

Help for BPP students facing homelessness

Facing homelessness is traumatic and stressful. BPP Independent Advice Team can offer help and support, but BPP is not an accommodation provider. This leaflet is designed to provide practical options.

If you are an international student, then there is a different leaflet on homelessness aimed at you.

Local councils have a statutory duty to assist people who are homeless, and this is explained below. Firstly, we look at the main options for someone looking for emergency housing:

- **Staying with friends or relatives:** This may be the best emergency option.
- **Hostels and night shelters:** There are a variety of different types of hostels and shelters run by voluntary organisations, housing associations, and private landlords. You can use the [Homelessness Link](#) tool to find them and other services.
- **Cold-weather shelters:** These offer very basic accommodation between December and March and are usually free. Some provide food.
- **Backpacker hostels:** These offer inexpensive accommodation to backpackers. Bathroom and cooking facilities are often shared and you may have to share a room. You may not be able to stay at the hostel during the day.
- **Bed and breakfast hotels:** These are small, privately run hotels and they tend to be more expensive than hostels. Conditions and services may be poor and there may not be cooking facilities. You will need to pay in advance.
- **Women's refuges:** These refuges provide accommodation for women who have been forced to leave home because of domestic abuse. For information, contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 200 0247.
- **Nightstop schemes:** These are for homeless young people and provide a short term stay in a room in another person's house, along with support and training. Contact Depaul Nightstop UK on 020 7939 1220.

Get help from the local council

The council must help if you're legally homeless or threatened with homelessness.

You count as threatened with homelessness if you are likely to be homeless within the next 8 weeks. How much help you get depends on your circumstances? The council must assess your situation and give you a personal housing plan. The aim of the plan is to help you find somewhere else to live.

The council usually works with you for up to 8 weeks if you're threatened with homelessness and a further 8 weeks if you become homeless

If you are in priority need then the Council must arrange both emergency accommodation and longer term housing.

You will be in priority need if you:

- have children living with you
- are pregnant
- are aged 16 or 17
- are a care leaver age 18 to 20
- are homeless because of fire or flood
- are assessed by the council as vulnerable

If the council decide that made yourself are homeless then they may not assist with longer term housing but must still arrange emergency accommodation.

If the council refuse to help you then you should contact Shelter.

Social Security (Universal Credit)

The main social security benefit is [Universal Credit](#) (UC). If you are already in receipt of other benefits, then you should get advice. If you are a full-time student, you can only claim UC if:

- You are under 21, taking a course that leading to a qualification at the same level as or below A levels (such as Scottish Highers, NVQ up to level 3) and you do not and cannot live with your parents; or
- You are responsible for a child; or
- You get Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and you have limited capability for work. This can be complicated and you may need specialist advice.
- You are over Pension Credit age; or
- You live with a partner who can claim UC; or
- You have taken time out from your course for illness or caring responsibilities, are now recovered/your caring responsibilities have ended, and you are waiting to go back to your course.

Part-time students and students who have taken time off their course usually qualify for UC.

If you can claim UC then you can claim a housing costs element to pay for housing. You can also apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), which is money paid to help people who qualify for universal credit but are having trouble paying their rent or finding enough money to pay for the start-up costs of a tenancy. You apply for a DHP from your local council. You will need to provide evidence of why you need the additional payments. You can also apply for a budgeting advance on your first UC payment. This is a small amount of money and has to be repaid over 12 months.

Other Financial Help

There are lots of educational charities that help students, depending on their background, circumstances and needs. Turn 2 Us has a [Grants Search](#).

The [BPP Student Association Crisis Fund](#) is a limited source of financial support for students who, due to circumstances beyond their control, are in severe financial difficulties. The fund has very limited resources and any award will be modest and with the sole aim of providing short-term emergency support.

Useful Links

[Find your local council](#) by postcode

[Shelter](#) free housing advice helpline: 0808 800 4444 and website

[National domestic violence helpline](#) 0808 200 0247

Benefits Advice – Turn 2 Us has a [Find an Adviser](#) tool to find a local adviser

[BPP Independent Advice Team](#)