



Applying for Housing Advice and Options Service Standard

What you can expect from our Housing team

The Housing team at Three Rivers District Council is committed to providing a quality service to every customer.

The Housing Options team provide free and confidential advice to those in housing need, homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- We will be polite and treat you with respect at all times
- We aim to contact you within 48 hours of your application online
- We will make sure the information we give you is clear and specific to your personal circumstances
- We aim to avoid placing families in bed and breakfast accommodation
- We aim to keep families in our District
- We will provide you with prevention advice to try and keep you in your home
- We will complete a detailed assessment of your circumstances and provide you with a personalised housing plan.

Housing Options

The Council has an emphasis on preventing homelessness and we will work with other agencies to achieve this. We will try to prevent your homelessness and resolve your housing need depending on your circumstances, examples of advice we can offer include;

- your rights and responsibilities
- rent/mortgage arrear
- resolving disputes with friends and family members who have given notice for you to leave
- advice on landlord matters such as disputes, disrepair, illegal eviction and harassment
- mutual exchange and the housing register
- private renting
- shared ownership
- supported housing schemes
- rent deposit guarantee scheme

Housing Register

You may qualify to join our Housing Register if you have a local connection and a housing need in accordance with our allocation policy. If you are eligible to join the register you can bid for properties through Home Connections. The Council does not have any general needs stock so all properties are owned and managed by Registered Providers such as Thrive Homes. Details of this can be found in our service standard 'Applying for Social Housing'.

The Council has a rent deposit guarantee scheme which works in the form of a bond certificate to a landlord. No payment will be made direct to you under any circumstance.

If a private property is identified, we would need to assess if the accommodation is affordable for you (similar to the Local Housing Allowance) and is the property size you require.

Homelessness

If you tell the Council that you are going to be homeless or if you are threatened with homelessness you will need to log on and complete an application at <https://threerivers.homeconnections.org.uk/>

If you are not homeless that day you will be contacted within 48 hours by a Housing Options Officer to carry out an assessment with you. In your assessment your Housing Options Officer will ask you to explain your current situation and will look at your eligibility for housing.

If you are eligible and threatened with homelessness the Council will then take reasonable steps to prevent you from becoming homeless and complete a personalised housing plan with you. This will include reasonable steps for both you and the Council to complete.

Homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days

You are homeless if:

-  you have no accommodation available for your occupation in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which you are entitled to occupy
-  you are unable to access your property or it is unsafe to continue to occupy the property
-  it is not reasonable for you to continue to occupy

You are threatened with homelessness if you are likely to fall into one of the above categories within 56 days.

Eligible for assistance

Being eligible for assistance means you are entitled to help with housing from a local authority if you need it. The law in this area is very complicated and the following is only a guide. You usually qualify if you have:

- British or Irish citizenship
- settled status from the EU settlement scheme
- indefinite leave to remain (ILR)
- refugee status or humanitarian protection

Many people with pre-settled status and some other people from abroad could also qualify.

Priority need for housing

If we are unable to prevent you from becoming homeless, the Council will then try to relieve your homelessness. If you are in priority need you will be placed into temporary accommodation.

You are considered to have a priority need for housing if you or a member of your household:

- are pregnant
- have dependent children living with you
- are homeless as a result of an emergency such as fire, flood or other disaster
- are homeless because of domestic abuse
- is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, physical disability or other special reason
- are aged 16 or 17 but not a relevant child or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- is under 21 and have been looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 but not a student in full-time education
- are vulnerable as a result of serving in the armed forces, having been imprisoned, having been looked after and are over 21 or ceasing to occupy accommodation because of actual or threatened violence

The Council will again assess your needs and circumstances. Your Housing Options Officer will arrange an interview and complete a personalised housing plan relating to your new circumstances. The Council will owe you a relief duty and will try to relieve your homelessness.

If you do not have a local connection to the Three Rivers District you will be referred back to the area you have a connection with if it is safe to do so. They will then continue to work with you until the end of your relief duty.

You have a local connection

You have a local connection to Three Rivers if you meet one of the following criteria:

- you have lived in Three Rivers for at least six out of the last twelve months or three out of the last five years
- you have a close relative (parent, adult child, brother or sister) who has lived in Three Rivers for the past five years
- you have a permanent job in Three Rivers
- you have special circumstances that will be considered by the Housing Panel

If the Council is unable to relieve your homelessness, they will assess the reason why you became homeless.

You have not become homeless intentionally

- If you have deliberately done or failed to do something which has caused your homelessness you may be intentionally homeless. Lots of factors are taken into account and we must look at your last settled address to establish if it was suitable, affordable, reasonable and available for you to continue to occupy.
- If we are satisfied that you are homeless, eligible and in priority need enquiries must be made into how you became homeless.
- If you have become homeless through no fault of your own you would not be intentionally homeless.
- If you have not become intentionally homeless then a decision will be made on whether a full housing duty is owed to you.

You have the right to ask for a review of our decision if you disagree with it.

If you would like any further information about anything regarding this service standard you can contact the Housing team at

housingenquiries@threerivers.gov.uk



Three Rivers House
Northway
Rickmansworth
WD3 1RL