

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Temporary Accommodation Placement Procedure

Introduction

This document sets out the Council's procedure for the placement of homeless households into temporary accommodation. This procedure takes into account the Act, case law, the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006 and applicable Council Policies, and is used in conjunction with the Council's Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy.

Temporary Accommodation request procedure:

When a request is made for temporary accommodation (TA), a Housing Options Officer is required to ensure that a homeless application is open on the system for the customer and complete a temporary accommodation request form (Appendix 1).

- All sections of the request form must be completed, including any risk assessments/special needs requirements that the applicant may have in relation to their accommodation needs, as well as providing evidence to support this.
- Housing Options Officers will carry out an income and expenditure assessment and will inform the applicant of the likely cost of TA and that they may be liable to pay a personal contribution towards the cost of their TA subject to any housing benefit payment.
- Housing Options Officers will also need to ensure that all members of the household that are to be accommodated are added to the homeless case so that accurate placements can be made.
- The temporary accommodation request form is to be signed off by a Team Leader/Manager and then submitted electronically to the Accommodation Team (AT) via the team's generic mailbox (Accommodationteam@lbbd.gov.uk)

It is essential that the Accommodation Team are given as much notice as possible of the need for temporary accommodation, to enable them to secure and match a suitable property for the homeless applicants.

Allocation of Accommodation:

Emergency interim accommodation - All TA requests are assessed by the Accommodation Team for relevant information before a placement is made. If there is no suitable self contained accommodation available, then a bed and breakfast placement will be made.

When bookings of this type are made, the AT will ensure that the room booked is large enough to accommodate all applicant(s) and where applicable will request a specific type of room, i.e with en-suite or on the ground floor.

Self Contained Temporary Accommodation – When properties are ready for use they are added to the Accommodation Team’s Void Properties Log. Properties are then match to those customers awaiting self contained accommodation. Properties are matched according to size and in priority order, this will include their waiting time for a property and need.

When matching properties to customer the AT as a matter of procedure will use web based tools to determine:

- Travel times by different modes of transport to various destinations such as stations, schools, place of employment. As well as the distance from the property to access public transport.
- The availability of amenities in the surrounding area of the property, such as shops, medical facilities’
- If outside the borough, the distance to the property from the borough and travelling times between.

As well as carrying out these tasks the AT will assess the individual circumstances and needs of the customer, for example access to a vehicle, employment and medical needs.

All placement nominations must be overseen by a Team Leader or Manager to ensure that they are suitable.

License Agreement Sign Up:

Once temporary accommodation is identified the homeless applicant(s) will be invited into the office to sign for their license agreement, and complete a Housing Benefit Application Form. The Placements Officer will fully explain the terms and conditions of their license and counter sign the license agreement.

If the customer is transferring from one temporary accommodation property to another they will be asked to sign a declaration, stating by which date they will return the keys (Appendix 2).

A copy of the license agreement and all other relevant paperwork will then be scanned onto Anite. The Accommodation Support Officer will open up the rent account on Capita, order a rent card for the customer and update the relevant databases, which are as follows:

- AST Report Suite, B&B Log – For all B&B Placements
- Admission Log – For all other self contained accommodation

Hostel Services

There are two pathways of admission into available hostel accommodation:

- Accommodation requested from the AT during office hours; or
- Out of Hours referral placements, made by the approved Out of Hours Officer.

Hostel Services staff will send details to the Accommodation Team on a daily basis to facilitate a referral on the day a room becomes available.

Rooms are allocated as referred to above (Allocation of Accommodation Section), however the Placements Officer will also call the Hostel Services team to discuss the nomination and any relevant risk assessment before carrying out the placement.

Once agreed the Placements Officer will scan the completed TA request Form, along with the current risk assessment and homeless reference number to the Hostel Services staff.

Out of Hours Placements

Out of hours referrals are made via the Control Centre to the duty out of hour's officer and is followed up by emailing a CRM report. The duty out of hours officer will assess the referral and if a placement is to be made this will be to either:

- The Council owned hostel in the emergency out of hours rooms; or
- Bed and Breakfast

If a placement is made the out of hours duty officer will send details of the placement to the Accommodation Team, Housing Options, Hostel Services and Accommodation Finance Officer, informing them of the placement details, including any relevant cost code if the cost of the placement is to be recharged to another Council Service.

The duty out of hour's officer will also inform the customer that the booking is for one night/weekend and that they must report to John Smith House for a full housing assessment on the first working day following the placement.

Accommodation Refusals

If accommodation is offered to a customer and they refuse to accept the accommodation, the Placements Officer will ask the customer to confirm why they are not accepting the offer and discuss this with them. The Placements Officer will provide them with a formal written offer letter (Appendix 3, an example offer letter), detailing the details of the offer and stating until what time and date the offer will remain available.

If the customer does still not accept the offer and there are children involved a Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) needs to be completed and sent to Children's Services detailing the time and date of expiry of the offer.

On expiry of the offer if the customer has still not accepted the property, then the case will be passed back to Housing Options to look at whether the Council has an ongoing duty to the customer.

Appendix 1

Accommodation Request Form

Incomplete request forms will be returned to case worker and duty team leader

Accommodation required date: ____/____/____

Main Applicant(s) Details

Contact No: _____ Homeless Ref: _____

Full Name: _____ D.O.B: ____/____/____ Age: _____

Partners Full Name: _____ D.O.B: ____/____/____ Age: _____

Is this a joint homeless application: Yes No

Household Composition

Number of adults in household (including main applicants above): _____

Number of dependent children in households (under 18): _____

Please ensure all members of household are on Capita, as placements will be made according to person records attached to the homeless case.

Is anyone pregnant: Yes No Name: _____ EDD ____/____/____

Is anyone in the household in employment: Yes No

Cost of TA discussed and affordability assessment has been completed: Yes No

Accommodation requirements/restrictions

Does customer have their own furniture: Yes No

Does the customer have access to their own vehicle: Yes No

Are there any restrictions or risks relating to accommodation: Yes No

If yes please provide brief details (*you will also need to complete page 2*):

Before accommodation request is submitted, has the following taken place:

All documents on Anite: Yes No

All associated cases cross referenced and HA case closed: Yes No

MCIL Case suspended: Yes No

Initial assessment on outcome: possible acceptance possible IH or other issues Unknown

Referring Officer: _____ Caseworker: _____

Authorised by: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Assessment Checklist

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Medical			
	No	Yes	If yes, provide details
Is the customer able to managed stairs?			
Is the customer able to share facilities?			
Is there any evidence to support claims?			
Has a medical form been completed?			
Has an OT assessment been requested/carried out?			
Is there any other relevant information that should be considered?			
Risks			
	No	Yes	If yes, provide details
Have there been any recorded incidents of violence/aggression or inappropriate behaviour in the last 12 months?			
Is the customer likely to be distressed, aggressive, agitated, emotionally unstable or unpredictable?			
Is the customer likely to have a weapon?			
Is the customer likely to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs?			
Does the customer demonstrate or is there likely to be a risk or sexually inappropriate behaviour?			
Is there any evidence to support claims?			
Has a full independent risk assessment been provided?			
Is there any other relevant information that should be considered?			

Appendix 2

END OF LICENCE & BELONGINGS LEFT IN PROPERTY

NAME:

ADDRESS:

This document explains the process for ending your current temporary accommodation licence agreement and vacating the property. It also explains what may happen with items left within the property after you have left. In order for your license to be ended and other services including assisting with removals and storage to be arranged ***you must*** read, sign and date this this document to confirm that you understand the information outlined.

Return of keys following vacating a Temporary Accommodation property

You must return keys for your temporary accommodation **on the same day** you vacate the property.

You are required to return your keys by: _____

If you do not return your keys by the date given above the council will arrange for the locks of the property to be changed and you may be charged for this process. You will no longer be able to gain access to the property. In exceptional circumstances we may allow an extended period of time for the return of keys however, this will need to be approved in advance by the Accommodation Team.

In the event Barking and Dagenham council assist with the removals process you will be deemed to have vacated the property on the day the removal is carried out. In this circumstance you must return keys to the removal team or hand keys in to John Smith House, Bevan Avenue, Barking, IG11 9LL

Removal of belongings left in the property

If you have not handed your keys in by the date given above and there is subsequently found to be belongings at the property after we have changed the locks then these items will be disposed of. If there are any issues with removing your belongings or returning the keys then you must contact the Accommodation Team as soon as possible before the date given above.

Charges for costs incurred by the council

Removal of belongings is very expensive, therefore the council may include a charge for the use of the property until arrangements can be made for them to be removed. We may also include charges for costs incurred in the process of accessing and securing a property in the event the key return procedure (explained above) is not followed.

If you do not pay this charge, the council may pass your debt onto a debt collection agency and/or will ask the court for a money judgement. Records of county court judgments are kept for six years unless you pay the full amount within one month. A judgment can make it difficult for you to get credit, like loans, a mortgage or a credit card. If you are moving to a council property any money you owe from your license, including removal and storage costs, will be taken into account. Owing money to the council may affect your chances of being re-housed in the future.

BY SIGNING BELOW I INDICATE I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE ABOVE DOCUMENT. I AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE TERMS AND CONDIITONS AS OUTLINED

Appendix 3 (example letter)

Dear [Customer Name]

Offer of Temporary Accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended

Further to our meeting on [insert day], I am writing to confirm our offer of temporary accommodation at **[insert address]**. This offer is made to you in discharge of our duty under Section 193 (5) of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended.

Due to the shortage of accommodation available within the Borough of Barking and Dagenham, it is not always possible to offer temporary accommodation in this area; however, on assessing your particular circumstances, the Authority is satisfied that this offer is suitable for you and your household.

You have advised that you are not in a position to accept our offer for the following reasons

- [insert reasons].

As already stated it is not always possible to procure accommodation in this Borough, however we believe the location of the accommodation is suitable as it is in a neighbouring authority – London Borough of [insert borough].

Having checked the “Google Maps” system, this shows that is [insert number] miles from the proposed accommodation back to your GP, and by car this is a travel journey of approximately, 15 minutes.

This journey is also (insert no of stops) train stop from (insert station) to Barking station, which would take (insert time) minutes approximately.

Whilst you have indicated that you do not wish to accept this offer of temporary accommodation, this offer will remain available to you until [insert time] on [insert date], after which time the offer will be withdrawn.

Consequences of refusal of a suitable offer of accommodation

Please note that should you refuse this offer of accommodation and fail to take up occupation of the property and the offer of accommodation is deemed suitable, the Authority will consider that it has ceased its duty to you having met its obligations under the terms of the above legislation and no further offers of accommodation will be made to you. In these circumstances you will be required to make your own alternative accommodation arrangements.

Pursuant to Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended, you have the right to request a review of the suitability of this offer, regardless whether or not you accept the offer.

If you do not agree that the property is suitable, you will need to submit your reasons in writing to this office for the attention of the Reviews and Policy Manager. Your written submissions must be received within 21 days from the date of this letter.

If a review of the suitability of this offer of accommodation considers that the offer is not suitable, the Authority will be under a duty to make you an alternative offer. I take this

opportunity to remind you of your right to accept the offer of accommodation and pursue a review of the suitability of this accommodation whilst in occupation.

You may wish to seek independent legal advice, contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau or Shelter in respect of this matter.

Yours sincerely

[Insert Officer Name]

[insert job title]