

YOUR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION EXPLAINED

This leaflet tells you what you need to know if you are homeless and we decide to make you an offer of temporary accommodation. It applies to:

- Anyone offered temporary accommodation whilst we investigate your homeless application. This is called an offer of section 188 interim temporary accommodation.
- Anyone offered temporary accommodation if we decide that we owe you the full homelessness duty. This is called an offer of section 193 (2) full duty temporary accommodation.
- Anyone offered temporary accommodation if we have decided that we do not owe you a long term temporary accommodation duty but have decided to exercise a power to provide accommodation where you have asked for a review of our decision.

What is temporary accommodation?

There are different types of temporary accommodation, the main ones are:

- Bed & Breakfast (B&B): this is usually shared accommodation
- Privately rented self-contained accommodation
- Hostels owned and managed by the Council

Where will my temporary accommodation be located?

The Council cannot always provide temporary accommodation in Waltham Forest. In fact it is more likely that the accommodation offered will be in another London borough or outside London.

Whenever we offer accommodation we have to be sure that you can afford to pay the rent. Most rents in Waltham Forest or close to the borough are unaffordable for people on benefits or a low income. We are doing our best to develop more affordable temporary accommodation in or around Waltham Forest but there are far more people in need of accommodation than there are available properties.

How do you decide where my temporary accommodation will be?

Our policy is to provide suitable accommodation within Waltham Forest whenever reasonably practicable. However, as explained, for many households this won't be possible due to the high demand and lack of suitable available accommodation.

We have therefore developed a policy to ensure that we prioritise those who have the greatest need to be accommodated in the borough or as close as possible to a particular location.

What is the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy?

When deciding where to offer temporary accommodation, the Council will take into account the potential disruption to employment, education or caring responsibilities, accessibility of essential medical facilities and support, and accessibility of local amenities, services and transport. We will always consider our legal responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and to make all of our offers consistent with housing law. We do so by categorising properties and needs as being in Zone A, B or C:

Zone A – located in the London Borough of Waltham Forest

Zone B – located in a nearby borough, i.e. Newham, Redbridge, Enfield

Zone C – located outside of Zones A and B

If you are placed outside Waltham Forest we strongly advise you to make arrangements for any children in your household to go to school near to where you are placed and for household members to register with a local GP. Most people spend several years in temporary accommodation before being rehoused. Our Temporary Accommodation Resident Support Team can provide advice on how to do this if you require it. Their details are at the end of this leaflet.

What happens if I refuse an offer of temporary accommodation?

You will receive only **one** suitable offer of temporary accommodation to meet or end any legal duty owed to you by the Council. If this is an interim offer made before we have made a decision on your homelessness application and you refuse an offer of accommodation you will need to make your own arrangements until a final decision is made on your homeless application. If we subsequently accept that we owe you a housing duty we will make a second offer of accommodation.

However if your case has already been investigated and the Council has accepted a duty towards you under s193 of the Housing Act and you refuse the offer we have no duty to make you any further offer of accommodation.

If you believe the accommodation is unsuitable you have the right to request a review of our decision. This review must be requested in writing within 21 days.

Who is responsible for paying my rent?

You are responsible for paying your rent. Temporary accommodation can be expensive and the benefit cap may mean that not all your rent is covered by housing benefit. You are expected to keep up to date with your payments and not get into arrears. If you are in arrears you will not be eligible for an offer of permanent housing and may be evicted from your temporary accommodation. If it is appropriate, we will help you make a claim for housing benefit or universal credit.

When you sign the agreement for your temporary accommodation you will be given an estimate of how much you need to contribute to the rent after housing benefit or universal credit are paid. Until your benefit application has been processed you will be expected to pay the estimated contribution. After the assessment by the benefits office, the amount that you need to contribute may be revised and if there is a shortfall you will need to make up that amount.

You will need to provide the following documents to assist with your claim:

- Letters from the DWP showing all your benefit entitlements
- Your pay slips to cover the last two months
- Your last three bank statements

If you fail to provide these documents on the day you sign up for your temporary accommodation we will ask you to supply them the next working day. A failure to provide these documents will result in your accommodation being cancelled.

What should I do if I am having difficulty paying my rent?

If you are having problems paying all of your rent you should contact your Temporary Accommodation Income and Payments officer right away. You can find their name on the letter that you were sent with your payments bar code. Alternatively you can e-mail them on TAIncomeandpayments@walthamforest.gov.uk or call on 020 8496 3000 and ask for the team by name.

This team can, for instance, make an appointment for you to have free money advice from Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If you are evicted for not paying your rent or not making sure that your benefit for your housing costs is being paid then we may discharge our legal duty to provide you accommodation and will not find you anywhere else to live.

Council Tax

You are responsible for paying the Council Tax on your property; you may be able to apply for Council Tax support. If you live in another borough you need to register with that local authority and apply for Council Tax support from that borough.

Utilities

You will be informed when you sign your accommodation agreement how to pay for your utilities.

Furniture

Bed & Breakfast accommodation and hostels are furnished with beds, wardrobes, fridges and cooking facilities. Not all self-contained accommodation is furnished but cookers and fridges are provided. It is your responsibility to make your own arrangements to furnish the property to your requirements. You might be entitled to some help to obtain furniture; you can ask the Temporary Accommodation Resident Support team for advice (contact details at the end of this leaflet).

Repairs and maintenance

You are responsible for looking after your accommodation. You must report repairs to your accommodation provider as soon as possible to ensure good maintenance of the property. Your housing officer will provide you with contact details when you sign your accommodation agreement. You will be expected pay for any damage caused by a member of your household.

Noise, nuisance and anti-social behaviour

You, your family, friends or visitors must not cause any nuisance, annoyance or harassment to other residents. Examples of such actions include, but are not limited to, loud noises, noise audible outside the accommodation at unsocial hours, abusive, offensive, racist, sexist or criminal behaviour. Causing such nuisance can result in eviction from your accommodation.

If you are experiencing noise, nuisance or anti-social behaviour from other residents, please contact your housing provider or the Police.

Changes to your household

If a member of your household leaves or someone joins the household to stay or live with you, or if you become pregnant or a baby is born, you must inform us in writing immediately. Please email Housing.Advice@walthamforest.gov.uk

Staying away

If you intend to stay away from your temporary accommodation for more than 3 days you must inform the Temporary Accommodation contracts team at TAContractsTeam@walthamforest.gov.uk. Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of your accommodation.

How long will I stay in temporary accommodation?

It is not possible to say how long you will be in temporary accommodation; it depends on your circumstances and the availability of accommodation. Please note most people spend several years in temporary accommodation before being rehoused, usually into private sector accommodation.

We will end your temporary accommodation when you move into your own accommodation, either accommodation we have offered you or that you have found yourself. If you refuse our offer of settled accommodation we will cancel your temporary accommodation. If our investigation into your application shows us we have no duty to house you or if your circumstances change so that you are no longer eligible for housing we will also end your temporary accommodation.

Can I look for my own property?

It is important to consider all of your options and be proactive in trying to secure accommodation. We strongly suggest that you continue looking for private rented accommodation in the areas you would like to live. If you find a suitable and affordable rented property we can help you to secure the property by paying the first month's rent and deposit. Please contact our Private Sector Lettings Team on 020 8496 5439 or email privatesectorlettings@walthamforest.gov.uk and let them know the details of the property you have found. They will contact the landlord and confirm that the property is affordable and the landlord has all the required safety certificates and necessary license before arranging payments.

There are other options, please ask for our Finding Accommodation leaflet or look on our website www.walthamforest.gov.uk

What help can you offer me if I am moved to a new area outside Waltham Forest or outside London?

We have a team that can help if you have to move to a new area. The Temporary Accommodation Resident Support Team is able to help you apply for school places, register with doctors and engage with local services. They are able to provide you with local information. If you require assistance from the team, you can contact them by email or telephone. A support worker will contact you and assess your requirements. Depending on your needs, the team can work with you for up to six months while you settle into your accommodation.

Even if you do not require any support to begin with, if your circumstances change and you need our help, you can contact the team at any time during your stay in temporary accommodation.

Contact the team by e-mail: Support.Resettlement@walthamforest.gov.uk or call 020 8496 3000 and ask for the team by name.

You can also visit our webpage where you will find our details, plus local information for other boroughs: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/homelessness