level of priority to help you receive an offer of housing. If you need help to bid for properties please speak to a member of staff at the Accommodation Resource Centre (ARC).

We will monitor the bids you make and if you do not bid for suitable properties for three months, we may make you an offer of housing outwith the choice based scheme. We will try to offer you a property in the areas you have chosen but this will depend on the availability of properties. This offer of housing will discharge our duty to you in

terms of homeless legislation. This arrangement to offer you a property out with the choice based scheme will also apply if:

- you successfully bid for a property and then refuse it;
- you do not bid for suitable properties advertised by Link Housing Association through their HomeHunt scheme;
- you refuse a property that is offered to you by a local housing association

If you refuse two offers of housing either ones you have bid for or one we made outwith choice based lettings, then you will move from a "Home Seeker" to a "Home Starter". Your priority for homelessness will be removed and your housing situation will be reassessed. If you are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, you will have to leave it. If you are assessed as homeless but not in priority need you will be a Home Seeker with Band 2 priority.

If you are at risk of becoming homeless within the next two months and in priority need you will be a Home Starter with Band 1 priority.

If you think that any offer of housing is unreasonable then you have the right to appeal. Information about the Homespot Appeals Process and how to appeal an offer of permanent housing is available from the ARC or Neighbourhood Offices.

Homelessness Appeals Process

If you don't agree with our decision, for example, if it has been decided that you are not in a priority need group, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed. A separate leaflet called the "Homelessness Appeals Process" explains how the appeals process works. You can get this form from the Accommodation Resource Centre, 21-15 High Street, Falkirk, FK1 1ES. Tel: 01324 503600 or Freephone: 0800 587 4440.

You can also download the form from the Council's web site www.falkirk.gov.uk



Citizens Advice Bureaux

Falkirk CAB
27 - 29 Vicar Street
Falkirk FK1 1LL
Tel: 01324 611244

Denny and Dunipace CAB
24 Duke Street
Denny FK6 6DD
Tel: 01324 823118

Grangemouth and Bo'ness CAB
1 Kerse Road
Grangemouth FK3 8HW
Tel: 01324 483467

Legal Advice

Shelter Housing Advice Helpline:
0808 800 4444

Can give free, independent and confidential advice on all housing matters.

Local Solicitors

A list of local solicitors can be found in the "Yellow Pages" Local solicitors with knowledge of housing law can be found by contacting:

The Law Society of Scotland
26 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh EH3 7YR
Tel: 0131 226 7411

Independent Advice

At any time during your homelessness assessment you can seek independent advice from a solicitor, Citizens Advice Bureaux or Shelter. The local contact details are listed below.

Contact List for the Accommodation Resource Centre and Neighbourhood Offices/One Stop Shops

Accommodation Resource Centre

21-25 High Street
Falkirk
FK1 1ES
01324 503600
Freephone 0800 587 4440

Bo'ness One Stop Shop

24 East Pier Street
Bo'ness
EH51 9AB
01506 778899

Denny One Stop Shop

Carronbank House
Carronbank Crescent, Denny
FK6 6GA
01324 504050

Callendar Square One Stop Shop

Callendar Square
Falkirk
FK1 1ZF
01324 506868

Grangemouth One Stop Shop

5 York Lane
Grangemouth
FK3 8BD
01324 504550

Camelon One Stop Shop

256 Main Street
Camelon, Falkirk
FK1 4DY
01324 503640

Stenhousemuir One Stop Shop

398 Main Street
Stenhousemuir
FK5 3JR
01324 503340

Dawson Centre

David's Loan
Falkirk
FK2 7RG
01324 501450

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, LARGE PRINT or audio please contact the ARC or one of our Neighbourhood Offices or One Stop Shops.

إذا كنت تحتاج لهذه المعلومات لغة أخرى، بربيل، أحرف مكبرة أو بطريقة كسيت، فارجو منك الاتصال بمركز الإسكان أو واحد من بيور هود أو فيسيز، ون ستوب، نوسر، هناك قائمة وزارة الهجرة والعوزين متوفرة في نهاية هذا المكتب.

如果你希望獲得此份表格的其他語言譯本、凸字印刷、大號字體或錄音帶，請與 Accommodation Resource Centre 或 Neighbourhood Offices/One Stop Shops 聯絡。在這本小冊子的末尾有一份表格地址和電話號碼。

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਕਰਕੇ ਐਲੀਕਟ੍ਰਾਨਿਕ ਫੋਨ: 0800 587 4440 ਕਰੋ.

مراقبہ کیجئے یہ صورتہ جسکی وہ سرکاری زبانوں میں بھی قابل صورتہ ہے۔ اس صورتہ کی چھپائی اور پرنٹنگ میں مددگار ہیں تو اسے سرایاؤ اور اسٹیشنر یا بیورو میں پرنٹنگ کے لیے بھی لکھو۔ اس صورتہ میں سٹاپس اور سٹاپس کے بارے میں سہاہت کے لیے ایڈریس اور پتے کی معلومات فراہم کرنے کے اختتام پر اس میں ہے۔