

Homeless Referral Protocol

A. Referral process

Organisations should notify Rushmoor Borough Council (see point B below) of any service user considered to be homeless or at risk of homelessness. They should do this by completing the agreed referral form which is on our website, with the consent of the individual. The referral form includes the following details: name, contact details, agreed reason for referral, if the person is homeless or if and when they are likely to become homeless, if they are at imminent risk of rough sleeping, a risk assessment, and key medical information.

Completed referral forms will be emailed to our housing services team by consent of the individual. We will acknowledge receipt of the referral within two working days. In urgent cases (where homelessness is imminent within two days), you should follow up the submission of this form with a phone call to the duty number of our housing services team on 01252 398634 or email housingoptions@rushmoor.gov.uk.

B. Choice of housing authority

The individual can choose to which council housing services team the referral is made. Wherever possible, the organisation should advise the individual to seek assistance from the most relevant council housing services team (i.e. the one where they have a local connection, unless it is not safe for them to return to that area). If a council housing services team receives an application from a client without a local connection it may refer the case to a local council where they do have a local connection.

The following situations satisfy a local connection. If the individual has more than one local connection, they could approach the council where they would like to live.

Living in an area

You have a local connection if you've lived in Rushmoor for at least:

- six out of the last 12 months or
- three out of the last five years

Staying in emergency housing or a refuge counts. Time spent in prison or hospital doesn't count.

Working in an area

You have a local connection if you're working or self-employed in Rushmoor.

Close family in the area

You have a local connection if any of the following family members have lived in Rushmoor for the last five years to date:

- Parents
- Adult children
- Brothers and sisters

We might accept a local connection based on other family members. For example, if another relative brought you and you remain in close contact.

Care leavers

You have a local connection if you're under 21 and were previously in care in Rushmoor for at least two years (even if placed there by another local authority).

You also have a local connection if you're under 25 and you get advice and support from Children Services under a 'pathway plan'. If your pathway plan is provided by a Hampshire County Council, you have a local connection to every Council housing department in Hampshire.

Refugee status or humanitarian protection

You have a local connection to the last council area you were housed in by the Home Office under asylum support. It doesn't matter how long you lived there for.

Special reasons

We could decide you have a local connection for a special reason such as:

- A need to live in the area to receive specialist health care
- Very important social connections with the area

We must try to prevent homelessness regardless of whether a person has a local connection to Rushmoor Borough Council. However, if a duty to provide accommodation arises then we may choose to refer the person to an area where they have a local connection.

C. Making early referrals

Some public authorities have relationships with service users which enable them to identify a risk of homelessness at an early stage. In these cases, the public authority should ensure that a referral is made to our housing services team as soon as a likelihood of homelessness becomes apparent, to enable the best opportunity for a solution to be found that prevents homelessness. For example, this would apply to individuals due to be released from prison or those being discharged from hospital who should be referred well before their release/discharge date.

D. Response to referrals

When we receive a referral, the housing services team will deal with it. They will do their best to respond within two working days to a referral by contacting the individual using the contact details provided in the referral form. If they are unable to get a response, they will provide information on how the individual can access advice and assistance (e.g. on our website or by visiting the council offices) via a phone call or email.

If it is clear that the individual is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, we have the duty to assess their needs and will work with them to develop a personal housing plan to prevent homelessness. This will trigger a homeless application.

E. Data sharing

All personal data received by Rushmoor Borough Council will be collected, stored, used and deleted in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Every local authority in Hampshire has a published Privacy Policy or Statement, which can be found on our website.

In addition all personal housing plans (PHPs) agreed by Rushmoor will include a data sharing consent clause as standard to allow early notification and sharing of data from the PHPs with the referring organisation and potentially other organisations.

About the duty to refer

On 1 October 2018, the Homelessness Reduction Act introduces a new requirement on specified organisation in England to notify councils of service users they think may be homeless or threatened with becoming homeless.

Which organisations have the duty to refer?

- Prisons (public and private)
- Youth offender institutions
- Secure training centres
- Secure colleges
- Youth offending teams
- Probation services (community rehabilitation companies and national probation service)
- Jobcentre Plus
- Accident and emergency services provided in a hospital;
- Urgent treatment centres (Urgent treatment centres include services locally designated as such, and all other providers of community and primary urgent care, including services locally designated as urgent care centres, minor injury units, minor injury services and walk in centres)
- Hospitals in their capacity of providing in-patient treatment (Inpatient care means persons who are receiving medical or other treatment as inpatients (admitted patients) in a hospital.) and
- Social service authorities
- Other organisations