

Wakefield Council - Housing Needs Service

Housing Fact Sheet 1- Released from Prison

Prior to being released from prison you must take any opportunity by working with housing advisors in the Prison Service to prevent becoming homeless upon release.

One of the options you may wish to consider at this time could be to return home or to lodgings. This would allow you to work with Wakefield Councils Housing Needs Service (HNS) in a planned way to secure more permanent and settled accommodation.

Housing Options in the Wakefield District

We understand that each person is different and that a 'one size fits all' approach to housing doesn't suit everyone. The options below reflect the different choices that may be available for you in order for you to find a home that is suited to your individual needs.

The options provide varying levels of support and differing ways of accessing the service they provide.

Registered Social Housing

Social housing is accommodation let at lower more affordable rents. It is generally provided by organisations such as social housing providers including Wakefield and District Housing (WDH), who are the main registered provider in Wakefield, and other Registered Providers of social housing e.g. Together Housing, Yorkshire Housing.

Demand for Social Housing is high and is therefore not generally available at short notice.

See leaflet entitled 'Housing Options - Registered Providers of Social Housing in the Wakefield District'.

Each Registered Provider will have its own allocations policy and not everyone will be eligible.

You can apply for Social Housing in two ways. Either:

- Choice Based Letting (CBL). This is operated by WDH, who advertise their properties through Homesearch. You need to be a current member of Homesearch in order to bid on and be offered a tenancy. More information

and an application form to register for Homesearch can be found online at <https://www.wdhomesearch.co.uk/>.

Available properties are published weekly. Once registered you are able to place an expression of interest on up to three properties per week.

Homesearch also advertise Immediately Available Homes. These are properties that are available on a first come, first served basis. There's no lengthy waiting list, no deposit required and a tenancy for as long as you need it. To apply for one of these properties you can either call Homesearch on 0344 9 02 02 02 or see online at <https://www.wdhomesearch.co.uk>

- Apply directly to a Registered Provider to be placed on their individual waiting list. To obtain an application form you will need to contact the Registered Provider direct.

Renting from a Private Landlord

The private rented sector within the Wakefield district is increasing. Some people find that private renting can be a quicker route to finding accommodation. It can offer you a more flexible choice of area as well as the option of furnished or unfurnished accommodation.

If you are considering private renting please see the Fact Sheet entitled Housing Options: Private Rented Sector.

Pathways for accommodation and/or support (also see fact sheet entitled Housing Options: What is Supported Housing?).

If you need practical support to live independently, there are a number of supported housing services in the Wakefield district that may be able to help. These are run by a variety of organisations for a wide range of people with different support needs. Providers fall into two categories:

- Council Commissioned Services – these are accessed through the Single Point of Access run from the Housing Needs Service (HNS).

The pathways are as follows:

- *Housing Sustainment Pathway*, provided by Turning Lives Around. This offers assistance to maintain and keep your current property. Working with families and single people.

- *Access to Housing Pathway* – provided by Foundation.
This service provides housing and support options across all types of property. Working with families and single people.
- *Access to Housing Pathway (Specialist Provision)* – provided by Riverside and Richmond Fellowship.
This pathway provides housing and support in cases of domestic abuse, complex needs, mental health and for young families.
- *Assessment Pathway* – provided by Riverside.
This service provides short term housing and support options for single people.
- **Non-Commissioned Services** – these services can be accessed directly by you or through referral from the Single Point of Access run from the Housing Needs Service (HNS). Whilst not commissioned by the Council the housing providers will have been deemed as ‘responsible landlords’.
 - Bridge-it: Tel 01924 907 754. Offering housing and support to families, single males and females.
 - C.A.R.E (CFE): Tel 01924 882427. Offering fully furnished supported housing with tailor-made support designed to redress the needs of persons from a diverse range of communities. This is available for single males only.
 - Saviours Trust: Tel 01977 600335. A charity based in Pontefract. It aims to offer immediate and sustainable support through the provision of housing, information, advice and guidance, pastoral care and positive activities.
 - Informal Learning: Tel 01924 882150. Offering housing and support for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Rough Sleeping

The Housing Needs Service may also be able to help those who find themselves rough sleeping, by referring them to the Wakefield Preventing Rough Sleep Model. See Riverside leaflet entitled ‘Preventing Rough Sleeping Service’ for more details.

Cold Weather Provision

In severe weather a night shelter may be available at Wakefield Baptist Church opposite the Bus Depot on Barnsley Road, Wakefield. The opening of this will be advertised in the Housing Needs Service reception at Queens House or through the Councils Contact Centre on 0345 8 506 506.

See flyer entitled ‘Cold Weather Provision’ for more details.

Help finding housing through probation services

When a prisoner is due for release from prison they will be invited to an appointment with a Probation Officer. The Probation Officer will offer advice and guidance on a variety of issues, including housing. However, as a part of a prisoner's rehabilitation they are encouraged to take control of their own housing situation.

Homeless upon release from prison

If you are homeless, or think that you are going to become homeless, you can seek advice from Wakefield Council's Housing Needs Service.

The Service offers free, confidential advice and information that may help you to keep your home or help you find accommodation that meets your needs. They will help you to understand the different options that are available in the Wakefield District to solve your housing problems.

Where there is reason to believe that you are, or that you may become homeless within 56 days, consideration can be given to what help can be provided under the homeless law.

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 to help with your costs until your benefits are sorted out.

Additionally, in preparation for your release, you could ask the prison for details of any credit union account scheme they may run. Saving into this from your prison wages may mean you have funds to which you have access upon release.

Help with housing costs

If you're on a low income or are finding it hard to pay your rent, you may be able to get help through Housing Benefit.

Before you make a claim for Housing Benefit, you must first check to see if you are eligible to claim Universal Credit. This is a new benefit that will eventually replace Housing Benefit for working age people. However, at the moment, it is only available to certain groups of people.

If you are moving into a private rented property your Housing Benefit entitlement will be calculated using Local Housing Allowance (LHA). For more information on renting privately please see our fact sheet entitled Housing Options: Private Rented Sector.

For more information on Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance and Universal Credit please contact the Benefits Service on 0345 8 504 504, email benefitservice@wakefield.gov.uk or visit their webpages at <http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/housing/need-help-rent/need-help-rent>

If you get Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit but the amount does not meet all of your housing costs, you may be entitled to extra financial help through **Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)**. This can cover housing costs including your rent, removal costs and rent in advance. For more information see online at <http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/housing/need-help-rent/discretionary-housing-payment>

Local Welfare Provision is a limited fund of money that aims to meet short term emergency or immediate support needs of vulnerable people in the Wakefield district. It can also be used to assist vulnerable people to establish or maintain a home in the community. For more information and to request help from this fund see <http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/housing/need-help-rent/local-welfare-provision> or contact Wakefield Council Customer Services on 0345 8 506 506.

Useful contacts

St Giles Trust is a charity helping people facing disadvantage to find jobs, homes and the right support they need. More information and contact details can be found at: <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk>

To find services near to you, you could use Shelters Directory or call Shelter's free advice helpline on 0808 8004444.

Housing Needs Service (HNS) Contact details

Housing Needs Service
Queens House
Queen Street
Wakefield WF1 1JR

Email: housingneedsservice@wakefield.gov.uk
Phone: 01924 304362 / 304360

Service availability:

	Telephone Service	Appointments and Drop-In
Monday-Wednesday	8:30am - 5pm	9am - 4pm
Thursday	10am - 5pm	10am - 4pm
Friday	8:30am - 4:30pm	9am - 4pm

If you become homeless out of office hours contact the Council's contact centre on 0345 8 506 506.