

Guidance Sheet for Homeless Template Letter

Purpose of the Letter

The Homeless Template Letter is designed to support families in applying for housing through a homeless application when they are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Under **Part VII of the Housing Act 1996**, a person is considered homeless if “they have no accommodation available or **if their current accommodation is unsuitable for them to occupy.**”

Households living in accommodation that is unsuitable for meeting the needs of their household are likely to trigger a homeless application under these grounds.

This includes situations where the lack of suitable housing prevents the safe discharge of a child/young person from the hospital or where the current property cannot accommodate the medical, care, or practical needs of the household. The letter helps Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) understand the family’s specific medical and housing needs, supporting their prioritisation for temporary or permanent accommodation that meets these requirements.

Key Points

1. **When to Use This Letter:**
 - The Homeless Template Letter should be used when a family’s current accommodation prevents safe discharge from the hospital or is unsuitable for the ongoing care needs of the child/young person.
 - The Homeless Template Letter should be sent once an active homeless application has been taken by the Local Housing Authority.
 - This letter is typically used for urgent cases where a **Statutory Duty to Refer (DTR)** has been submitted.

2. **What is a Statutory Duty to Refer (DTR)?**

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, public authorities have a legal duty to refer individuals or families who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to the Local Housing Authority. While applicants can also approach the council directly for assistance, a DTR is a formal referral process to ensure vulnerable households are identified and supported.

What Happens After a DTR is Submitted?

After receiving a DTR, the Local Housing Authority will contact the applicant to complete a homeless assessment. This assessment will determine whether a homelessness application is triggered.

3. **Purpose of the Homeless Application:**

- The purpose of a homeless application is to seek support from the Local Housing Authority to help secure housing that meets the household's medical, care, and practical needs. This can include the provision of temporary housing while longer-term solutions are arranged.
4. **Supporting Evidence:**
- Attach any additional medical evidence, such as letters from consultants, community nurses, or other healthcare professionals involved in the household's care, that you feel the housing authority will need to see to inform their assessment of the child's/young person's needs.
5. **Local Housing Authority Assessment:**
- LHAs will use the letter and supporting evidence to help inform their assessment, including:
 - **Homeless Eligibility:** Determining whether the family qualifies for housing support under homelessness legislation.
 - **Priority Need:** Assessing the child/young person's medical needs to determine the appropriate priority banding for the family.
 - **Suitability of Accommodation:** Ensuring that any housing offered meets the household's needs. The medical information provided will help inform and be part of the suitability assessment when considering properties or direct offers of accommodation.
6. **Assessment of Property Suitability:**
- **Critical Point:** While the LHA will assess bedroom entitlement and property type, it is the responsibility of healthcare professionals involved in the child/young person's care to physically visit the property and evaluate the property's specific suitability once an offer of accommodation is made.
 - This assessment includes but is not limited to:
 - Doorway widths for wheelchairs/ buggy or equipment.
 - Access to key areas like bathrooms and storage.
 - Bedroom size and configuration to accommodate medical equipment and carers.
 - A healthcare-led assessment must take place once a property is offered to determine if it meets the overall care needs of the child/young person.
7. **Refusal of Accommodation:**
- Any offer of accommodation refused on the grounds of medical unsuitability should not be registered as a refusal by the housing team. The refusal should be clearly documented as a result of failing to meet the child/young person's medical needs.