



Your Guide to Temporary Accommodation

Key definitions

Housing Inclusion Officer

A member of Council staff who will work with you to secure long-term accommodation or resolve any barriers that prevent you from residing in your existing accommodation.

Temporary Accommodation Officer

A member of Council staff who will manage your tenancy, and should be contacted for issues relating to your tenancy whilst you are in temporary accommodation.

Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996

This section of the Housing Act defines the basis with which temporary accommodation is provided and brought to an end.

What is temporary accommodation?

One of the Council's 'Our Greenwich' missions is to make sure that people in Greenwich have access to a safe and secure home that meets their needs.

Under section 199 of the Housing Act 1996, if a person or family becomes homeless and urgently needs a home, the Council can provide temporary accommodation while helping them find long-term housing.

Temporary accommodation is provided as a temporary solution to homelessness. The location, size and rent may vary.



Do you need this guide translated?

If you need this guide translated into another language, contact us on **020 8921 3928** or email **interpreting@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**.

Your journey through temporary accommodation



You came to the Council for help, either because you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. At this point, a Housing Inclusion Officer will assess your case and determine whether it is appropriate to offer interim accommodation in the form of temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation is provided as a last resort, and we will always aim to prevent you from becoming homeless so that you can avoid moving into temporary housing.



The Council will then search for temporary accommodation.

It could be in a property rented from a private landlord, or refuge for you and your household, which is dependent on what is available that is suitable for your needs. Due to the continuing housing crisis in London, temporary accommodation is sometimes in the form of hotels and outside of the borough.



You may spend anywhere between a few months and several years living in temporary accommodation before we are able to help you find a settled home. This is because of the high demand for housing in the borough, and the limited number of homes becoming available.



We will agree a personal housing plan with you.

This plan sets out the steps we need to take together to stop you becoming homeless and to find a place to live if you have already lost your home – this could include temporary accommodation whilst we work with you to secure longer-term accommodation.



You find a home and move out of temporary accommodation.

The Council will help you find a new, settled home. Depending on your circumstances, this could mean helping you to apply for the Council's housing register and bidding for social housing or finding a privately rented home.

Due to the lack of available council homes and the number of people on our housing register, you are likely to move out of temporary accommodation a lot quicker if you find somewhere to live in the private rented sector. Private Lettings Team (our private sector procurement team) and your Housing Inclusion Officer will work with you to find long-term accommodation within the private rented sector.

For more information visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/affordable-home-to-rent

How your Housing Inclusion Officer works to prevent homelessness

- works with you to help you find a new home
- helps you remain safely and securely in your current home or to return to a previous, suitable home you have lived in
- makes referrals to partner agencies for employment support or benefits support
- gives you other information around your homeless case

A Temporary Accommodation Officer will:

- help to manage issues in the temporary property such as repairs
- deal with rent collection in your temporary accommodation
- help you to manage your tenancy and provide support while you are in temporary accommodation.

How does the Council decide where to place households?

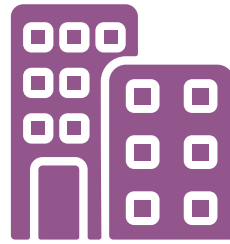
The Council will decide how to allocate temporary accommodation by looking at your individual circumstances. We would like to be able to offer accommodation in your area, but unfortunately sometimes we are not able to because we do not have the homes available in the borough. We will provide the address of the accommodation you will be moving to before you are expected to travel there.

We will look at what is suitable for you. It may be that you can commute to work, travel to your medical appointments, or take your children to school on the bus or train, all of which is common in a city like London with excellent transport networks.

You may need to register with new schools or medical services that are more local to your temporary accommodation, as you may be living out of the borough until your move to longer-term accommodation within Greenwich or elsewhere. If you have any questions about moving outside of the borough, or you're unsure about what to do then please contact your Temporary Accommodation Officer directly.

Hotel accommodation

You may be placed into hotel or hostel accommodation when you approach the Council, if it is the accommodation that we are able to provide at short notice. Please note cooking equipment is not permitted in a hotel room and there are no on site laundry facilities. We will move you into more suitable accommodation when that becomes available.



How long will I have to wait to move out of temporary accommodation?

There is a severe shortage of affordable homes as thousands of people are on our housing register for social housing, and around 2000 households are living in temporary accommodation as of April 2025. You may have to wait a long time, even many years, on our housing register before you can be allocated social housing.

Private rented sector accommodation will often be the quickest route to finding a settled home. You can find out more about private rented accommodation by visiting our website: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/affordable-home-to-rent

We will make sure that any offer of private rented accommodation will be suitable in size, location, and is affordable for you, and that you have all the housing options available to make an informed decision about your next move.



Your rights and responsibilities



Things you need to do in the first few days of moving into temporary accommodation

- ☐ **Complete a ‘change of circumstances’ update on your Universal Credit account**
Please see a guide on how to do this:
gov.uk/universal-credit/changes-of-circumstances
- ☐ **Provide any documentation your Housing Inclusion Officer requests**
Your housing officer will contact you as and when they require more documentation or information
- ☐ **Make a separate claim for Housing Benefit on the Council’s website to get support with housing costs:**
royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingbenefit
- ☐ **Read and understand your licence or tenancy agreement**
If you need your licence or tenancy agreement to be translated into another language, contact us on 020 8921 3928 or email interpreting@royalgreenwich.gov.uk. If you need any other support in reading or understanding your agreement, please contact your Temporary Accommodation Officer.
- ☐ **Check if you’re liable for council tax**
If so, apply for Council Tax Reduction from the council where you have been placed.
gov.uk/council-tax/who-has-to-pay
- ☐ **Make a budget plan**
This includes rent payments, service charges, council tax and other living expenses.
royalgreenwich.gov.uk/budgetcalculator
- ☐ **Google search local services that can help you**
- ☐ **Register with a local GP and dentist**
(unless you are able to remain with your current practice)
nhs.uk/nhs-services/services-near-you/
- ☐ **Check the condition of the property and report any issues to your Temporary Accommodation Officer so they can be investigated and fixed as soon as possible, over telephone 020 8921 2333 or email tempaccommteam@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or if you know the name of your Temporary Accommodation Officer, you can contact them directly.**

Paying your rent while in temporary accommodation

It is your responsibility to ensure the rent is paid. Falling behind with your rent payments could limit your move-on options and might affect your access to the rent deposit scheme. Having debt can be stressful and cause other problems. Contact us if you are struggling to pay your rent and we can help you. This might be by supporting you to apply for benefits or talking to your landlord about payment plans.

The licence and non-secure tenancy agreement

When you move into temporary accommodation, you will receive a licence or non-secure tenancy agreement. A licence is personal permission for someone to occupy accommodation. As the tenant of the property, you should take care of the property and report any issues to your Temporary Accommodation Officer as soon as they arise.

It’s very important that you read the information provided about your licence or non-secure agreement, so you fully understand the agreement. Examples of breaking your agreement include:

- **you sub-let the property**
- **deliberate damage to integral parts of the property**
- **unacceptable behaviour such as creating excess noise, or creating disputes with your neighbours**

If any of the above happens, it is unlikely that we will be able to give you another home and you will have to find somewhere to live yourself. If you become homeless due to this, and then ask the Council for homeless support again you could be found to be intentionally homeless, which would mean the Council would be unable to offer you settled accommodation.

Will I have access to internet?

As part of the Council’s digital inclusion work, the Council has joined the National Databank, which is a national scheme to provide free mobile SIM cards to residents on a low income and without access to the internet.

Thanks to our partnership with local community organisation Creating Ground, we have been able to work together to reach residents in temporary accommodation, helping to keep them connected with loved ones and feel less isolated. Collection is free from all 12 library branches in the borough during a one-hour surgery each week.

For more information visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/free-sim-scheme

There are also other Data Banks you can receive a SIM card from. Please check this map for more information: goodthingsfoundation.org/find-support/map.

You can also ask your TA Officer for advice on how you can obtain a SIM card or email the Digital Inclusion team at digital-inclusion@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Will I have access to storage?

If you are moving into temporary accommodation and will need support with storing your belongings, we may be able to assist if you meet the criteria. Please contact your Housing Inclusion Officer to discuss this as soon as possible.

Safer sleep for babies

Following this advice for every sleep, day and night, reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, previously known as cot death). This safer sleep advice has saved the lives of over 30,000 babies since 1991.

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in their own clear, flat, firm separate sleep space (e.g. a cot or Moses basket) in the same room as you.

1. **Lie your baby on their back.**
2. **Keep their cot clear.**
3. **Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress.**
4. **Keep baby smoke-free.**
5. **Avoid your baby getting too hot.**

Sleep your baby in the same room as you for at least the first six months.

For further helpful information visit: lullabytrust.org.uk/baby-safety/safer-sleep-information/safer-sleep-overview

What happens if I refuse an offer of temporary accommodation?

We will discuss the offer of temporary accommodation with you and listen to your concerns about the property, as we appreciate that moving into any property, whether it's temporary accommodation or a private tenancy, can be very stressful. If the accommodation has any facilities such as cooking facilities shared with other households or is outside of the borough, this does not necessarily mean it is unsuitable, and if we still think it suits your needs, we will expect you to accept the offer. Temporary Accommodation Officers will be happy to answer any questions about the property before you accept the offer.

In these circumstances, we will advise you to accept the offer and notify you of your rights. If you refuse the offer, you are unlikely to be offered further temporary accommodation through the Council. We're happy to answer any questions you have about the property before you move in, but due to the scarcity of accommodation we are unable to make more than one suitable offer.

Please remember, you may spend anywhere between a few months and several years living in temporary accommodation before we are able to help you find a settled home.

Moving into temporary accommodation (apart from hotels)

Once you have been allocated emergency temporary accommodation, you will be contacted by your new landlord to arrange a meeting. Remember to ask how to contact your landlord directly because this is who you will deal with about maintenance issues in your accommodation.

When you are moved into temporary accommodation you will be given the details of the Council's temporary accommodation team. You will also be assigned a Temporary Accommodation Officer to help you, and you should contact them if you have any questions about your temporary accommodation or if you have difficulties contacting your landlord.

Moving into a hotel

The process of moving into a hotel is different in that you don't meet the landlord or collect keys, you simply turn up to the hotel and collect your access card/keys and then stay in the property whilst more suitable accommodation becomes available. Please note cooking equipment is not permitted in a hotel room and there are no on site laundry facilities. If there are any issues whilst you are in the hotel, you can still contact your Temporary Accommodation Officer but please report maintenance issues in the accommodation to the hotel directly.

If you are placed in hotel accommodation, there may be occasions when the hotel could ask you to move to another room within the hotel which is different to the one you have been staying in. We will always try where possible to book rooms that are going to be available for the longest period, but we are sometimes restricted due to the hotel's room availability and the limit on the number of nights we can book a particular room for at any one time.

You will only be offered hotel accommodation as a last resort if there is no other accommodation that is available for you to occupy.



Moving from one temporary accommodation home to another or out of temporary accommodation



Why is the Council moving me to different temporary accommodation?

You may be moved to another temporary home if your temporary accommodation is not owned by the Council and the landlord needs it back, or if we have found a more appropriate, longer-term home for you.

Alternatively, we may have found accommodation that is either more suitable for your household or is closer to the borough. Properties that are closer to the borough are in high demand, so we can only offer them as and when they become available.

When will the Council bring my stay in temporary accommodation to an end?

In most cases, we will end your temporary accommodation if you accept or decline an offer of a suitable long-term home. For further information on what this means, speak to your Housing Inclusion Officer. Alternatively, if you break the terms of your tenancy agreement or the council decides it does not have a duty to rehouse you, we might also end our duty to provide you with temporary accommodation.

Find privately rented sector accommodation (PRS)

Private rented sector accommodation will often be the quickest route to settled accommodation. If necessary, we can help you with rent in advance and a deposit. Please be aware that you are not restricted to consider accommodation inside the borough. For more information on how to find private rented sector accommodation check the Council's website. If you need advice or further assistance you could consult Shelter or Citizens Advice Greenwich.

I have found or been offered alternative accommodation, what should I do?

If you have found appropriate long-term accommodation, you should speak to the Council's Private Lettings Team, who help to find long-term private rented sector homes for people in temporary accommodation. They will discuss this in further detail with you. It is important for you to be certain you can afford the accommodation and we can help with this. You can contact the team via email on **private-lettings-team@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or by telephone on **020 8921 2531**.

Can I bring my pet into temporary accommodation?

Unless your pet is an Assistance Animal, as described in The Equality Act 2010, a temporary accommodation landlord will not be legally required to allow pets in their property. If you have an assistance dog or emotional support animal, then please provide us with the documentation to support this. You may need to pay for a kennel or ask family or friends to look after your pet, until you find long-term accommodation.

The Dogs Trust may be able to assist with looking after your dog if you are fleeing domestic abuse. Find out more by visiting **dogstrustfreedomproject.org.uk**



Benefits and bills



The Council can help you get benefits and Universal Credit

Benefits and tax credits are payments from the government to certain people on low pay, or to meet specific needs.

Contact our Welfare Rights Team on **020 8921 6375**, on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 10am to 1pm.

Visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits for more information about what you might be entitled to.

You can also visit one of our Advice Hubs across the borough for face-to-face support, guidance and help. Find out more online at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/advicehubs

If you disagree with a decision about your entitlement to benefits, you can ask the DWP for a review. You usually need to request the review within one month. Citizens Advice Greenwich can offer help and advice.

Energy costs

If you are struggling to pay your energy bills, you should speak to your energy provider as soon as possible. Under rules from regulator Ofgem, your supplier must help you – usually by negotiating a payment plan that you can afford.

Pre-payment meters

If you've run out of gas or electricity, your energy supplier should give you temporary credit if you can't top up, for example because:

- you can't afford it
- you're having problems topping up

Make sure you contact your energy supplier as soon as possible and they will be able to help you.

All energy suppliers offer small amounts of emergency credit. You'll usually get £5 of emergency credit on your gas and electricity meter (though some have increased this in response to the energy crisis) that you can access through your meter. Find out more by visiting moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/how-to-get-help-if-you-re-struggling-with-your-energy-bills-/

Make sure you're on the priority energy list

If you or someone you know needs a little extra support, they can be added to the Priority Services Register for water, electricity and gas.

You are eligible if you:

- have reached state pension age
- are disabled or have a long-term medical condition/recovering from an injury
- have a mental health condition
- are pregnant or have young children
- if you don't speak or read English well
- need to use medical equipment that requires a power supply
- would struggle to answer the door or get help in an emergency

You can speak to your electricity and gas supplier using the contact information found on your most recent bill.

For water, visit: thameswater.co.uk/help/extra-care/priority-services

South East London Community Energy Co-op

You could get free energy advice at a local café through the South East London Community Energy (SELCE) organisation. Find out more by visiting selce.org.uk/warm-homes-for-less

Apply for Council Tax Support

You will still need to pay Council Tax when you are living in Temporary Accommodation.

Council Tax Support is a scheme to reduce council tax bills for people on a low income. You can apply whether you are in or out of work, and regardless of whether you receive Universal Credit or Benefits.

To qualify for Council Tax Support:

- you must be liable for council tax
- your income must be low enough to satisfy the means test
- your savings must not exceed £16,000 (unless you are also receiving the guarantee element of Pension Credit). Savings over £6,000 (or £10,000 for pensioners) will affect how much you get.

Your award is generally credited directly to your council tax bill.

Find out more by visiting royalgreenwich.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

One off payments and grants



Apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment

If your rent is not met in full by housing benefit or universal credit and you have a temporary situation which makes it difficult to pay your rent, you can apply for extra help in the form of discretionary housing payments (DHPs).

We only have a limited amount of money each year to help residents with DHPs, so we need to ensure that DHPs are awarded to people who need them most and help those who are taking action to address their long-term circumstances.

Find out more and apply by visiting

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/discretionary-housing-payment

Emergency support scheme and community support award

You might be able to get a one-off payment for specific items through our Emergency Support Scheme; for example, if there is a flood or fire in your home.

You could also get a Community Support Award which we provide for basic household items and furniture.

Find out more about the schemes by visiting **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ESS**

Find a charitable grant through turn2us

You might be able to get a charitable grant through Turn2us, a charity which helps people living in poverty in the UK. The grants are for specific things like buying a new fridge if you can't afford to replace it.

This is open to all residents, even those going through immigration.

Find out more by visiting **turn2us.org.uk**

Other loans

Be very careful with other kinds of borrowing. Things like payday loans, log book loans and doorstep lending can seem like an easy solution, but can make a bad situation worse. They're often a very expensive way of borrowing, so always try to find other ways - such as joining a credit union. Credit unions offer banking services to people who would otherwise find them difficult to get.

Find out more information about the Greenwich & Bexley Credit Union at

gbcreditunion.com

Finding employment



You can get help finding a new job, free careers advice and employment support and training through Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB).

GLLaB can help Royal Greenwich residents who are:

- looking for your next job
- wanting to learn new skills to re-train or up-skill for a new career
- wanting to get back to work after a break
- looking for your first job
- looking for an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programme.

Visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/GLLaB for more information on searching for a job.



Help with everyday costs and healthcare



Get debt advice from Debt Free London

You can get 24x7 confidential support and advice from Debt Free London. They offer services around debt, saving and budgeting including advice on rent arrears, utility bills, credit cards or loan debt. Find out more about managing debt by visiting debtfreeadvice.com

Get general money advice through Citizens Advice Greenwich

Citizens Advice Greenwich can help you with free advice on a wide range of problems, including debt, housing, benefits, employment, family issues, discrimination, consumer complaints and many more. Find out more by visiting greenwichcab.org.uk

Food banks through LiveWell Greenwich

If you are struggling to afford food or utility bills, you can contact LiveWell Greenwich for advice and support, who can refer you to food banks if you need food bank vouchers. Speak to advisors for more information by calling the free advice line on **0800 470 4831**.

For more information visit livewellgreenwich.org.uk

NHS Low Income Scheme

If you are on a low income, you can get support for paying for things like prescriptions, dental & eye care, travel costs and wigs and fabric supports costs through the NHS. Find out more by visiting nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/nhs-low-income-scheme-lis/

Get free counselling

If you are struggling with your mental health, you may be able to get free counselling at Bromley, Lewisham & Greenwich Mind. Find out more by visiting blgmind.org.uk/greenwich-mental-health/



Support for families and children



Support through children's centres

You can find free or low-cost activities for families with children aged under five at one of our 23 children's centres across the borough. Call **020 8921 6921** or visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/childrens-centres** for more information.

Join a local food club

Family Action, a UK charity, is working to ensure no child or young person is left hungry in our borough through local food clubs available for an annual membership of £1. Food On Our Doorstep allows you to get £15 worth of food for your family for just £3.50 each week. Visit **family-action.org.uk** for more information.

Community meals

You can get free monthly community meals at rotating community centres across the borough. Find out more by visiting **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-food-programmes**

Holiday Food and Fun

If your child is aged between four and 16 and receives or is eligible for benefits-related free school meals, they can come along to one of our free holiday clubs this winter and get a filling meal each day too! For more information visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/holidayfoodandfun**

Holiday meals

Free, nutritious food is available for all children and young people in our borough during the school holidays. Just turn up and tuck in! Find your local at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/holidaymeals**

Healthy Start

If you're more than 10 weeks' pregnant or have a child under four, you can get help to buy healthy food, milk and vitamins.

Apply for free milk and vitamins by visiting **healthystart.nhs.uk**

Childcare

You could get up to £500 every three months for each of your children to help with childcare costs. This goes up to £1,000 every three months if a child is disabled. Find out more online at **gov.uk/tax-free-childcare**

Free early learning

Free early learning places are available in Royal Greenwich for some two-year-olds and all three and four-year-old children. Visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/earlylearning** for more information.

Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

The Local Offer is an information resource for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Find out more by visiting **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/localoffer**

Free English classes

If you want to improve your English language skills, then you can sign up for English for Speakers of other Language (ESOL) classes. Visit **efalondon.org/esol-classes** for more information or ask your Housing Inclusion Officer about free English classes in the area.



Local services and helpful contact details



You will be able to find key contact details, including those of your Housing Inclusion Officer, on your personal housing plan. Below are some more helpful contacts and links.

Greenwich Supports

Cost of living support from the Council, local charities, and community groups.
royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-supports

LiveWell Greenwich

Cost of living support and local information, events and support to look after your health and wellbeing.
livewellgreenwich.org.uk
0800 470 4831

Citizens Advice Greenwich

For free advice on a range of issues including debt, housing, benefits, employment, family issues and discrimination.
greenwichcab.org.uk
080 8278 7965

Greenwich Housing Rights

Free housing legal advice and representation on a range of housing matters.
grhr.co.uk
020 8854 8848

HER Centre

A small local women's charity in Greenwich supporting victims of domestic abuse.
hercentre.org
020 3260 7772

Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
116 123
samaritans.org

Mind

The mental health charity for those experiencing a mental health problem.
0300 123 3393
mind.org.uk

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

A charity that stands together with everyone who's struggling with life, no matter who they are, where they're from or what they're going through.
0800 585858
thecalmzone.net/what-we-do

SOS Silence of Suicide

A suicide prevention charity that offers a helpline for mental health and emotional wellbeing.
0808 115 1505
sossilenceofsuicide.org

Who to contact at the Council:

Private Lettings Team

(to help you find a home in the private rented sector)
private-lettings-team@royalgreenwich.gov.uk
020 8921 2531

Temporary Accommodation Team

(for temporary accommodation queries)
020 8921 2333

Welfare Rights Team

(for information and support on benefits)
020 8921 6375

Families Information Service

(for help and advice on a range of issues that affect you and your family)
020 8921 6921