

LEAVING PRISON AND HOMELESSNESS



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This advice gives you practical support and information about services for securing accommodation if you are expecting to be released from prison or have recently been released from prison.

HELP FINDING HOUSING IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

You could try to find housing in the private rented sector. Derbyshire Dales District Council will be able to advise you how to find out what housing is available locally and how to apply for Universal Credit/Housing Benefit to help you with your housing costs.

You might be able to get help with a deposit through:

- a private rented sector rent deposit or bond scheme
- Derbyshire Dales District Councils discretionary housing allowance

APPLY FOR A COUNCIL OR HOUSING ASSOCIATION HOME

www.Home-Options.org

01629 761117

If you are not already on the Housing Register you will need to apply. Be realistic about the areas you select to have a chance of being housed. Social housing is in extremely high demand across the district.

You can register on-line at: www.Home-Options.org

If you need assistance in completing this form, please call/contact Housing Options by:

Email: housingadvice@derbyshiredales.gov.uk Phone: 01629 761117
Home-Options Team, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Town Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3NN

You should make us aware of any areas you cannot live within the district due to bail conditions or due to personal safety.

You need to consider as many areas as possible to improve your chances of being offered a social housing property. We can advise you of what these areas are if you haven't already been told or have forgotten.

HELP FINDING HOUSING FROM PROBATION SERVICES

Offenders serving sentences of 12 months or more are released on licence and live in the community supervised by the probation service until the end of their sentence. If you are released on licence, your probation officer can help you find accommodation, as long as you have spent a continuous period of at least twelve months in custody

HELP WITH MONEY BEFORE YOU ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON

All prisoners are given a discharge grant paid for by the prison when they leave. This is money to help with your costs until your benefits are sorted out. If a prison housing adviser has found you accommodation for your first night, you may be given a higher discharge grant (about an extra £50), which is paid directly to the accommodation provider.

You may also be able to get help from Derbyshire County Councils discretionary fund. A prison adviser or other adviser may be able to help you with your application.

- You could apply for help with paying for:
- essential belongings lost when you were away
- clothing
- a fridge for your new home
- help with the costs of moving into accommodation

You may be able to prepare for your release when you are in prison by saving some of your prison wages. You could consider opening a credit union account when you are in prison.

Ask at the prison for details.

HELP FROM DERBYSHIRE DALES DISTRICT COUNCIL IF YOU ARE SINGLE AND HOMELESS

If you apply to Derbyshire Dales District Council for housing assistance because you are homeless, we may not necessarily be legally obliged to provide you with accommodation. Our duty to you might be limited to providing you with advice and assistance and not actual accommodation.

For Derbyshire Dales District Council to be legally obliged to provide you with accommodation we will have to be satisfied that you are eligible; homeless; in priority need; and that you have not made yourself intentionally homeless.

Derbyshire Dales District Council will take into account if you have spent time in prison when deciding how to treat you, even if it has been some time since you were released.

Derbyshire Dales District Council will also look at whether you:

- have a mental illness
- have a learning disability or physical disability
- are under 21 and have been in care
- were in the armed forces
- are fleeing violence or threats of violence

PRIORITY NEED FOR PRISONERS AND EX-OFFENDERS

In some circumstances, Derbyshire Dales District Council might decide you are in priority need because you have spent time in prison or on remand.

Derbyshire Dales District Council will consider whether you should be regarded as being vulnerable by virtue of the fact that you are homeless. This has a particular meaning for homelessness applications and is not the same as being labelled vulnerable in prison.

When considering your homelessness application, Derbyshire Dales District Council will look at:

- the length of time you spent in prison if any third party support is being provided to you either by the probation service, a youth offending team, or drug and alcohol team
- evidence provided by any third party (including any housing needs assessment) about your homelessness vulnerability
- the period of time since your release from prison and how successful you have been in finding your own accommodation and in keeping that accommodation
- any third party support networks such as family, friends or a probation officer
- evidence of any other vulnerability such as mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse, or a history of having been in care
- any other factors that might have an impact on your ability to find accommodation

The fact that you have been in prison does not in itself mean that Derbyshire Dales District Council has to treat you as being vulnerable and in priority need for accommodation. Derbyshire Dales District Council will need to assess the evidence before it and be satisfied that you will find it difficult to seek out and maintain accommodation for yourself compared to other people who are rendered homeless.

PRISONERS AND EX-OFFENDERS TREATED AS INTENTIONALLY HOMELESS

Derbyshire Dales District Council may decide that you are intentionally homeless if you were evicted from your previous home because of criminal or anti-social behaviour or because of rent arrears resulting from your time in prison.

If Derbyshire Dales District Council decides you are intentionally homeless, we will only offer you limited help with finding housing. If you are in priority need, you may be offered temporary accommodation for a short period of time to assist you to find your own accommodation in the private sector.

Derbyshire Dales District Council may take the view that you should have known that your criminal activity could have resulted in you being sent to prison, and that this could lead to the loss of your home.

Derbyshire Dales District Council is less likely to decide this if the loss of your home didn't directly follow on from you being sent to prison, for example, if you made an arrangement for another person to pay the rent while you were away, but that arrangement broke down.

Derbyshire Dales District Council could also decide that you are intentionally homeless if you gave up your tenancy because your entitlement to housing benefit ended during a period in prison.

WHAT AREA CAN YOU BE HOUSED IN IF YOU ARE HOMELESS?

When you apply to Derbyshire Dales District Council as homeless, we will check to see if you have a local connection with our area. You can establish a local connection, for example, by living, working, or having immediate family (usually a parent or brother or sister) in the area.

Time spent in prison in a specific area does not give you a local connection with the area where the prison is located. However, if you have no local connection with any area or if you are fleeing domestic violence, you can apply to any council in any area.

There may be restrictions placed on where you can live. For example, if an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) says you can't go to a particular area, you may need to seek help from a different council.

High risk prisoners managed by a multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) may be required to live in certain areas.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IF YOU HAVE NO HOUSING

www.shelter.org.uk

0808 800 4444

You may need to use emergency accommodation such as a hostel, night shelter or other temporary accommodation if you have nowhere to go following your release. Hostels provide temporary accommodation. Some are direct access, which means you don't need a referral from an agency to use them. During the winter months there are night shelters in Derbyshire but not in the Derbyshire Dales.

Use Shelter's directory or call their free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444 to find services near you. The Shelter directory can be located at

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness

or you can also search on the Homeless Link website at:

www.homeless.org.uk/search-homelessness-services