



May 2008

Key Points:

- Replaces previous version dated May 2007

Looking for rented housing

This factsheet is aimed at people aged 60 and over.

The factsheet provides information for those considering moving into rented accommodation. Our factsheets are updated annually so you should check that you have a current version. This factsheet explains about how to apply for or find rented housing, describes the different types of rented housing which are available, including sheltered housing for older people.

This factsheet describes the situation in England. There may be differences in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Readers in these nations should contact their respective national Age Concern offices for information specific to where they live.

Contact details are:

The Scottish Helpline for Older People – Age Concern

Scotland, tel: 0845 125 9732

(local call rates) Monday to

Friday, 10am – 4pm; website:

www.olderpeoplescotland.co.uk;

Age Concern Cymru, Ty John

Pathy, Units 13/14 Neptune

Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff

CF24 5PJ, tel: 029 2043 1555

(national call rate); website:

www.accymru.org.uk;

Age Concern Northern Ireland,

3 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT7

1NR, tel: 028 9032 5055

(national call rate) Monday to

Friday 10am – 12pm and 2pm –

4pm, website:

www.ageconcernni.org.

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1. Local Authority (Council) Housing

In many areas, local councils are the main provider of rented housing. The law states that a council must decide who to rent its housing to in a certain way. This may be called an allocation or a lettings policy. Every applicant has the right to see this policy.

Allocation of local authority housing is based on the *Housing Act 1996* as amended by the *Homelessness Act 2002* and the Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation for local housing authorities November 2002 (in England).

The Allocation Scheme

The allocation scheme describes which people will have most priority for council housing in that local council area. The law says that certain groups must be given reasonable preferences, effectively giving these groups priority for allocation of housing.

These include:

- people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. For more information about a council's duty to assist you if you are homeless, see Section 4;
- people who are living in housing which is overcrowded, unsanitary or unsatisfactory in another way. This includes people who live in housing which is unsuitable for them because of their disability. For example, if you are living in a house where you are unable to get upstairs to use your bathroom or bedroom you might have priority for housing;
- people who have a particular need for settled accommodation, because of medical or welfare needs. This might include someone who has a particular illness or disability or a need for support in their housing;
- people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others, for example, a person needs to move in order to give or receive care, to access specialised medical treatment, take up particular employment etc.

Local authorities also have the power to give additional preferences to particular groups of people who fall within the reasonable preferences categories (see above) and who have urgent housing need, for example:

- those who are owed a homelessness duty as a result of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out and who as a result require urgent rehousing;
- those who need to move because of urgent medical reasons.

Allocation schemes are allowed to determine priorities in relation to applicants who fall within the reasonable preference and additional preference categories. They might include:

- financial resources available to the applicant;
- any behaviour of the applicant or a member of his/her household which affects his suitability to be a tenant; **or**
- any local connection between the applicant and the local authority eg, residence in the area, family connection or any other special circumstances.

Making an application

If you want to apply for council housing, contact your local council office. You can apply to another local authority in whose area you do not currently live as the council cannot exclude you just because you do not already live there. However, the council's allocation scheme may favour existing local residents (see above for additional preference categories) so you may have very little chance of being housed there.

You will probably have to fill in an application form giving details about where you live now, your income, your savings and any medical conditions. You may have to provide proof of your income and savings and any evidence supporting your application e.g. a letter from your GP if you feel you need rehousing on medical grounds. The council should also ask questions about what sort of housing you need, for example, whether you need any particular features because of a disability or illness or whether you need to live close to particular people or to facilities such as shops or a bus route. If you would like advice about filling in the form, staff at the council should be able to help free of charge.

Once you have made an application, it is likely that you will have to wait some time for housing. Many councils have a limited number of housing vacancies and long waiting lists. A council may send you a form every now and again, for example every year, to make sure that you still need housing and that your circumstances have not changed. It is important that you return this to the council or you may be taken off its records.

If you are not happy with the local authority decision on your application and you feel it is not following the law or its own policy, ask for a review. You can also complain to a local councillor. You can find out who your local councillor is from the council offices (Town Hall) or a local library.

If you are still not satisfied, you can take your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (see Section 11).

The offer

The law does not state how many offers of housing must be made, so each housing authority will have its own policy on offers and refusals, some might limit to one offer only. You should be offered a reasonable period of time to decide on the offer. You will normally have a chance to look at the property before deciding. If you are not happy with the state of repairs discuss it with the Housing Officer or get independent advice (see Section 11). The council might give you an allowance for redecorating. It might also give a list of small repairs to be done after you move in.

The council should provide you with a written tenancy agreement which sets out the rights and responsibilities of both landlord and tenant. You should also be told how much the rent will be. On the top of the rent you will also have to pay Council Tax. If you are on a low income you may be able to get help with rent and Council Tax payment (see Factsheet 17, *Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit*). You also may be able to get the Social Fund to help you with buying furniture (see Factsheet 49, *The Social Fund and other sources of financial help*).

Choice-based lettings

Choice-based letting is an alternative scheme of letting adopted by some local authorities that allows applicants for housing to 'bid' for properties that are advertised through local channels such as local newspapers, newsletters or websites. The properties must be suitable to their needs so, for example, a single person would not be allowed to apply for a three-bedroom house.

Priority is given to those who have the most urgent needs, but where possible the length of waiting will be also considered.

The Government set the target for all local authorities to adopt a choice-based lettings system by 2010.

Advantages and disadvantages of renting from the council

The advantages are that it may be cheaper than private renting, it provides more security (secure tenancy after a probationary period) and the repairs are usually the responsibility of the council. However, you may have to wait a long time for an offer of accommodation; it will be unfurnished and sometimes in need of redecoration and you usually will get one offer only. You may have little choice over type and location of the accommodation offered (unless your council operates a choice-based letting allocation scheme – see above).

Returning from abroad

If you are returning from abroad and you do not have any restrictions on your residential rights in the UK you are eligible to apply for council housing. For further information contact the council in the area in which you wish to live.

2. Housing associations

Housing associations (also known as Registered Social Landlords) also provide rented housing, including rented sheltered housing (see Section 6).

Many housing associations have arrangements with local councils which ensure that much of their accommodation will be let to people on the council's housing register. Some housing associations accept direct referrals but they may still require that you put your name on the council's register.

You should be able to find out about housing associations in your area from the council or from a local advice agency. Age Concern locally may also be able to help. There is also the Public Register of Social Landlords which gives contact details on housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation that operate in your area. You can access it on the Housing Corporation website (see Section 11).

A Charter for Housing Association Applicants and Residents, produced by the Housing Corporation, tells you what rights you have as an applicant and explains what you can expect from a registered social landlord.

The Charter says that all housing associations must have written policies on the type of housing services they provide, who can apply and how applications will be considered. You can ask to see these policies.

If you are not satisfied with the way your housing association handles your application for housing, you can make a formal complaint. If you are still not satisfied, you can contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman scheme (see Section 11 for contact details).

Advantages and disadvantages of renting from Housing Associations

The advantages are that the accommodation is likely to be more secure and cheaper than private rented. It may also be easier to get a suitable property if you have special needs but you may have to wait a long time for an offer. It is usually unfurnished and you may have little choice over type and location (unless you bid for accommodation through the councils choice-based letting scheme – see above).

3. Private renting

In deciding whether you want to rent privately, you need to be clear what your rights will be. Most new tenancies in the private sector are now let on an assured shorthold basis.

This means that the landlord will have the right to bring your tenancy to an end after the first six months. Some private providers of sheltered accommodation offer assured tenancies which provide more security (see Section 6).

If you are a council tenant or housing association tenant already, think carefully about giving up this security to move to private rented accommodation. (There is more information on private tenants' rights in Age Concern Factsheet 35, *Tenants' rights*).

If you decide to rent privately, you can look for advertisements in your local newspaper or you can use an accommodation agency.

Accommodation agencies may be listed under 'Accommodation' or 'Estate Agents' in your local *Yellow Pages*. They are private agencies which let out rented housing on behalf of the owners. Most agencies will make a charge but the law says that they are not allowed to do so unless they actually find and rent you a home.

If you find private accommodation to rent, check your tenancy agreement carefully before signing. Check the type of tenancy or licence, who is responsible for maintenance and repairs, who pays the bills and how to end the tenancy. Take the agreement to a local advice agency or solicitor if you are not sure about any of the terms (see Age Concern's Factsheet 43, *Getting legal advice*).

Check whether the rent includes any money for bills or services such as water charges.

There is a new Housing Benefit scheme (called Local Housing Allowance) available to help private tenants on low incomes with paying their rent. This was introduced on 7 April 2008. For more information see Age Concern Factsheet 17, *Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit*.

Check how much rent you have to pay in advance and what deposit you would be expected to pay. A deposit is an amount of money that you pay at the beginning of a tenancy. It should be returned to you at the end of the tenancy but if you have damaged the property or owe any rent, the landlord can keep all or part of the deposit. You should have a list of furniture and other items in the property (inventory) including notes of any damage or disrepair. It is best to sign it with your landlord to prevent future disagreement.

From 6 April 2007, all deposits taken by private landlords for assured shorthold tenancies must be safeguarded by a scheme sponsored by the government. A tenancy deposit protection scheme has been introduced to protect your deposit and to provide assistance to resolve a disagreement about the deposit at the end of your tenancy through an alternative dispute resolution service. Your landlord must give you details of the scheme s/he is using to protect your deposit within 14 days of receiving your deposit.

If you need help to raise money for a deposit, contact your local advice centre or local council to see if there are local charities or other initiatives such as a local rent deposit scheme.

If you are receiving Pension Credit you may be able to get help from the Social Fund to pay for rent in advance (see Factsheet 49, *The Social Fund and other sources of financial help* for more information).

Advantages and disadvantages of renting privately

You may be able to find it quickly and in a location and type of your choice. It may be furnished. But it may offer less security (see above) and the rent will probably be higher than in the public sector. You will probably have to pay a deposit and rent in advance. Housing Benefit might not cover all of the rent and you might have difficulties persuading the landlord to do the repairs.

4. Homelessness

Do you have to leave?

You do not always have to leave just because you have been told to do so. As soon as you are given a notice you should get advice (see Section 11). For more information about your rights as a tenant see Factsheet 35, *Tenants' rights*.

Help from the Council

The council has a legal duty to provide advice and assistance free of charge to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness but you have to be eligible. Most people are eligible for assistance but some groups of people who have lived abroad may not be. If you are in this situation get advice. It is important to remember that being eligible for assistance does not mean that you will be housed by the council (see below).

Threatened with homelessness means that you are going to become homeless within 28 days and there is nothing you can do about it. For example, if you have a notice from the court saying that your home is going to be repossessed in four weeks.

There are certain categories of people who have a priority need for accommodation. They include:

- pregnant women;
- people with dependant children;

- people who are homeless because of fire, flood or similar emergency;
- people who are vulnerable because of old age; mental illness or handicap; physical disability; or other special reasons.

Other priority groups include some young people in particular circumstances and people who become vulnerable as a result of serving in the armed forces, having been in custody or becoming homeless because of violence or threats of violence which are likely to be carried out.

Local councils can decide who is vulnerable but will usually accept people over retirement age as being vulnerable due to old age. If you think that you are in a priority need group and the council does not agree with this, seek help from a local advice agency (see Section 11).

Once a council has accepted that you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless, it will have a legal duty to ensure that suitable accommodation is available for you.

‘Intentionally homeless’ means that it was your fault that you became homeless. For example, you chose to leave accommodation which was suitable when you could have carried on living there.

You may also be considered to be intentionally homeless if you have to leave accommodation because you did not pay your rent or mortgage. But if you were unable to pay your rent or mortgage because of financial difficulties, the council should not say that you are intentionally homeless.

The council can provide accommodation in its own stock or arrange for it to be provided by another landlord, for example, a housing association or a landlord in the private rented sector.

When you apply as homeless it may take the council a little while to decide whether it has a duty to assist you with obtaining accommodation. For example, it may need to investigate if you are intentionally homeless.

If you appear to be in priority need and homeless then the council has a duty to provide you with accommodation while it makes its enquiries.

If they wish, councils can also consider whether applicants have a local connection with the local district, or with another district.

If you do not have a connection with the area the council may send you to another area where you do have a connection.

If you are homeless but do not have a priority need or are intentionally homeless the council must make sure that you get advice and assistance to help you find accommodation but it does not have to ensure that accommodation is available for you. It might give you a list of hostels or letting agencies or it might put you in contact with an advice centre that can help.

If you are in a priority group but intentionally homeless the council must make sure that you have suitable accommodation available for a reasonable period of time to give you a chance to find accommodation. Most councils consider 28 days to be reasonable.

If you are not happy with the decision made by the council, you have the right to ask for a review. If you want to request a review of a decision, you have to do so within 21 days of being told about the decision.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the review by the council, get advice about challenging the decision (see Section 11).

5. Moving to another area

Existing council and housing association tenants wishing to move to another area can apply directly to the council of the area they wish to move to. They have to be considered through the same allocation scheme as new applicants for housing. The council cannot exclude anyone from applying just because they do not have an existing local connection but it can apply local connection rules as one of the additional preference categories (see Section 1).

Mutual exchange

If you are a council or housing association tenant and want to move to another area you may be able to exchange your home with another council or housing association tenant.

Contact your housing office for details. Usually, you will have to complete a form to join the exchange list of tenants. If you decide to do an exchange with another council or housing association tenant, either in or out of your area, you will need to get permission from your landlord. The landlord is not allowed to refuse permission unreasonably but permission will not be given, if, for example:

- either of the exchanging tenants has a Notice seeking possession and/or a court order against them, for example for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour;
- the exchange would leave either of homes overcrowded or under occupied.

If you are moving from a council to a housing association tenancy, you may lose certain rights (see Factsheet 35 *Tenants' Rights*).

Other exchange schemes available

If your council does not operate a mutual exchange scheme you may wish to use alternative schemes; some of them charge fee for their service. To see a complete list of these schemes go to the government website: www.directgov.gov.uk/socialhousing .

You may also try to find an exchanging partner by advertising in local shops or newspaper.

Seaside & Country Homes

If you live in social housing in London and at least one person in your household is 60 or over you may be able to move to a rural or seaside area. Contact your local authority for an application form or call the Seaside and Country Homes team on 0845 212020 for more information.

Lawn

If you live in London and want to move to another part of the UK you may be able to use this scheme. You have to be a social housing tenant but there is no age restriction. Contact your landlord to find out if they participate in such a mobility scheme (some landlords have it listed under different names) or call 08450 212020 for more information.

6. Sheltered (Retirement) housing

What is sheltered housing?

If you apply to a council or housing association you may be offered sheltered housing. Sheltered housing is intended specifically for older people, and usually residents need to be 60 or over. Sheltered housing tends to be built in a scheme of about 20 to 40 flats or bungalows. Some schemes have communal facilities such as a guest bedroom which can be rented out if family or friends want to visit you, a lounge, laundry and garden.

There is usually a scheme manager (warden), either resident or non-resident, who is available during the day to carry out their duties (see below for more information).

When the scheme manager is off duty, residents have the support of an alarm system which is linked to a communication centre which can summon help in an emergency. The people at the centre will contact a relative, a doctor or an emergency service as appropriate.

Is sheltered housing right for you?

Sheltered housing may be smaller, more manageable and offer more security and support. However, the new accommodation might be in the area that you are not familiar with and further away from your friends and family, you might not be able to fit all the furniture in and you might not be able to take your pet with you.

Instead of moving to sheltered housing, you may want to consider whether you could receive extra security or support services in your present home.

For example, you could consider additional security measures, an emergency alarm system or see if your social services department can assist you. For further information see Age Concern Factsheet 50, *Housing options*, Factsheet 6, *Finding help at home*, and Factsheet 33, *Crime prevention for older people*.

Making the right choice

Before moving into sheltered accommodation there are a number of points you may want to consider.

The location

Is the site flat - are there any hills to climb to get to and from the scheme? Is it in an unfamiliar area? Are you happy to move away from friends and surroundings you know well?

Local community facilities

Is there easy access to shops, post offices, banks, chemists and medical services? Is the scheme within reasonably easy reach of facilities such as parks, libraries, places of worship, pubs, clubs and day centres?

Transport

Is the scheme on a public transport route? What is the frequency of local bus or train services? If you drive, or if you have regular visitors who do, is there adequate parking space and is there easy access from the parking area to your home?

Social life

Will you be happy living somewhere occupied exclusively by older people? Are social events arranged? Will you feel out of place if you do not join in with these?

Pets

Some sheltered housing schemes will not allow pets; check if there are any restrictions.

Design

If the flat is on the first floor or higher, is it accessible by lift? Are you comfortable with using a lift? Check that doorways and corridors are wide enough for people with walking frames or wheelchairs. Are there facilities available for storage of scooters and for charging the batteries; if the scooter has to be kept in your flat, can doorways and hallways be negotiated easily?

Doors and windows should have handles which are easy to reach and operate. You should not need to bend or stretch to reach light switches and sockets. All rooms should be adequately heated and ventilated. The main entrance, as well as individual flats, should be sufficiently secure.

Size

Smaller housing is likely to be more manageable but will you be happy somewhere smaller than your current home? Consider how much of your existing furniture you will want to take with you and where it will fit.

Noise

Check how good the sound insulation is - for outside noise, noise from neighbouring flats and noise from any nearby facilities such as the residents' lounge, the laundry, a lift or a refuse chute.

The scheme manager (warden)

The duties of the scheme manager vary between schemes. Most managers will be expected to manage the scheme, help out in emergencies, give residents information on availability and access to services, and encourage them to ask for additional support from other organisations. They are not there to provide 'care' for residents, or to carry out tasks such as shopping and cleaning. Find out what the manager's duties are. You may want to meet her or him so they can explain their duties and responsibilities.

The alarm system

The emergency alarm system should be linked to a 24-hour monitoring service. Try and find out about the reliability of the system and about what action is taken if someone calls for help.

Facilities for residents' use

These too vary from scheme to scheme. Most schemes have a common room/residents' lounge, and a guest room where visitors can stay. If the common room is important to you, it might be a good idea to check if it is well used.

Service charges and support service charges

As well as a weekly rent, most tenants in sheltered housing will have to pay a regular service charge (for example for upkeep and cleaning of communal areas) and a support services charge that will include scheme manager service and emergency alarm service.

If you receive housing benefit, you will not be charged for your support services. If you do not receive housing benefit but you have a low income, you may be able to get help through the council's Fairer Charging Policy. You will need to apply to the council for an assessment of your circumstances to see how much help you will get.

Ask your scheme manager about it or contact the local Supporting People Team (contact local council for details). A housing advice centre, local Age Concern or Citizens Advice Bureau may also be able to advise you.

Finding sheltered housing

Most rented sheltered housing is provided by housing associations and local councils. The demand for this type of accommodation is high in most parts of the country. Both local councils and housing association aim to assist people in greatest need and they will set criteria describing which applicants have the most priority. Applicants should be able to show:

- housing need because of the physical condition of the applicant's present home; **or**
- medical and/or social reason for moving, such as poor health, disability, isolation from friends or family; **and**
- they are not able to buy rather than rent; **and**
- they have a good reason for wanting to move (if they are not local already) to the area they apply for (eg, they want to be near family or friends).

If you are already a tenant of a council or housing association you should first approach your landlord and ask for a transfer. To apply for council sheltered accommodation contact your local housing department.

To apply for housing association sheltered housing you need either to be referred to a particular housing association by your local council, or to approach the housing association yourself to find out about availability.

There are some private providers of sheltered housing for rent but only very few. Contact the Elderly Accommodation Counsel for details (see Section 11). For information on sheltered housing for sale, see Age Concern Factsheet 2, *Buying retirement housing*.

7. Extra care sheltered housing

Some local authorities and housing associations provide sheltered housing which offers extra care facilities. Such housing is for people who need personal care services, such as help with bathing or dressing. Accommodation is usually provided in self-contained flats, but unlike sheltered housing there may be a shared dining room where meals are available. There may also be care staff to provide personal care.

Such housing is often run jointly with a local social services department and people will normally be housed there as a result of an assessment by a social services department. If you are interested in moving to extra care sheltered housing, contact your local council to find out whether there is any in your area and what are the procedures for applying. Check if the care services provided match your needs, how they are paid for and if you are eligible for any financial help. Remember that your needs may change over time and as a result, your care and support needs may increase or decrease.

You can also contact the Elderly Accommodation Counsel to find out what is available in your area (see Section 11). Charity Counsel and Care produce a factsheet *Extra care housing* (see Section 11).

8. Housing for disabled people

Many housing associations and councils now have a few properties which have been purpose built for people who use a wheelchair or who have some problems getting around.

Mobility housing is housing with special features such as a level entrance and wider doors for people who have problems with steps or may sometimes use a wheelchair.

Wheelchair housing is specially designed for people who always use wheelchairs.

If you use electric scooter or wheelchair, check if there are facilities for storage and for charging of the batteries. If you need to keep it in your flat check if the doorways and hallways can be negotiated easily.

There is a website: www.accessible-property.org.uk that advertises accessible or adapted properties for sale or rent.

9. Abbeyfield houses

Abbeyfield houses cater for people looking for support in sheltered housing. Most of the accommodation is in houses of eight to twelve unfurnished bed-sitting rooms, many have en-suite or bathroom facilities, with a shared lounge, dining room and garden.

The weekly charge usually includes two main meals a day, prepared by a resident housekeeper and facilities for residents to prepare their own breakfast and snacks. A typical house also offers a call alarm system, an assisted bathroom and a network of support from local volunteers.

For further information contact the Abbeyfield Society (see Section 11).

10. Almshouses

Almshouses are run by charitable trusts and offer low-cost accommodation for older people. Each charity has its own rules about the categories of people they can house. For example some almshouses were set up for retired workers of a particular trade or people living in a specific geographical area. A few almshouses can provide extra care for frail residents. Residents living in almshouses, as beneficiaries of a charity, do not have the same legal rights as a tenant elsewhere. There is no security of tenure under law and the individual's rights as a resident will be outlined in a "Letter of Appointment" provided by the Trustees or the Clerk to the Trustees.

For further information on local charities which administer almshouses contact the Almshouse Association (see Section 11).

11. Further information

Abbeyfield Society, Abbeyfield House, 53 Victoria Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 3UW, tel: 01727 857536, website: www.abbeyfield.com.

The Advice Information and Mediation Service for sheltered and retirement housing (**AIMS**), Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER, tel: 0845 600 2001 (lo-call rate), website: www.ageconcern.org.uk/aims. Part of Age Concern England, provides specialist impartial advice to people living or working in sheltered and private retirement housing.

Almshouse Association (The), Billingbear Lodge, Carters Hill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 5RU, tel: 01344 452922, website: www.almshouses.org.

Citizens Advice Bureau, website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk, if there is no housing advice centre in your area, an advisor at a Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to help you. You can find out where your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau is from your local phone book.

Counsel and Care, Twyman House, 16 Bonny Street, London NW1 9PG, tel: 0845 300 7585 (lo-call rate), website: counselandcare.org.uk.

Elderly Accommodation Counsel, 3rd Floor, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP, tel: 020 7820 1343, website: www.housingcare.org. Elderly Accommodation Counsel provides information on all forms of accommodation, support and care for older people. Staff offer guidance and advice to help enquirers choose and finance accommodation most suited to their needs. The charity also maintains a detailed nationwide database of all forms of specialised accommodation for older people – sheltered and retirement housing to rent, buy or part buy, extra care housing, care homes and nursing homes. A request form for further information can be found at the end of this Factsheet. Once you have located a possible housing provider you will have to contact them directly to confirm details such as availability and how to apply.

Housing advice services

The availability and quality of housing advice varies from area to area. Local councils have a legal duty to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and how to prevent homelessness is available in their local area. Contact your local council as soon as possible if you are worried you may become homeless.

In some areas there may be a specific housing advice or housing aid centre, providing advice on a range of housing issues. Your local council or Citizens Advice Bureau should be able to tell you if there is a housing advice centre in your area.

Housing Corporation

National telephone number (for all telephone enquiries): 0845 230 7000 (lo-call rate), Enquiries and Complaints Team: 1 Park Lane, Leeds, LS3 1EP, website: www.housingcorp.gov.uk.

Legal advice

Solicitors can advise you on the law and represent you in court if necessary. If you need to approach a solicitor about a housing matter, try to find one who is experienced in housing law.

Your local housing advice centre or Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to refer you to an experienced solicitor. In some areas there are also law centres where you can get free legal advice from solicitors. An advice agency will be able to tell you if there is a law centre in your area. Further information about legal advice is in Age Concern Factsheet 43, *Getting legal advice*.

Ombudsman services

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint to your local authority or housing association you can take your complaint to one of the ombudsman.

The **Local Government Ombudsman** investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities (for more information see website: www.lgo.org.uk) and can be contacted as follows:

- for London boroughs north of the River Thames (including Richmond but not Harrow), Essex, Kent, Surrey, East and West Sussex, Suffolk, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and City of Coventry:

**10th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4QP,
tel: 020 7217 4620**

- for City of Birmingham, Solihull MBC, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and the north of England (except the Cities of York, Lancaster and Manchester):

Beverley House, 17 Shipton Road, York YO30 5FZ, tel: 01904 380200

- for London boroughs south of the River Thames (except Richmond) and Harrow, Cities of York, Manchester and Lancaster and the rest of England not included under the other offices:

The Oaks No. 2, Westwood Way, Westwood Business Park, Coventry CV4 8JB, tel: 024 7682 0000.

The Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN, tel: 020 7421 3800, website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

Investigates complaints made by tenants of registered social landlords such as housing association and tenants of certain private landlords who are members of the scheme.

Shelterline, 0808 800 4444 (free call), (textphone for deaf callers). The housing charity Shelter has a national helpline which provided telephone advice to people with housing problems. Shelterline is a free service providing advice on tenancy rights, homelessness, repairs and housing benefits.

SSAFA Forces Help, Housing Advisory Service, 19 Queen Elizabeth Street, London SE1 2LP, tel: 020 7463 9398, website: www.ssafa.org.uk. SSAFA (The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association) Forces Help is a charity that helps the ex-Service community. Its aim is to act as a friend to ex-Service personnel and their families. The charity provides a Housing Advisory Service that gives confidential advice and guidance on a wide range of housing issues.

12. Further information from Age Concern

The following factsheets may be of use:

Factsheet 2	<i>Buying retirement housing</i>
Factsheet 6	<i>Finding help at home</i>
Factsheet 10	<i>Local authority charging procedures for care homes</i>
Factsheet 12	<i>Raising income or capital from your home</i>
Factsheet 13	<i>Older home owners - financial help with repairs and adaptations</i>

Factsheet 17	<i>Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit</i>
Factsheet 29	<i>Finding care home accommodation</i>
Factsheet 33	<i>Crime prevention for older people</i>
Factsheet 35	<i>Tenants' rights</i>
Factsheet 43	<i>Getting legal advice</i>
Factsheet 50	<i>Housing options</i>

The following book may be relevant: *Choices in Retirement Housing: Your guide to all the options*. It costs £9.99 and is available from Age Concern Books. To order, please telephone our hotline (9am-7pm Monday to Friday, 10am - 5pm Saturday): **0870 44 22 120** (national call rate), or visit our **website: www.ageconcern.org.uk/bookshop** (secure online bookshop).

If ordering by post, please send a cheque or money order, payable to Age Concern England, for the appropriate amount plus p&p to Age Concern Books, Units 5 & 6, Industrial Estate, Brecon, Powys LD3 8LA.

(Postage and packing: mainland UK and Northern Ireland: £1.99 for the first book, 75p for each additional book up to a maximum of £7.50. Free on orders over £250. For customers ordering from outside the mainland UK & NI: credit card payments only; please telephone the hotline for international postage rates or **email: sales@ageconcernbooks.co.uk**).

If you would like

- to find your nearest Age Concern
- any additional factsheets mentioned (up to a maximum of 5 will be sent free of charge)
- a full list of factsheets and/or a book catalogue
- to receive this information in large print

phone 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ. For people with hearing loss who have access to a textphone, calls can be made by Typetalk, which relays conversations between text and voice via an operator.

Age Concern factsheets and other information materials can be downloaded free from our website at: www.ageconcern.org.uk. To receive a free e-mail notification when new and updated factsheets are published, please either contact the Factsheet Subscription Service on tel: 020 8765 7200 by email: factsheet.subscriptions@ace.org.uk, or sign up on-line.

Age Concern provides factsheets free to older people, their families and people who work with them. If you would like to make a donation to our work, you can send a cheque or postal order (made payable to Age Concern England) to the Personal Fundraising Department, ACE Freepost CN1794, London SW16 4BR.

Find out more about Age Concern England online on www.ageconcern.org.uk.

Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Concern. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, Age Concern cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions.

No factsheet can ever be a complete guide to the law, which also changes from time to time. Therefore please ensure that you have an up to date factsheet and that it clearly applies to your situation.

Legal advice should always be taken if you are in doubt. (*Age Concern is unable to give financial or legal advice*).

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Communications Division, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road SW16 4ER. Registered charity no. 261794.

AN/LAE
FS8/08/05/01



ELDERLY ACCOMMODATION COUNSEL

020 7820 1343

**We're
here to
help you
with the
next
stage**

EAC is the main source of independent advice and information about all forms of accommodation and support for older people.

The charity was formed in 1985 and its advice service is provided by a small team of staff. Through its own continuous research it has built up a detailed knowledge of almost all sheltered and retirement housing developments, care homes and nursing homes in the UK.

Having read this Factsheet, you may have decided to make a move and need information about suitable housing in your chosen area. On the other hand, you may still feel unsure about the right course of action, and wish to explore other alternatives, such as help to enable to you remain in your own home, or a move into residential care.

EITHER WAY, EAC IS HERE TO HELP.

- For an accommodation listing, simply complete this form and return it to us.
- For further information or advice to help you make your decision, feel free to phone us on the number oppsite.
- When completed return this form to:
EAC, 3rd Floor,
89 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TP.



If you're anxious about the cost, just ask us to ring you back.

1 Personal Details

Please complete if you are looking for alternative accommodation

If you are the applicant, please fill in Box A. If you are completing this form for somebody else and would like us to write to you rather than them, please fill in Box B.

A APPLICANT

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

Last Name.....

First Name(s).....

Address.....
.....
.....

Postcode.....

Phone (day).....

Age(s).....

B CORRESPONDENT

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

Last Name.....

First Name(s).....

Address.....
.....
.....

Postcode.....

Phone (day).....

Relationship to applicant.....

Please return to: EAC, 3rd Floor, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP Fax 020 7820 3970

2 Applicant's Present Housing Tenure

- Home Owner Tenant Council Housing Assoc. Private landlord
 Other (please state).....

Please tick appropriate box

3 Your Requirements

HOUSING

Do you wish to consider:

- Buying Renting Both
 Shared ownership
 Housing with care

Minimum requirements:

- Size** Studio 1 bed 2 bed
Type Bungalow Flat Any

Preferred Location(s):

.....
.....
.....
.....

OTHER OPTIONS

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Special needs: (eg: cultural or religious, mobility, pets etc.)

Care or Support Services:.....

CUSTOMER SERVICE To help EAC to improve its services, we may contact you to ask if you found our service helpful.
 Please tick this box if you do NOT want to be contacted.

DATA PROTECTION

EAC will store and process your data in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. EAC occasionally supplies information to other reputable organisations and may keep you informed about products and/or services that may be of interest to you.

Please tick the box if you do not want your data to be used in this way.