

LEAVING HOSPITAL

IF YOU ARE LEAVING HOSPITAL OR AWAITING HOSPITAL ADMISSION

We can help and advise you if you are going into hospital, or have already been admitted and you believe you will not have suitable accommodation to return to when you are discharged.

We can help with:

- supporting you to have accommodation to return to you
- try to prevent you from becoming homeless
- making your accommodation more suitable
- if appropriate help you move in a planned way
- look at alternative housing options

You should get in touch with us at the earliest opportunity if you know you are going to be admitted in to hospital and think your accommodation will no longer be suitable

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/identifying-your-need-for-housing>

If you are in hospital:

Your hospital is required to notify us if they consider you to be homeless or threatened with homelessness <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/duty-refer>. With your consent, they can make a referral to us providing details of how we can contact you.

Once we receive a completed referral our Shelter team will contact you to provide you with the appropriate advice and assistance.

Other relevant information

If you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

You can continue to receive **Housing Benefit** for up to 52 weeks while you are receiving care in hospital as long as:

- you usually live in the accommodation that you are temporarily away from
- you intend to return to this accommodation when you are discharged from hospital
- you do not rent out (sublet) your accommodation whilst you are away

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/guide-housing-benefit-and-council-tax-support>

You can continue to receive **Universal Credit** for up to 6 months.

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/universal-credit>

You must tell Universal Credit if you become an inpatient in hospital and when you are discharged from hospital.

Whilst in hospital:

You should continue to pay your rent and other essential bills such as Council Tax.

If you need advice and assistance to find accommodation when you leave hospital you should contact us immediately <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/identifying-your-need-for-housing>

You can also tell the hospital nursing staff so that they know that you may be homeless when you are discharged from hospital and they can, with your consent, contact us on your behalf. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/duty-refer>

Housing Options in Westminster

Extra help: If you need some extra help and are not threatened with homelessness or homeless, you can visit our People First website <https://www.pfha.co.uk/>. You can obtain more information and advice about staying in your own home and information on the **Care Act**. This aims to improve your wellbeing and independence by giving you greater control and influence when you are in need of support.

Finding accommodation: Finding suitable accommodation in Westminster can be very difficult given the high cost and lack of available places. It can be particularly difficult if you are trying to find a place for the first time. You will need to know how much you can afford to pay in rent (with the assistance of Housing Benefit if you are not working, or have a low income) and where possible, money to cover any deposit due upfront when renting a home. You need to be realistic and consider:

- How **much** you can afford to pay each week
- What **facilities** you want (e.g. central heating, a telephone, a garden)
- What **size** property you need (e.g. bedsit or a two-bedroom flat)
- The **location** (e.g. somewhere close to public transport, shops, friends, etc.)
- **Who** you want to live with (e.g. whether you want to be a lodger in your landlord's home, live on your own, or have flat mates).

You need to think very carefully how much you can afford to pay and what is realistic. Do not overstretch yourself because you will have other bills to pay for apart from your rent.

Financially, it may be better for you to share the cost of accommodation with others. However, you need to decide if you can live in accommodation where you have your own bedroom, but will have to share the lounge, bathroom and kitchen with others. If you flat-share, you need to be aware that one of your flat-mates might move out. If this happens, the full rent will still have to be paid.

To check your eligibility for housing and any other benefits you should visit: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

Staying with family or friends: Living with family or friends is the cheapest form of accommodation. It may also give you the opportunity to save money towards a deposit. If your relationship with family and friends has broken down we can arrange mediation to help rebuild your relationships. If this is a temporary solution we can continue to explore your other housing options and help you to move in a planned way.

Private Rented Accommodation: You should consider the size and type of accommodation you need for your household and how much rent you can afford. You should also consider whether the accommodation is suitable for your health needs.

To check the amount of rent a private landlord is asking for is reasonable, you can check what the Local Housing Allowance amount is. This is the maximum Housing Benefit you will be allowed to have for the property size you need, if you are eligible for it. <https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit/what-youll-get>

Transfer Homes: If you are a Westminster Council tenant or a tenant of another council, or a tenant of a Housing Association, you can apply to transfer or exchange to alternative accommodation. You may also be able to receive a cash incentive to give up your current accommodation and obtain an alternative elsewhere.