

Homelessness

Homelessness means not having a home. You can be sleeping on a friend's couch, or crowded in with family – you don't need to be living on the streets to be without a home.

Homelessness can happen for all sorts of reasons. It might be because you have health problems, relationship problems, eviction, loss of employment, harassment by your neighbours or a disaster like a fire or flooding. You might be homeless if you are:

- sleeping rough
- staying with friends or family with no home of your own
- staying in a hostel or a bed and breakfast
- living in poor conditions that affect your health
- at risk of violence in your home
- living in overcrowded conditions
- living in a home that is not suitable for you because of illness or disability

If you are homeless in Dumfries and Galloway, you need to contact Dumfries and Galloway Council who will assess your situation. Getting advice as early as possible can really help – Dumfries and Galloway Council might be able to help you stay in your home, find a new home more quickly or assist you to apply for social housing.

You can access the Dumfries and Galloway Council website for further information on Homelessness, by clicking on this link - <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15280/Help-for-homeless-people>

Dumfries and Galloway Council also have a self-assessment tool which will provide you with all housing options available to you. To visit the Enhanced Housing Options Portal please follow this link - <http://www.dandghousingoptions.org.uk/>

Nowhere to stay tonight?

Dumfries and Galloway Council operates an out of hours service that you can call on 01387-273660, if you have nowhere to stay tonight, the emergency service will help you find somewhere to stay.

If you then decide to decline the offer of accommodation that the council makes to you, it's still very important to make contact with the homeless service as soon as possible. Even if you are staying with friends or family, the council will work with you in relation to your housing situation.

Wherever possible, Dumfries and Galloway Council will do everything they can to prevent you becoming homeless.

What happens when you come to the council for help?

Before any help to find you a home can start from Dumfries and Galloway Council, you need to make a homeless application. When you present yourself as homeless at one of the council offices across the region, the council will arrange for you to have a private interview with a Housing Options & Homeless Assessment Officer.

Dumfries and Galloway Council interviews homeless applicants as quickly as possible. You may be offered an interview straight away, or the council may make an appointment for you to come back.

If you don't have anywhere to stay, you should be interviewed on the same day. Interviews are usually held at the council offices and are the first stage in the process for you to access help and support as a homeless person.

Applying as homeless

The most straightforward way of making a homeless application is by going to an office of Dumfries and Galloway Council and explaining that you are there to make a homeless application.

It helps to be prepared when you come to your interview – the member of staff interviewing you will need to make a decision on your application and your circumstances. If you bring all relevant paperwork with you to the interview, it will allow the Housing Options & Homeless Assessment Officer to assess your application as quickly as possible.

This might include bringing:

- a copy of your current tenancy agreement
- proof of identity such as birth certificate or passport
- proof of your national insurance number
- details of your income, including benefits, bank statements and wage slips etc.
- if your home is being sold, confirmation of the sale of the property
- if your home is being repossessed, the court summons for repossession
- if you are presenting as a household with children, then your children's birth certificates and confirmation of custody arrangements if applicable
- if you are pregnant, your maternity certificate (MATB1)
- if your current tenancy is ending, any documentation relating to the tenancy and the ending of it.

This may include: a copy of your lease or contract (if tied accommodation), legal Notice to Quit, AT5, AT6 or Section 33 notice. On 1 December 2017 a new type of tenancy came into force, called the private residential tenancy, it replaced assured and short assured tenancy agreements for all new tenancies. For information on private residential tenancies please follow this link - <https://www.gov.scot/policies/private-renting/private-tenancy-reform/>

Don't worry if you can't get all of the information together that you need before your interview – Dumfries and Galloway Council will give you time to gather the relevant documents that they need to process your application.

At the interview

You may bring a relative, friend, support worker or other representative with you. You will also be asked if you wish to be interviewed by a member of staff of the same sex if you would feel more comfortable with them.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will keep your details confidential and will only use your information to assess your application under the conditions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

During the interview, the Housing Options & Homeless Assessment officer will explain the application to you clearly, check if you have anywhere to stay and arrange emergency accommodation for you if you need it. An assessment will be carried out based on the information you have provided.

The council will issue you with a formal written decision and this will take place within 28 days of the date of your application. The decision may be delayed if the council does not have all the relevant information they need.

What will the Housing Options & Homeless Assessment Officer ask?

When you go for your interview, you will be asked some questions about your situation and about how you became homeless.

The questions will be things like:

- how many people there are in your household and who they are
- where you have been living more recently
- why you left or will have to leave your accommodation
- if you will be able to return there or not
- if there is anywhere you can stay on a short-term basis, perhaps with relatives or friends
- any health problems or disabilities you or anyone in your household has
- any problems you have had with domestic abuse or other forms of harassment
- your financial circumstances (covering things like your income, the benefits you receive and any employment)

Some of the questions might be difficult to answer and there might be things you don't want to tell the member of staff. The officer needs to have the full extent of your situation to make the best decision for you.

How is my application assessed?

Your application will be assessed against current homeless legislation and the Scottish Government's Code of Guidance on Homelessness.

These say that the council must consider:

- whether you are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- whether you are intentionally homeless;
- whether you have a local connection with Dumfries and Galloway

The council will issue you with a formal written decision usually within 28 days of the date of your application. The decision may be delayed if the council does not have all the relevant information they need.

Who else will the council contact to get information about your application?

The council will only contact people and agencies who can provide relevant information relating to your homeless application, such as:

- other council departments, including Social Work Services and Revenue and Benefits
- your landlord
- mortgage lenders
- police
- solicitors
- healthcare professionals
- support services

Your officer will not speak to anyone you don't want them to, for example, your parents, an ex-partner or an abusive neighbour. You don't have to stay in temporary accommodation while the council makes their inquiries. Staying with friends or family will not affect your application.

Assessments & Next Steps

A) Assessed as homeless

If you are unintentionally homeless and have a local connection in the area, the council will refer you to Homes4D&G for permanent housing.

Homes4D&G is the Common Housing Register for Dumfries and Galloway which came into effect in 2014.

Your details will then be shared among the partner landlords (Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership (DGHP), Home Group, Irvine Housing Association and Cunninghame Housing Association).

Your homeless application will be placed into the Homeless Group. Your application will then be prioritised based on the date you presented as homeless. If more than one homeless applicant has an equal need for a property, Homes4D&G will offer the property to the homeless applicant who presented as homeless first.

Homes4D&G will make **one** offer of accommodation.

In the meantime, you will either be entitled to stay in temporary accommodation if the council has placed you there, or you will be offered temporary accommodation if you need somewhere to stay until permanent accommodation is secured.

B) Assessed as not homeless

If, after considering your application, the council decides that you are not homeless under the terms of the legislation, or that you are intentionally homeless, it means that the council do not have a duty to offer you permanent accommodation.

The council should come to a decision within 28 days. After that time, you should receive a decision letter which explains the reasons behind the decisions and what happens next.

If you were placed in temporary accommodation while your application was being assessed, the council will give you reasonable notice to leave, and offer you advice and assistance to find somewhere else to stay.

What happens if I disagree with the decision the council makes?

If you do not agree with the decision the council makes, or you think that a mistake has been made, speak up and get some independent advice.

Under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, the council has a legal duty to review their decision if you ask them to.

You have the right to appeal any decision relating to your homeless application within 21 days of your decision being reached. If you wish to appeal against the council's decision, you should write to the Housing Options & Homeless Service clearly stating the reason for your appeal.

You can also access independent advice from Citizens Advice Bureau who can act on your behalf.

How long will it take before I am offered a permanent home?

Homes4D&G have a limited number of properties available in Dumfries and Galloway. The length of time it takes before you are made an offer of housing varies and will depend on the number of vacancies, the area in which you require housing, the size and type of accommodation you require.

Your officer will keep in touch with you on a regular basis to provide you with an update.

What if my circumstances change and I no longer need help?

You may find that you may not need Dumfries and Galloway Council's assistance. You may find your own accommodation, or decide to remain where you are, or you may have reunited with your family, partner or spouse.

Whatever the reason, if you decide not to go ahead with your homeless application, just let the council know. You can re-apply at any time if you need any help in the future.

If your circumstances change in any other way for example your contact details, who will be moving with you, your income then please contact the council or your homelessness officer as soon as possible.

Finding your local office

Report to nearest homeless team if you need assistance.

If you are in Annandale and Eskdale:

Dumfries and Galloway Council – Housing Options & Homeless Service
High Street
ANNAN
DG12 6AQ

Tel: 030 33 33 3000 or
homelessannan@dumgal.gov.uk

If you are in Nithsdale:

Dumfries and Galloway Council – Housing Options & Homeless Service
52-60 Queensberry Square
Dumfries
DG1 1BF

Tel: 030 33 33 30000 or
homelessdumfries@dumgal.gov.uk

If you are in the Stewartry:

Dumfries and Galloway Council – Housing Options & Homeless Service
Council Offices
Daar Road
Kirkcudbright
DG6 4JG

Tel: 030 33 33 3000 or
homelesskirkcudbright@dumgal.gov.uk

If you are in Wigtown:

Dumfries and Galloway Council – Housing Options & -Homeless Service
Council Offices
Sun Street
Stranraer
DG9 7JJ

Tel: 030 33 33 3000 or
homelessstranraer@dumgal.gov.uk