

Housing Leaflet For 16/17 Year Olds



Joint Policy and Planning
Board (Housing)

Working with Partners across Kent

**Kent
County
Council**
kent.gov.uk



Kent Housing Group

The Voice of Housing in Kent

Criteria For Eligibility

Are you 16/17 years old and either Homeless or about to be Homeless?

Being aged 16 and 17 and facing the possibility of having nowhere to live or having to leave home suddenly can be a very stressful and confusing time and it is important you receive the right support and advice so you fully understand what your options are so you can make the right decisions.

If you already have a worker supporting you, such as a Social Worker / Early Help Worker you should talk to him/her straight away.

If you do not have anyone supporting you and you find yourself homeless, or you are sofa surfing, or at risk of being homeless then there are 2 agencies that have a legal duty to help you.

These are the Local Authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and the Local Housing Authority, (LHA) who are based in your district council. You can contact either of these to request support.

The support and possible accommodation you can expect from the two agencies will vary and will depend on your own unique set of circumstances. This leaflet aims to explain how this all works.

The priority for both agencies will be to support you to return home, where safe to do so, or find alternative options for you so you can be settled and live safely.

It is important to note that you will not get your own accommodation at this stage, as you will not usually be able to have your own tenancy at 16 or 17, only a licence to occupy a property. Even then it is difficult to find a landlord who will rent to a younger person. There are also limits on how much, if anything, you will receive towards your rent, and usually the most you can expect to be able to afford is a single room in a shared house.

What happens next ?

Nobody wants to see you sleeping rough, so whoever you first speak to will want to ask you some questions about why you feel you cannot live at home. They will want to talk to somebody in your family to find out how you have got into this situation and to carry out a home visit to see what support they can offer you in the short-term and possibly in the long term. They will work with you and your family to try to overcome these problems.

If you are unable to return home, your family will be asked to try to resolve your homelessness themselves by identifying who else may be able to support you in the short term and / or long term. This is called Parental Responsibility, and any arrangements made by your parent(s) / carer(s) are known as a family arrangement. This may only be for a short time, to allow staff from KCC and the LHA to meet with you and find out more information and to agree a plan with you. During this time you will be listened to and your wishes and feelings considered along with ensuring you are as safe as possible.

Joint housing assessment:

The law has an expectation that Local Authorities in the UK and Local Housing Authorities should meet with you together to carry out what is called a “Joint Housing Assessment”.

This meeting is really important and it gives you the opportunity to talk to a social worker and a housing officer together about what is happening and then agree on who will support you, both now and in the future. Your assessment is really important and without it you may not get all the help you need, therefore it is crucial you do not turn one down.

Make sure you keep any appointments that are made for you.

During your assessment there may be some things that are difficult for you to talk about but it is really important you give the social worker and the housing officer as much information as possible about why you are homeless and the reasons you can't return home, as well as talking about areas where you do not feel safe, or do not want to live, e.g. if you have been experiencing violence or abuse at home or from gangs and need to be in an area away from this

You may want a friend, or someone you trust, with you during the assessment and this is absolutely fine. **Your views are important and will be taken into consideration but you won't necessarily have the final say in any choices that are made about your accommodation and support as your options are dependent on your individual circumstances and level of need;** Age / family relationships / educational employment needs / social networks/ ability to live on your own and your consent and / or ability to consent).

What happens next ?

During and after your assessment KCC and the LHA will continue to explore the possibility of you returning home, where safe to do so. However, if it becomes absolutely clear you can't return home either or both agencies should make sure that you have a suitable and safe place to stay if you are unable to return home or live with another family member. This might be temporary accommodation or longer term depending on your own set of unique circumstances.

During the assessment if it becomes clear we can support to you to get back home, KCC may be able to give that support from our Early Help services and/or Specialist Children's Services

If we are unable to achieve this, and you are assessed as a Child in Need, a social worker will talk to you about being "accommodated" by KCC. If you agree to being accommodated by KCC under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 then you will be known as a "Looked after Child".

This accommodation is often provided as an emergency, and is often for a short period of time whilst other support is looked at with you and your family. During this time your social worker will arrange for a Family Group Conference (FGC). This is a meeting for you and your family, chaired by an independent professional from KCC to look at what your immediate / wider family may be able to do to support you.

If there are no other options, you may be able to stay accommodated by KCC until you reach 18, and possibly receive support past this age depending on the length of time you have been in care.

This accommodation may be foster care, but is more likely to be supported accommodation or shared accommodation, where a worker will support you in your day to day living and accessing education / employment.

As a "Looked After Child" you have to have an allocated social worker who oversees your care as KCC becomes your "Corporate Parent".

Your social worker will visit you regularly and work with you towards living independently, this is known as a Pathway Plan and will include support with any parts of your life you need help with, such as education, health, identity, finances and family.

What happens next ?

Your social worker will meet with you regularly to assess your progress.

You will be offered an initial and annual health assessment.

You will have regular "Looked after Child" reviews until you reach 18. The review will look at your progress regarding key areas of your life such as your education, health, identity, finances and family.

The Review process is overseen by an Independent Reviewing Officer who will make sure that the process runs smoothly and that your voice is heard.

You may receive ongoing support post 18 from the leaving care service (if you have been accommodated for more than 13 weeks before your 18th birthday).

You will NOT be able to claim benefits if accommodated by KCC but KCC will give you a minimum income in line with current UK Income Support whilst accommodated and engaging with the above support.

If you do not consent to being accommodated and supported by KCC SCS, you may still be able to get help with your accommodation from the LHA.

In order to get help with accommodation from the LHA you will need to make a homeless application. This will be discussed at the Joint Housing Assessment.

If you are accommodated by the LHA then you may well be placed in supported accommodation, or in a room in a shared house.

Being accommodated by the Housing Department means you are responsible for paying your own rent, bills and any service charges. If you are eligible then you should make an application for benefits. Recent changes to benefits mean allowances towards housing costs will probably not cover your entire rent so you will need to top this up from other benefits. You will also need to pay for any other bills such as electricity, gas, food, phone and so on. Your support worker should support you with any financial / benefit questions you may have. Your worker can discuss what post 18 support you will receive depending on your status.

Useful contacts / Where to get help

Law Centres Network
www.lawcentres.org.uk

Shelter
0808 800 4444
www.shelter.org.uk

Just for Kids Law
020 3174 2279
www.justforkidslaw.org

Citizens Advice Bureau
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

No Second Night Out
0870 383 3333
www.nosecondnightout.org.uk

Runaway Helpline
116 000
www.runawayhelpline.org.uk

A national, 24-hour free helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home. They give confidential advice and can help a child or young person get to a place of safety. They can also pass a message home.

Get Connected
0808 808 4994
www.getconnected.org.uk

A free, confidential helpline that gives young people in difficult situations support, information and advice. Open 7 days a week, 1pm to 11pm.

Here is a link to a booklet that has been written by a young person with loads of great tips and information on your first home

http://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/347274/Your_First_Home_-_some_stuff_you_really_need_to_know

