

The Homelessness Reduction Act – what it means for you

The new Homelessness Reduction Act from 3rd April 2018 increases the requirements for Stratford on Avon District Council to help all eligible applicants – rather than just those with a ‘priority need’.

It adds two new duties:

Duty to take steps to prevent homelessness

Stratford on Avon District Council will have to help people at risk of losing suitable accommodation as soon as they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness

Stratford on Avon District Council will have to help all those who are actually homeless to try and secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are ‘intentionally homeless’ or ‘priority need’. This may be through helping them access accommodation in the private sector or helping them access supported accommodation or another type of suitable accommodation.

Those who are owed one of these new duties will also be entitled to reasonable preference on Home Choice Plus. If neither of the above steps work and the household becomes, or remains, homeless, then those in priority need retain their right to be rehoused, but non priority households and intentionally homeless households will not be entitled to further long term help.

Duty to complete personalised housing plans, setting out actions the council and individuals will take to resolve their housing situation

Each household approaching the Council who is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days will have a personalised housing plan developed between them and a housing professional. This may include the engagement of other public sector charity or voluntary and community sector organisations and will include a series of steps to be taken by both the household and the housing professional to resolve the households housing situation.

Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a duty to refer

From later in 2018 public bodies in England will have a duty to refer an individual’s case (with consent) to a housing authority they identify.

What the Act won’t change

Whilst the range of support available from the District Council will grow as a result of the Act, there are some areas which will not change greatly. The District Councils responsibilities will remain largely the same in the following areas:

- Temporary Accommodation will only have to be provided to certain qualifying households, as at present and these do not get expanded by the Act.
- An applicant will still be entitled to request a review of a range of decisions made by the District Council in relation to their entitlement to housing assistance.