

Duty to Refer someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness



Statutory duties

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force in April 2018, introducing new statutory duties on local authorities to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and eligible (as per their immigration status), with an emphasis on prevention:

- ❖ **Prevention Duty:** Where a household is threatened with homelessness in 56 days, the housing authority has a duty to work with the household for 56 days to prevent their homelessness or help them to secure alternative accommodation.
- ❖ **Relief Duty:** Where a household is homeless, the housing authority has a duty to work with them for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
- ❖ **Duty to refer:** public authorities specified in regulations are required to notify a housing authority of service users they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness (i.e. it is likely they will become homeless within 56 days).

Duty to refer

In October 2018, a new duty 'Duty to Refer' was introduced with the intention of ensuring that a person's housing situation is considered whenever they come into contact with any wider public service. This duty places a **statutory duty on specific public bodies** to notify a local housing authority if they identify any person whom they believe is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Specified Public Bodies

- ❖ Prisons;
- ❖ Youth offender institutions;
- ❖ Secure training centres;
- ❖ Secure colleges;
- ❖ Youth offending teams;
- ❖ Probation services (Probation and CRCs);
- ❖ Job Centre Plus;
- ❖ A & E Services;
- ❖ Urgent treatment centres (Providers of community and primary urgent care);
- ❖ Hospitals in their capacity of providing in-patient treatment;
- ❖ Social Services.



How to make a referral to the local authority's Housing Department

- ❖ An on-line referral process is in place and a dedicated email address which comes straight to the duty service in the back office:

Wandsworth:

www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-and-temporary-accommodation/make-a-homelessness-referral/

Email: dutytorefer@wandsworth.gov.uk

Richmond:

www.richmond.gov.uk/services/housing/homelessness/homeless_referral

Email: Dutytorefer@Richmond.gov.uk

- ❖ The same email address structure applies to all local authorities across the UK.

A referral should include:

- ❖ The individual's contact details.
- ❖ Consent – The referral can only be made if the person agrees for the referral to be made and identifies a local housing authority in England where they would like the referral to be sent.
- ❖ The reason for the referral (why it is considered the individual is homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days).



What happens next?

When a referral is received, the Council will make contact with the individual.

If the individual is considered to be eligible (as per their immigration status) and homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, a member of the Homeless Preventions and Solutions Service will book an initial appointment to discuss their housing situation.

A 'Personalised Housing Plan' will be created which will include steps that the Council and the individual should take in order to prevent or relieve their homelessness.