

Temporary Accommodation Charter

Introduction

These standards are proposed for agreement and adoption by members of the Eastbourne Housing Forum partners as listed at the end. They have been developed to ensure decent standards of accommodation and service are provided to homeless households who have to spend time in temporary accommodation.

The Council itself is developing a Strategy incorporating these standards within the context of their duties as a local housing authority to accommodate homeless people and the current challenges this entails.

The following standards set out our expectations, aspirations and commitments as partners to achieve these.

In exceptional circumstances, homeless households may need to be placed in accommodation not intended for use as temporary accommodation or in accommodation which has not been checked. Whenever this occurs, the council will strive either to move the household as soon as possible to approved accommodation or inspect the property while the household is in residence.

We recognise that providing accommodation and support to homeless people can present significant challenges given the vulnerability of those people and the disruption to their lives that homelessness brings. We are keen therefore to ensure that the accommodation and services provided in Eastbourne to homeless households meet reasonable standards to ensure the best outcomes.

Length of stay:

We will work together as providers of accommodation, support, advice and other services to ensure the length of time spent by any household in temporary accommodation is kept to a minimum. We will work with people housed in temporary accommodation to ensure their stay is no longer than is required to meet their re-housing and support needs. This will vary from person to person depending on their needs.

At the same time, we will ensure that homeless people placed in supported housing will be given the time and support they need to move on to more independent housing.

We expect homeless people placed in temporary accommodation to cooperate with us in this effort to secure longer-term suitable housing for them.

Standard of accommodation:

Providers of temporary housing have legal responsibilities for Health and Safety and will keep written records of their risk assessments and all safety checks and actions undertaken.

Providers of temporary housing will have up to date policies and procedures on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults which comply with locally agreed standards (Pan Sussex procedures for Child Protection and for Safeguarding Adults).

Temporary housing schemes will be maintained in a good state of repair, free of mould and damp, and accessible to all guests where reasonably practical. Any maintenance issues reported by guests should be dealt with as quickly as possible and an order placed for repair within 2 working days with an emergency response within 24 hours.

All temporary accommodation units will include enough beds for the household placed there wherever possible, with clean bedding, somewhere to store possessions and clothing, and a chair as a minimum.

Temperatures will be comfortable to protect health. The range will vary from person to person, but 18C/64F is the World Health Organisation's recommended room temperature for healthy people; 20C/68F for older people or very young children; 16C/60.8F for those with allergies or respiratory problems.

Guests should feel safe and secure in their accommodation. Any suspected crime should be recorded and reported immediately to the police.

Rooms and storage areas will be lockable to protect the individual's or family's privacy and property.

Efforts should be made to minimise noise and disturbances.

Shared or individual cooking facilities will be made available. If shared, there will be a fully functioning, clean kitchen where residents can store their food securely.

Bathrooms will be kept clean and will be fully accessible.

Cleaning equipment will be made available to residents to borrow and will be properly maintained. Rooms will be monitored for cleanliness on a regular basis.

Every effort should be made to prevent infestations and to deal with any infestations as quickly as possible through contact with the local authority.

Wherever families with children are accommodated a buggy store should be provided if possible.

Management

Providers of temporary housing are expected to treat everyone staying with them as guests. The accommodation is paid for and most residents will be contributing to this payment themselves. All guests should be received in the same way as if they were themselves paying all the costs of the accommodation and services directly themselves.

Staff will be selected, checked and trained for work with people with a range of needs including adult and child safeguarding and mental health first aid. They will be appropriately supervised.

Although staff employed by temporary housing providers are not eligible for DBS checks, it is recommended that these staff obtain a basic Check <https://www.mygov.scot/basic-disclosure/apply-for-basic-disclosure/?via=https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/basicdisclosureonline/index.htm>. This certificate will reveal all unspent criminal conviction information

There should be zero tolerance of abuse, bullying or any form of harassment – either of staff or guests. Residents whose behaviour causes significant disruption to others should be asked to leave.

Providers of temporary housing should seek regular feedback from their guests, ideally at the point when they are moving out. A standard questionnaire can be provided. The Council will spot check the responses as part of the regular monitoring checks.

Information and support

Temporary housing providers will provide information to households on what they offer and the standards residents can expect, as well as setting out what is expected of them (payment, standards of behaviour, proactive cooperation in efforts to secure alternative housing for them).

All homeless people not already in receipt of support services or housed in a supported housing scheme will be referred to an accredited support service who will make an assessment of support needs and assist with benefit claims.

All children under the age of five will be referred to the Health Visitor service to ensure their health needs are met.

Monitoring and evaluation of services

The Council will carry out unannounced spot-checks every 6 months to ensure that housing providers are complying with the minimum standards outlined above. Help and support will be given to achieve compliance but the Council may decide to cease using a provider if the minimum standard is not met within a reasonable period of time. This will be at the Council's discretion.

Optimum standards

The following section sets out preferred standards which we will work towards.

A mini-fridge should be provided in all rooms.

Laundry facilities should be provided.

A nutritious breakfast, including fresh fruit, should be offered.

Kitchen boxes (containing cutlery and utensils) should be made available on loan on request, subject to the household paying a refundable deposit

Facilities for cooking and warming baby milk should be provided in all residences and available as required. Wherever possible, this should be in the form of a microwave in the room.

Drop-in advice and support services should be provided by housing, health, advice and other support agencies to ensure guests are accessing the services and benefits they need to minimise their time in temporary accommodation and the impact of homelessness. This should include support to secure housing in the private rented sector.

Skills sessions should be offered to prepare people for move-on from their accommodation covering tenancy rights and responsibilities, money management, using the internet to access services, cookery and other life skills. The Council and 3VA may be able to advise voluntary organisations on appropriate funding sources for these services.

Information about key services and about local opportunities and activities should be made available to guests. This may be on a noticeboard, in leaflet form or as a map and will be provided by the Eastbourne Housing Forum.

Information by the Eastbourne Housing Forum should be provided to guests relevant to moving out along with support to access any assistance available for homeless people moving to a new home.

Signatories:

Organisation name:

Signature:

Role in organisation:

Etc.

Part 2 - Temporary Accommodation Charter - Eastbourne Borough Council commitments

These standards apply specifically to Eastbourne Borough Council. It is the intention that these will be incorporated within a Temporary Accommodation Strategy in the future.

The following standards set out the Council's aspirations. We cannot guarantee these will be met as the need to place homeless households on the day they become homeless means they may be placed in accommodation that is not intended for use as temporary accommodation. They may also be placed in accommodation that the Council has not had the opportunity to inspect.

The Council makes every effort to maximise the availability of social and affordable housing in Eastbourne and aims to work as closely as possible with neighbouring authorities to reduce the need to place homeless households in temporary accommodation outside the Borough.

Where we place a homeless person or household outside the Borough, we will make every effort to move them back to the Borough as soon as possible to ensure they are housed close to the services they use and their local networks.

Length of stay:

We will work together with our partners to ensure the length of time spent by any household in temporary accommodation is kept to a minimum. We recognise that this depends on the availability of alternative private rented and affordable housing accommodation but will make every effort and work with the homeless household to secure housing as quickly as possible once it is needed. We expect those households placed in temporary accommodation to cooperate in this effort to secure longer-term housing for them.

Suitability of accommodation:

Wherever possible the Council places homeless people in temporary accommodation that meets their needs and is of a sufficient size for their household. However, given the nature of temporary accommodation as an emergency measure, this will not always be possible, particularly for larger households and those who need ground floor accommodation. We aim to offer any household initially placed in accommodation that does

not fully meet their needs the option of moving to more suitable accommodation when this becomes available.

Standard of accommodation:

Wherever possible, we will ensure that temporary housing we use meets the standards set out in this charter.

We will carry out unannounced spot checks of rooms in any temporary housing which we use to ensure standards are consistent throughout and at all times.

We will work with temporary housing providers to improve standards where these fall below the standards agreed. The Council may decide to cease using a provider if the minimum standard is not met within a reasonable period of time. This will be at the Council's discretion.

In some circumstances, we may need to place a homeless person or household in housing which we have not had the opportunity to inspect, for example, outside the local area. In these situations we will carry out an inspection or move the household back to Eastbourne as soon as possible.

Although staff employed by temporary housing providers are not eligible for DBS checks, it is recommended that these staff obtain a basic check

<https://www.mygov.scot/basic-disclosure/apply-for-basic-disclosure/?via=https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/basicdisclosureonline/index.htm>.

This certificate will reveal all unspent criminal conviction information.

Information and support

The Council will provide information to households they are placing in temporary accommodation on what they are being offered and what standards they can expect; advising them what they can bring to ensure their stay is as pleasant as possible (e.g. additional bedding, toys, hot water bottles, some kitchen and cleaning equipment); and setting out what is expected of them (payment, standards of behaviour, proactive cooperation in efforts to secure alternative housing for them).

The Council will provide basic information about the names and ages of members of any household placed in the accommodation, terms of payment, and expected length of stay if known.

All households not already in receipt of support services will be referred to Home Works who will make an assessment of support needs and assist with benefit claims.

We will refer all children aged under to the Health Visitor service to ensure their health needs are met.

Signature:

Role in organisation: