

Factsheet

Looking for somewhere to live: Finding rented accommodation

HOMES FIRST

Lewes and Eastbourne
Councils
working together for you

This leaflet can help you find affordable accommodation.

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If you've been asked to leave your accommodation

Most tenants cannot be evicted until a valid notice seeking possession has been served. Once the notice period has run out, your landlord can apply for a court order.

If you have been asked to leave your accommodation, please contact Lewes and Eastbourne Councils' Housing Solutions Team or Brighton Housing Trust (contact details below), who will be able to advise you of your rights.

Where to look for accommodation

If you do not have access to the internet, free internet access is available from the libraries of East Sussex County Council.

The following websites enable you to search for accommodation:

- Rightmove: <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/>
- Friday Ad: <https://www.friday-ad.co.uk/property/>
- Gumtree: <https://www.gumtree.com/categories/flats-houses>
- PrimeLocation: <https://www.primelocation.com/to-rent/>
- DSSmove: <http://www.dssmove.co.uk/>

To search for rooms in shared houses, there are a number of websites including:

- SpareRoom: www.spareroom.co.uk
- OpenRent: <https://www.openrent.co.uk/>
- Zoopla: <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/>

Accommodation can also be searched for at:

- Facebook Marketplace – properties to rent;
- Letting agents – there are a number of letting agents covering the areas of Eastbourne and Lewes district. These can be found by searching online;
- Ask friends who are currently renting if their landlord or letting agent has places to rent;
- Ask friends and family if you can stay with them, or if they know somewhere you can stay..

Pets

Many landlords are reluctant to accept tenants with pets. A landlord cannot ask for a deposit of more than five weeks rent, even if you have a pet, but can charge additional rent.

For advice on pet-friendly tenancies, see Letswithpets:

<http://www.letswithpets.org.uk/find-a-pet-friendly-property/find-a-pet-friendly-property>

Scams

Most adverts for properties to rent are genuine, but a number of scams exist. Fraudulent landlords may post adverts for properties that look attractive and cheap. However, they may not own the property but ask prospective tenants to pay money before seeing the property. Never pay money to a landlord or agent before seeing the property. Avoid making payments through money transfer companies such as Western Union and MoneyGram.

How much money can a landlord or letting agent charge?

The only payments that landlords or letting agents can charge tenants for are:

- Rent – there is no control over how much rent a landlord can charge;
- A refundable deposit of no more than five weeks rent;
- A refundable holding deposit (to reserve the property) of no more than one weeks rent;
- Payment if the tenant ends the tenancy early (before the six or 12 month period you have agreed);
- Up to £50 if the tenant and landlord agreed to a change in the terms of the tenancy;
- Payments for gas, electricity, TV licence, phone, Wi-Fi and Council Tax (if paid for by the landlord);
- A charge for late payment of rent or lost keys, if this is included in the tenancy agreement.

If a landlord or letting agent wants to charge you for anything else, please contact the Councils' Housing Solutions Team.

Guarantors

Some landlords and letting agents ask for a guarantor. Landlords and letting agents usually request a homeowner with a reasonable income, who will be responsible for paying your rent if you fail to pay, or for damages to the property.

Having a guarantor makes it easier to obtain accommodation. If you do not have a guarantor, it may be better to search for accommodation in the Friday Ad, or on Gumtree and Facebook for example, where landlords advertise directly, rather than through a letting agent.

Financial help with rent

If you are on low income, or in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit, you may be entitled to help with paying your rent. How much you receive will depend on your household composition (and if single, whether you are aged over 35) and your income.

Turn2us has an online benefits calculator, accessible at:
<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou>

The maximum amount you can receive for rent payments is called the Local Housing Allowance, (the LHA rate).

You can use the LHA bedroom calculator to calculate how many bedrooms you are eligible for, accessible at: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/bedroomcalculator.aspx>

If you are a single person under 35 years of age, you will only be entitled to the Shared Accommodation Rate. Most care leavers are entitled to the one-bedroom rate until their twenty-fifth birthday.

Once you know your bedroom entitlement, you can find out the LHA rate for any postcode or council at: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/>

If you receive benefits, look for accommodation that costs equal to, or close to, the LHA rate. If you find accommodation that costs more than the LHA rate, you will have to pay for the shortfall from your benefits.

Local areas where there are more properties at or close to the LHA rate include:
Eastbourne: Shinewater, Langney, Hampden Park, and some areas of Old Town.
Lewes district: Peacehaven and Newhaven.

Areas outside of Eastbourne and Lewes where there are properties at or close to the LHA rate include Hastings, Bexhill, Pevensey, and Polegate.

Outside of the South East, and particularly in the North of England, it is much easier to find affordable accommodation. Home-Link can help you find accommodation across the country: <https://www.home-link.org.uk/choice/default.aspx>

If you have debts, or need help with managing your money, advice can be sought from StepChange: <https://www.stepchange.org/> Phone: 0800 138 1111

A free online budget planner that looks at your income and expenditure is provided by the Money Advice Service:
https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/budget-planner/budget/how_to_use

Help with rent in advance and deposits

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and need help with rent in advance and/or a deposit for a property, the Councils may offer an interest-free loan.

Loans and savings schemes for people on low incomes may also be offered by Credit Union: <https://www.eastsussexcu.org.uk/>

Discretionary Housing Payments

If you are currently in receipt of either Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit, you can apply for a discretionary housing payment (DHP) from Housing Benefit.

DHPs are normally awarded to cover the shortfall between the Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit that you receive and your rent.

In some circumstances you may receive a DHP to cover rent arrears.

In exceptional circumstances you can apply for a DHP for rent in advance and the deposit on a new dwelling.

For more information see: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/discretionary-housing-payments/>

Council and housing association housing (social housing)

The only way to access a social housing tenancy is by applying to join the Council's housing register for the area that you want to live in. To apply for social housing you need to have a local connection to the area, as defined in the Allocations Policy for either Eastbourne or Lewes, or belong to one of the exempt groups.

For details see: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/housing/apply-for-housing/>

The allocations policies provide details of who is entitled to apply and the priority bands for housing.

For housing register applicants in Band B it can take two years to get rehoused. There are approximately 1,000 households on the register for Eastbourne and approximately 1,000 households on the register for Lewes. The housing register is not a quick solution to an immediate housing problem.

Help finding accommodation and keeping a tenancy

If you need help to find accommodation, the Councils may be able to refer you to Home Works or the Rapid Rehousing Pathway, which can assist you with finding accommodation and help you to understand what is needed to maintain your tenancy.

Supported housing

Supported housing is available for people who are unable to live independently and who need some support to help them keep accommodation. For most of the schemes you will need to be referred by the Council.

Eastbourne & Wealden YMCA has supported housing for 16 to 25 year olds.

Eastbourne Foyer, run by YMCA, provides supported accommodation for people aged between 16 to 25 years old.

Newhaven Foyer, run by the Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) provides supported housing for people aged 16 to 24 years old.

Sanctuary Housing has two schemes: One for people with mental health problems and additional support needs. Another scheme provides accommodation and support for homeless people with drug/alcohol addiction, mental health problems and mild learning difficulties.

The Colonnades, Eastbourne, is a block of 74 flats with support.

East Sussex Young Mother's Service provides accommodation for vulnerable mothers aged 16 to 25 years old.

To apply to live in one of the supported housing schemes, contact Eastbourne and Lewes Councils' Housing Solutions Team.

Help for drug or alcohol misuse

East Sussex drug and alcohol recovery service (STAR) – Eastbourne & Hastings.

See: <https://www.changegrowlive.org/content/east-sussex-drug-and-alcohol-recovery-service-star> Phone: 0300 3038 160

Rough sleepers

See the leaflets *Eastbourne Rough Sleeper Services* and *Lewes Rough Sleeper Services*.

Care leavers

If you are a care leaver and have housing problems, you should contact your personal adviser in the first instance.

Your personal adviser may be able to refer you for accommodation provided by the YMCA or the Foyers.

If you were put in care by East Sussex County Council, as a care leaver you can apply to be placed on both Eastbourne and Lewes Councils' housing registers.

Prisoners and ex-offenders

Housing advice is available from Nacro:

<https://www.nacro.org.uk/resettlement-advice-service/support-for-individuals/housing/>

Keeping your home - Housing Benefit

If you are on bail and your bail conditions prevent you from living in your home, you can receive Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks, if you intend to return.

You can receive Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks whilst on remand.

If you have been sentenced and imprisoned, you can receive Housing Benefit for up to 13 weeks, if you expect to return home in that time.

Keeping your home – Universal Credit

If you were receiving help to pay your rent from Universal Credit before going to prison, you can continue to receive Universal Credit to pay housing costs for up to six months. You will not get help with housing costs if you are expected to be in prison for longer than six months.

Keeping your home – living with a partner

If your partner lived with you before you went to prison, your partner may be able to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to pay the rent. Your partner can apply even if they are not listed on the tenancy.

Housing on release from prison

Prior to your release from prison, the prison will make a referral to a council. The council will assess whether they have to provide you with temporary accommodation. The council will advise you on how to find accommodation. If you need supported accommodation the council can refer you to a supported housing provider.

If the council does not have to provide you with accommodation, you will need to ask family and friends if they can help you, whilst you look for a private rented property.

Former members of the regular Armed Forces

Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils are signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Armed Forces Covenant

<https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/support-and-advice/service-leavers/>

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, offers free support and advice for current and former members of the armed forces: <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>

Veterans' Gateway also offer free support and a free helpline:

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk> Phone: 0800 731 4880

Veterans' Gateway also has a webpage devoted to housing:

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/housing-advice-for-veterans/>

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

Phone: 0808 802 8080

Help for Heroes supports Service Personnel and Veterans who were injured or became ill during service, due to their service: www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Haig Housing Trust provides housing assistance for ex-service personnel. They offer housing at affordable rents throughout the UK:

<https://www.haighousing.org.uk/properties/apply-now>

People in the following three categories can apply to the housing register in both Eastbourne and Lewes, and do not require a local connection:

- Current or former service personnel if they apply within 5 years of discharge;
- A bereaved spouse or civil partner of armed forces personnel who is leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner;
- A serving or former member of the Reserves Forces who needs to move because of a serious injury, medical condition, or disability sustained as a result of their service.

People who are experiencing domestic abuse or domestic violence

Women experiencing domestic abuse can contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline. Phone: 0808 2000 247

Men experiencing domestic abuse can contact the Men's Advice Line. Phone: 0808 8010 327.

People in a same-sex relationship experiencing domestic abuse can call the National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline. Phone: 0800 999 5428

The Women's Aid directory of local services is accessible at:

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/>

If you wish to remain in your home, you can get legal advice on obtaining a court order (injunction) to protect you from being harmed or threatened (a non-molestation order), an occupation order, or a court order which decides who can live in your home and can prevent an abusive partner from living there.

You can get legal advice from Brighton Housing Trust or a solicitor specialising in family law. If you are on benefits or on low income you may get Legal Aid to help with the legal costs.

If you are experiencing domestic violence and extra security measures would help you, you can apply to the Sanctuary Scheme for help to make your home more secure, with better locks on doors and windows for example. You can request assistance from the Scheme, using the form at:

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/housing/domestic-violence-support/>

For women, if you feel unsafe and need to leave your home to seek accommodation in a women's refuge, call the National Domestic Violence Helpline.

Phone: 0808 2000 247

Support for survivors of abuse and violence can be found at The Portal:

<http://theportal.org.uk/>

Hospital discharge

If you are in hospital and have nowhere to live when discharged, please contact the hospital's discharge co-ordinator and ask them to make a referral to the Council.

Mental health

Please see 'Supported housing' above.

Further financial advice

Eastbourne Welfare Benefits Hotline: benefitseastsussex@harcuk.com
Phone: 0333 344 0681

Eastbourne Citizens Advice: <http://www.eastbournecab.co.uk/>
Phone: 03444 111 444

Money Advice: <https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en>

National Debtline: <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/> Phone: 0808 808 4000

Grants for low income families including help to cover travel costs to school:
<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/grants-low-income/>

Advice on applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP):
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/help-with-your-claim/claim-form/>

You may be eligible for a budgeting loan: <https://www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits>

You may be eligible for a Universal Credit Advance. Find out by calling this number:
0800 328 5644

You could be entitled to a Universal Credit Budgeting Loan. You will need to discuss this with your allocated worker at the job-centre:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-advances>

Help to Save. If you are in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit, and earned more than £569.22 from paid work in your last monthly assessment period, the government will contribute 50p for every £1 you save:
<https://www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income>

Winter night shelters

During the winter months there are night shelters operating in both Eastbourne and Lewes. Ask the Council for more information.

Severe weather

The Council will provide accommodation for anyone who is sleeping rough when the temperature falls below zero for just one night.

Contact information

Eastbourne and Lewes Councils

Lewes & Eastbourne Councils' Housing Solutions – assist anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness to find accommodation:

Eastbourne Borough Council: 1 Grove Road, Eastbourne BN21 4TW.

Contact form at: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/contact-us/contact-us-form/>

Phone: 01323 410000

Lewes District Council: Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes BN7 1AB

Contact form at: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/contact-us/contact-us-form/>

Phone: 01273 471600

For a Housing Benefit claim form: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/how-to-claim-housing-benefit-or-council-tax-reduction/>

Brighton Housing Trust

Provide housing advice free of charge: www.bht.org.uk

Advice Centres in:

Eastbourne. Phone: 01323 642615

Brighton. Phone: 01273 645455

Hastings. Phone: 01424 452618

Eastbourne JobCentre Plus

St Anne's House, 2 St Anne's Rd, Eastbourne BN21 3XX

Lewes JobCentre Plus

Medwyn House, Mountfield Rd, Lewes BN7 2XR

Eastbourne Welfare Benefits Hotline

benefitseastsussex@harcuk.com

Phone: 0333 344 0681

Youth Advice Centre (YAC)

Housing advice for young people up to age 26. Operates Tuesday 2 - 4pm.

YMCA, 56 Seaside, Eastbourne.