



Temporary Accommodation

A guide for residents facing homelessness



Introduction

At Dacorum Borough Council (DBC), we want our residents to contact us as early as possible if they are facing homelessness or are worried about their housing situation. We will do our best to help you find somewhere settled to call home. If we are not able to prevent you becoming homeless, we may offer you temporary accommodation whilst we continue to work on your case. Not everyone is entitled to temporary accommodation, so your case officer would give you more information depending on your circumstances.

Accommodation during enquiries (also known as section 188 accommodation)

The Homeless Prevention & Assessment Officer (HPAO) dealing with your homeless application will investigate the reasons why you are homeless. If they decide that you are in urgent need, they will make sure that you have somewhere to stay until they have made a full review of your application.

This may involve speaking to:

- Your landlord to allow you to stay in your current home beyond your notice date, if it is reasonable and safe to do so;
- Your parents/relatives/friends to allow you to remain whilst enquiries are completed, if it is reasonable and safe to do so;

Or

- Asking you if you have anyone you can stay with for a while;

Or

- The HPAO will find emergency housing (Temporary Accommodation) for you.

If you receive a decision that we have no duty to provide housing for you, then any temporary accommodation we have provided for you would cease and you would be served a Notice to Quit.

You will still receive advice and assistance from DBC to secure a suitable place to stay, for example help with a deposit to secure private rented accommodation.

Types of temporary accommodation

The type of temporary accommodation you would be offered will depend on the size of your household, any medical or special needs you may have and the availability of accommodation at the time you need it.

Not all of our temporary accommodation is furnished, so you may need to think about getting furniture at an early stage. Dacorum Community Trust is a charity-based organisation in The Forum that may be able to help you find some essential items. You can call them to arrange an appointment on 01442 253216.

Shared Accommodation

We have several 'hostels' that offer the homeless applicant/s their own private room, but the kitchen, lounge and bathrooms are shared with other residents. Each room comes complete with a bed and a mattress. However, there could be two single beds or a double bed depending on the size of the room.

All our hostel kitchens have a cooker and fridge/freezer.

Self-contained properties

All self-contained properties are unfurnished and are let on a non-secure licence agreement (basic protection from the eviction act 1977) as temporary accommodation.

The council has a range of property types we use as temporary accommodation. The home we offer to you would be dependent on the size of your household and any medical or special needs you may have. It's important to note that we cannot always offer Temporary Accommodation that meets the size requirements that you would need for permanent housing.

We work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities to access suitable and safe temporary accommodation for residents who need it. Because of this, we may not always be able to offer you temporary accommodation within Dacorum.

Any offer of temporary accommodation will depend upon availability at the time you become homeless. We are committed to not placing any family or young person into bed and breakfast accommodation, or out-of-area accommodation - there have been no such placements since June 2016.

Licence Agreement terms and conditions

Residents of temporary accommodation must abide by their licence agreement. This includes paying weekly licence fees, making sure that they maintain the property and not taking part in any anti-social behaviour. If residents do not follow the terms of their licence agreement, they are issued with a warning letter. Persistent failure to follow the licence agreement requirements can result in eviction. For example, on the third consecutive warning for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, the household will be issued with a 28-day notice to leave the property and would no longer be allowed to live in any of our temporary accommodation.

If you were asked to leave our temporary accommodation, you would have to find your own alternative accommodation. This could also affect your homeless decision depending on the stage of your application.

Do I have to pay for temporary accommodation?

Yes, you will be expected to pay a weekly charge. If you are on a low income, you will need to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (depending on your current circumstances). Even if your Housing Benefit/Universal Credit covers most of the charge, you would still be responsible for paying the remainder, so you must make sure the weekly charge is paid in full. If you do not, you will be evicted from our temporary accommodation and no longer able to stay in one of our properties.

Suitability of the Accommodation

Will the accommodation be suitable to my needs?

Although we may not be able to meet your every wish or requirement, we will try to accommodate any medical or special needs you have. We will then match you up with the most suitable temporary accommodation we have available at that time.

What if I am unhappy with the temporary accommodation offered to me?

If you have any concerns, you can talk to your Temporary Accommodation Officer, but you should be realistic about the availability of accommodation. We would have allocated the most suitable accommodation available at the time. There is no process for challenging the suitability of any interim accommodation offered to you whilst the council is investigating your homeless application.

How long can I stay?

At first, you can stay whilst we make our enquiries - provided you pay your licence fee and comply with the agreement that you are required to sign. When a decision has been made about your homeless application, you will be told the next steps you need to take.

If we make a decision not to house you (this is called 'not owed a main duty'), either because you are not eligible, not in priority need or because you became homeless on purpose, you must leave the temporary accommodation.

We will give you reasonable notice (28 days) and advise you to secure other accommodation.

If your application is accepted, you can continue to stay in temporary accommodation until a permanent home is secured for you. This may be in the private sector, with the council or with a housing association.

Moving on from temporary accommodation

You will need to leave the temporary accommodation if one of the following things happens:

- Our homeless enquiries show that the council has no duty to continue accommodating you;
- You find different accommodation on your own;
- You accept an offer of permanent accommodation from our Moving with Dacorum Scheme;
- You lose the accommodation because we have evidence that you are in breach of your tenancy agreement;
- You refuse an offer of permanent accommodation which is suitable for your needs.

Support for residents

The main aim of temporary accommodation is to provide short-term, emergency housing for those who need it. We will make sure that support is available to our temporary accommodation residents throughout their stay.

Residents are allocated a Welfare and Sustainment Officer, who works with them to manage any support needs. Your Welfare and Sustainment Officer would talk to you about what support you need and draw up a support plan, which will be designed to help you in various ways, including (but not limited to):

- Support with finding employment (e.g. attending job centre appointments with residents if required, or helping residents to access education to improve chances of employment);
- Support to ensure that any children within the household are able to maintain school attendance;
- Help in applying for benefits that the household may be entitled to;
- Support around health and wellbeing (e.g. working with the resident to register at and/or attend appointments where required at a GP surgery, dentist etc.);
- Referrals to other agencies and organisations if needed (e.g. for support with mental health or substance misuse);
- Help with the housing application process (including advice and signposting if a negative decision is made);
- Support to obtain furniture and white goods where needed;
- An invitation to a Tenancy Sustainment Information session (TSI). (These aim to manage residents' expectations and provide guidance about maintaining a successful tenancy.)

Temporary accommodation residents are also able to access our Tenant Academy, which offers a range of free courses and activities to help you make the most of life in Dacorum. You can find out more about our Tenant Academy on our website:

www.dacorum.gov.uk/tenant-academy or by calling **01442 228000** and asking for **Tenant Academy**

We will work with other professionals and support agencies when providing support to a household in temporary accommodation. For example, we may contact health visitors or representatives from local children's centres, to monitor the wellbeing of any children and offer advice regarding schools and local playgroups.

If a positive decision is made following a homeless application, the Welfare and Sustainment Officer will continue to offer support to the household for six months after they have moved into their new home.

What about my belongings?

If you are homeless and are placed into temporary accommodation, you may need to arrange somewhere to store your furniture and personal belongings if the accommodation isn't big enough to store everything. You can arrange storage with a private storage company at your own expense, or perhaps friends or relatives may be able to help you. Council garages are also available to rent. You can find more information at www.dacorum.gov.uk/garages

When you leave temporary accommodation, you must arrange to remove all of your belongings. If you fail to remove these within a day or two after you have vacated, we would give you notice that we intend to clear and dispose of them. You would then be recharged for any costs for the clearance and disposal. If this debt is not paid back to the council, this would affect any future housing applications you make.

Pets

Tenants may be able to keep a domestic pet in temporary accommodation, but this will be at the discretion of the Temporary Accommodation Officer, who would ask you to complete a form. We do not allow pets in emergency accommodation such as a hostel.

Complaints

If for any reason you are not satisfied with our service, you should contact your Temporary Accommodation Officer.

If you are not satisfied with their response, you can make a complaint in person at one of the council's offices, over the telephone, in writing by letter, fax or email or using the form on our website: www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints

For further information:

Email: temporary.accommodation@dacorum.gov.uk

Phone: 01442 228000 and ask for Temporary Accommodation

Write to: Temporary Accommodation, Dacorum Borough Council, The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1DN