

Leaving Hospital

If you are going into hospital and know that you won't have suitable accommodation to return to when you are fit to be discharged you should contact the Homeless Prevention Service straight away as we can work with you to support you to have accommodation to return to. We will work with you to try to prevent you from becoming homeless and to help you move on in a planned way.

If you are worried that your current accommodation will no longer be suitable for you when you are discharged from hospital you should contact us as soon as possible as we can look at ways of making your accommodation more suitable or look at alternative housing options.

If you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

You can continue to receive **Housing Benefit** for up to 52 weeks while you are receiving care in hospital as long as:

- you usually live in the accommodation that you are temporarily away from
- you intend to return to this accommodation when you are discharged from hospital
- you do not rent out your accommodation whilst you are away

You must tell the Housing Benefits Team:

- when you become a hospital inpatient
- if you are going to be in hospital for longer than 52 weeks
- when you are discharged from hospital



If you are re-admitted to hospital at least 24 hours after being discharged your period of absence from your home will start again and you could receive Housing Benefit for up to another 52 weeks.

You can continue to receive **Universal Credit** for up to 6 months. You must tell Universal Credit:

- if you become an inpatient in hospital
- when you are discharged from hospital.



*You **must** continue to pay your rent and other essential bills such as Council Tax whilst you are in hospital.*

Before you leave hospital

If you are likely to need advice and assistance to find accommodation when you leave hospital you should contact us immediately. You can also tell the hospital nursing staff so that they know that you will be homeless when you are discharged from hospital and they can, with your consent, contact us on your behalf.

We will visit you in hospital to assess your situation and give you advice on your options so you can make an informed decision about your housing. This may include:

- advice on finding a private rented property
- a referral to our Rent Guarantee Scheme
- making an application to apply to join Homechoice (Reading's social housing register) and a referral for sheltered accommodation (if you are over the age of 60)
- a referral to our supported accommodation (if you are a single adult or part of an established couple without dependent children)
- advice on making benefit claims for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit which can help towards the cost of your rent
- speaking to friends and/or family who may be able to accommodate you immediately following your discharge whilst we continue to provide you with support to move on

We can also attend your discharge meeting.

If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness after leaving hospital

If you have been discharged from hospital but have no accommodation you should contact us straight away. We will assess your situation and work with you to create a personalised housing plan which will include your housing options.

If we assess you as being in priority need you will be entitled to emergency accommodation. You will normally have a priority need if you, or someone in your household:

- is pregnant
- has dependent children who normally live with you
- are aged 16 or 17
- are under 21 and a care leaver
- has been made homeless by an emergency such as flood or fire
- is vulnerable as a result of any physical/mental conditions or a learning disability

With your consent we will contact your health care providers to find out if you are considered to be vulnerable as a result of your health needs. We will ask for information about your hospital admission, your medical conditions (and any symptoms or side effects that you may experience as a result of this), prescribed medication (including the dosage), any specialist health referrals made for you, your short and long term prognosis and how your health needs affect your ability to cope and carry out your daily activities.

Your Housing Options

We will discuss options that are appropriate for you and your household. Because the demand for all forms of housing in Reading is very high you should explore all of these. Your options may include:

- **Staying with family and friends** - living with family or friends is the cheapest form of accommodation and it can give you the opportunity to save money towards a deposit. If your relationship with family and friends has broken down we can arrange mediation to help rebuild your relationships. If this is a temporary solution we can continue to explore your other housing options and help you to move in a planned way.
- **Looking for private rented accommodation** - you should consider the size and type of accommodation you need for your household and how much rent you can afford. You should also consider whether the accommodation is suitable for your health needs.

Most landlords will ask for a cash deposit (in case you fail to pay your rent or cause damage to their property). If you don't have a deposit we may be able to help either through the Rent Guarantee Scheme or by lending you the money to pay a cash deposit direct to your landlord.

- **The Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS)** - this scheme helps households on low incomes into private rented accommodation. We pay the rent to your landlord and provide a deposit guarantee (instead of a cash deposit). The scheme removes the need for a guarantor because the Council will provide a guarantee to the landlord for the duration of the tenancy. You must pay your rent to us and save for your own deposit - see our factsheet "Rent Guarantee Scheme" for more information.
- **Applying to Homechoice** (Reading's Housing Register) so you can bid for a Council or Housing Association home. Visit www.reading.gov.uk/homechoice to complete an online application form or pick one up from the Civic Offices reception.
If you are over the age of 60 and you have support needs then you may be considered for sheltered housing which provides a safe environment and residents have access to support and regular social activities.
If your health needs are being made worse by your current accommodation you can apply for a medical assessment - you may be awarded a higher priority for re-housing. See our Allocations Scheme (www.reading.gov.uk/homechoice) for more details.
- **Referral for supported accommodation** – if you need support to develop the emotional and practical skills you need to move on to independent housing.

Help with housing costs

If you are working and on a low income or claim welfare benefits you may be eligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help towards your rent. You may also be eligible for Council Tax Support. Use our online calculator to check your entitlement – becs.reading.gov.uk

You should check the Entitledto website to see if you could claim any other benefits - www.entitledto.co.uk

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

LHA limits the amount of benefit/universal credit you can get towards your rent based on the number of bedrooms your household is eligible for:

Shared accommodation	£81.14/week	£351.61/month
1 bedroom	£153.02/week	£663.08/month
2 bedroom	£193.98/week	£840.58/month
3 bedroom	£221.79/week	£961.09/month
4+ bedrooms	£315.12/week	£1365.52/month

If you are under 35 years you can claim the 1 bed rate if you rent self-contained accommodation and you get the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Attendance allowance

You can claim the 2 bed rate if somebody regularly stays over to provide essential care for you and you need a bedroom for when they stay.

You can ask for these payments to go directly to your landlord.

Other Benefits

You may qualify for further benefits based upon your health needs -see www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/disability-and-sickness-benefits for details and how to claim.

Contact the Homeless Prevention Service

We are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

You will be seen by a Housing Advice Support Officer who will then allocate your case to either:

- a Homeless Prevention Officer - if you are threatened with homelessness within 56 days or are immediately homeless
- a Homeless Resolution and Enablement Officer - if you are still in accommodation but you are worried about becoming homeless in the future

Call: 0118 937 2165 (office hours)

Email: Housingadvice@reading.gov.uk

Drop-in: Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU

This information can be provided in alternative formats (Braille, audio, large print) and other languages on request