



St. Helens Council

HOUSING OPTIONS & ADVICE SERVICES

St Helens Council is committed to providing services of the highest standards across all of its disciplines and to all of its service users.

Our staff will always deal with you and your housing needs in a professional manner. We believe that every one of our customers is important and all should be treated equally.

This charter outlines what the Housing Options & Advice Services provide. It explains the standards that we aim to meet, what you can expect from us and, furthermore, what we expect from you in return.

We Will Always

- Endeavour to prevent homelessness occurring
- Be professional, courteous and polite
- Be sensitive to individual needs and requirements
- Consult with you on the services we provide, so that we can constantly seek to improve
- Respect your confidentiality
- Provide an interpreter, if required
- Monitor our performance and tell you how we are doing.
- Wear a name badge
- Aim to provide an interview appointment within 5 working days of initial contact
- Endeavour to see you within 10 minutes of your prearranged interview time
- Acknowledge email enquiries within 1 working day
- Respond to written correspondence (including emails) within 10 working days
- Provide a thorough assessment of your housing needs and discuss all your options with you
- Only ask for information needed to make a decision about your application
- Interview you in a private room
- Provide an advisor of the same sex, if requested to do so

If You Are Homeless

- We will see you on the same day if you are homeless as the result of an emergency
- And are unable to attend the Advice Centre, we will arrange to visit you at your home

- But you are non-priority, we will provide you with advice and assistance to secure accommodation
- Intentionally, we will provide you with advice and assistance to help you find your own accommodation. We may also provide you with accommodation for a reasonable period of time to allow you to secure alternative accommodation
- We will endeavour to make a decision on your homelessness application within 33 working days
- We will contact you, in writing, within 3 working days of making a decision on your homelessness application.
- We will tell you if we cannot help you and explain the reason why before directing you to someone who may be able to help you

If we must use Temporary Accommodation, we will

- Endeavour to use the hostels within the borough
- Only use bed and breakfast when there are no places at the hostels
- Only use bed and breakfast providers outside of the borough as a last resort
- Maintain contact with you whilst in temporary accommodation
- Not place families in bed and breakfast for more than six weeks

What We Expect You To Do

- Treat staff with respect
- Attend appointments on time
- Be patient. There are times when we will need to deal with many priority cases at the same time but we will do all that we can to keep waiting times to a minimum
- To notify us immediately of any change in your circumstances which could affect your application
- To respond to requests for information or documentation within the timescale requested
- To act upon the advice given