



Homelessness – An Offer of Permanent Accommodation

This leaflet will be of use to you if you have been given a decision following your homelessness assessment which finds that you are:

- Homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Are unintentionally homeless.
- Have a local connection.

As we will have a duty to offer you permanent housing.

This leaflet can be provided in a range of different languages or formats as required, such as large print, audio format or Braille.

What type of permanent accommodation will I get?

You may be offered permanent accommodation with the Council or Orkney Housing Association Ltd, this would be in the form of a Scottish Secure Tenancy.

However, the offer of a private residential tenancy from a private sector landlord would also be deemed to be permanent accommodation as would securing any form of home ownership.

It is likely that you will be placed in temporary accommodation until such time as a suitable property becomes available for you. Our leaflet on temporary accommodation may also interest you.

How do I go about getting an offer of permanent accommodation?

Our Homelessness Officers will help you to complete an application for housing. This allows you to be considered for both Council and Housing Association properties.

Separate leaflets are available which cover the allocations process in more detail.

Your homelessness assessment will be used to award you:

- A priority pass with Orkney Islands Council.
- Homeless points with Orkney Housing Association Ltd.

This will provide you with a high priority for rehousing with both organisations. You will receive information from both the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd regarding your priority and will be kept up to date regarding progress. If you are interested in a property with Orkney Housing Association Ltd you will have to bid for the property concerned.

Section 5 Referrals

In certain circumstances we may put your name forward to Orkney Housing Association Ltd. This happens if Orkney Housing Association Ltd have told us that they have a property which will soon become available which will meet your needs.

This process is called a Section 5 Referral and Orkney Housing Association Ltd would normally agree to this referral except in exceptional circumstances. This may be if their tenant decides not to move and therefore the house is no longer available for let.

Where a Section 5 Referral is to go ahead, Orkney Housing Association Ltd will contact you to carry out a home visit. This is normal practice and is intended to ensure that your move into their accommodation is smooth.

When a suitable property becomes available

When you are offered a permanent home it is important that you act quickly to ensure you can view the property and arrange to sign the lease and start the process of moving house.

Once a reasonable offer has been made the Council will discharge its duty towards you under homelessness law.

Reasonable Offer

An offer of permanent accommodation, from either the Council or Orkney Housing Association Ltd, will be considered reasonable if:

- The property is wind and watertight and meets all our repairing obligations.
- The property is of a size that meets the requirements of that household.
- The property meets any known health or medical needs as advised in their housing application form.
- The property is not located in an area that would put the customer at continued risk of domestic abuse, racial harassment or external violence.
- The property is not outwith the area of an applicants special needs for example where a child's education/welfare is likely to be severely affected by having to change school.

If you consider that an offer of permanent accommodation made is not 'reasonable' you have the right to appeal this decision. To do so you must state clearly why you consider the offer is not reasonable. Our leaflet on the homelessness appeals process covers the process of making an appeal in more depth.

Ideally timescales should be shortened, where possible to one week, when considering appeals on the basis of permanent accommodation as delays in the allocation process result in lost rent and poor performance in respect of relet of properties.

If you are considering refusing an offer of permanent accommodation, you should contact our Homelessness Section for advice before making any decision. Your concerns will be considered and you will be offered tailored advice as to how this would affect your housing situation and advised of any alternative courses of action. For instance if the property is suitable for your needs but you would prefer a different scheme, you could choose to accept the offer and apply for a transfer later. In addition you may wish to seek independent housing advice from a Solicitor or from the Citizen's Advice Bureau or other agency who may act on your behalf.

Paying Rent

Rent is charged on all properties let by the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd. The cost will vary depending on the type and size of the property and whether there is a service charge (that is to cover the costs of managing the accommodation and its garden, providing any heating etc).

If you are unemployed, receiving benefits or on a low income, you may qualify for Housing Benefit, or the housing cost element of Universal Credit, which will go towards paying the rent. If you claim Universal Credit you will not be able to claim Housing Benefit and will instead be entitled to a housing cost element in your Universal Credit award. Depending on your circumstances, Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs may cover all of the costs.

How to claim Housing Benefit

When you are offered permanent accommodation, if you are above state pension age, and on a low income, you will be given a Housing Benefit application to fill in. You must provide certain information and documents for the Housing Benefit claim to be processed. This could include, for example:

- Proof of identity (such as birth certificate, national insurance card, passport).
- Verification of your income and financial resources (for example original payslips, benefit letters bank statements etc).

Help with filling in a Housing Benefit application will be offered when you sign the lease for your permanent accommodation. In addition, advice is available from staff at the Housing Benefit Section.

It is important that you make your claim for Housing Benefit as soon as possible, or you may lose benefit you are entitled to.

Universal Credit and housing costs

When you are offered permanent accommodation, if you receive Universal Credit you will not be able to claim Housing Benefit. Instead you will have to claim a housing costs element in your claim for Universal Credit.

You will be responsible for telling the Universal Credit Support Centre that you have changed address and what your new housing costs (rent payments) are. In the first instance they can be contacted by telephoning 0345 600 0723 or by signing in to your Universal Credit account at <https://www.gov.uk/>

It is important that you tell Universal Credit about your new rent as soon as possible, or you may lose benefit you are entitled to. You will also be responsible for making your rent payments to the Council.

What happens if I have pets?

You would normally be permitted to keep two domestic pets in permanent accommodation without permission being needed. If you have more pets than this or non-domestic or exotic pets, such as sheep or reptiles, permission will normally be required.

What about furniture?

If we have stored your furniture while you were in temporary accommodation, we will arrange for your furniture to be removed from storage and delivered to your new home. A charge may be made for this.

If you did not have furniture of your own and are on benefits or a low income, we may be able to provide some assistance towards certain items. If you think this may be relevant please ask us about this. We will help you with the process and will help you complete a personal budget sheet as part of this process. You may also be entitled to a Community Care Grant or Budgeting Loan. An online application can be made from the MyOrkney area of our website. The contact details are swf@orkney.gov.uk. Alternatively our Revenues Section will be able to give you further advice.

In addition, there is a local furniture recycling store, Restart Orkney, which may be able to assist with low cost furnishings. Please contact us if you require help with this and we will refer you to an agency which can help.

In addition, in certain circumstances you may be entitled to assistance with basic household items including crockery and bedding in the form of a Starter Pack. Please contact us to discuss this.

Contacts

Orkney Islands Council

Housing Services

Address: Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Telephone: 01856873535.

Website: <https://www.orkney.gov.uk>

Email: homeless@orkney.gov.uk

Emergency out of hours repairs service: 01856873430.

Emergency out of hours homelessness officer: 07921582962.

Housing Benefit Section

Address: Finance Service, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Telephone: 01856873535 extension 2116 or 01856886312 (direct dial).

Email: benefits@orkney.gov.uk

Orkney Health and Care

Address: Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Telephone: 01856873535.

Emergency out of hours duty social worker service: 01856888000.

Education, and Leisure

Address: Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Telephone: 01856873535 extension 2477.

Fax: 01856876327.

Email: education.leisure@orkney.gov.uk

Voluntary Sector

Citizens Advice Bureau

Address: Anchor Buildings, 6 Bridge Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1HR.

Telephone: 01856875266.

Shelterline

Telephone: 08088004444 (free 24 hour advice).

Website: <https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>

Starter Packs Orkney

Telephone: 07783351886 (referrals made through OIC).

Restart Orkney

Address: 62 Junction Road, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1AR.

Telephone: 01856879777.

Email: restart@employabilityorkney.co.uk

Website: <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/EMPLOYABILITY/>

Other Useful Contacts

Jobcentre Plus

Address: West Tankerness Lane, Kirkwall, KW15 1AQ.

Telephone: 01856885300.

Fax: 01856872392.

Universal Credit online

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

