



Homeless when released from prison

If you have recently been released from prison, find out about services that could provide practical support and help you find accommodation.

Key advice

- Tell Dacorum Borough Council Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service about your accommodation and health history.

Help from Dacorum Borough Council if you are homeless when released from prison

If you apply to Dacorum Borough Council for housing assistance because you are homeless after leaving prison, Dacorum Borough Council may not be obliged to provide you with accommodation.

Its duty to you might be limited to it providing you with advice and assistance and not accommodation.

For Dacorum Borough Council to be legally obliged to provide you with accommodation, we would have to be satisfied that you are eligible, homeless and in priority need. Dacorum Borough Council will take your time in prison into account when assessing your application, even if it has been some time since you were released.

We will also look at whether you:

- have a mental illness
- have a learning disability or physical disability
- are under 21 and have been in care
- were in the armed forces
- are fleeing violence or threats of violence.

Priority need for prisoners and ex-offenders

When assessing your application, the Council will look into whether you are in priority need because you have spent time in prison or on remand.

When considering your homelessness application, the Council will look at:

- the length of time you spent in prison
- whether any third party support is being provided to you, either by the probation service, a youth offending team, or drug and alcohol team
- evidence provided by any third party (including any housing needs assessment) about your homelessness vulnerability
- the period of time since your release from prison and how successful you have been in finding your own accommodation and in keeping that accommodation
- any third party support networks such as family, friends or a probation officer
- evidence of any other vulnerability such as mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse, or a history of having been in care
- any other factors that might have an impact on your ability to find accommodation yourself

The fact that you have been in prison does not necessarily mean that Dacorum Borough Council has to treat you as being vulnerable and in priority need for accommodation. The Council will need to assess the evidence before it, and be satisfied that you will find it difficult to seek out and maintain accommodation for yourself compared with other homeless people.

What area can you be housed in if you are homeless?

When you apply to Dacorum Borough Council as homeless, the Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service will check to see if you have a local connection with Dacorum. You can establish a local connection, for example, by living, working, or having immediate family (usually a parent or brother or sister) in the area. (Time spent in prison in a specific area does not give you a local connection with the area where the prison is located.)

If you have no local connection with any area, or if you are fleeing domestic violence, you can apply to any council in any area. The council you apply to has to help you.

There may be restrictions placed on where you can live, depending on your release conditions.

Emergency accommodation if you have no housing

If you have nowhere to go following your release from prison, you may need to use emergency accommodation such as a hostel or a night shelter. Some Hostels may provide temporary accommodation. Some are 'direct access', which means you don't need a referral from an agency to use them.

In Dacorum the DENS Day Centre provides hot meals, showers, laundry facilities and other practical help for people who need somewhere to go during the day. They may also be able to help you find housing.

www.dens.org.uk/how-we-help/day-centre

The DENS Day Centre is located on the outskirts of Gadebridge Park at the following address: 1 Queensway, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1HT.

The Day Centre is open Monday-Thursday from 11:30am-2pm, and offers pre-booked appointments on Fridays from 9am-4:30pm.

For more information, contact the Day Centre on **01442 275900**.



You can also contact Dacorum Borough Council's Homelessness Prevention and Advice Team or visit: www.dacorum.gov.uk/homeless

Search the **Homeless England** directory to find hostels, emergency and longer-term accommodation and day centres in your area.



Use Shelter's directory or call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on **0808 800 4444** to find services near you. You can click the image for more information.



Help finding housing in the private rented sector

You could try to find housing in the private rented sector. Dacorum Borough Council's Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service will be able to advise you how to find out what housing is available locally and how to apply for Universal Credit to help you with your housing costs. You may also be able to get help with a deposit.

Apply for a council or housing association home

As a longer-term housing option, you could also consider applying for a council home or a housing association home. Please complete the online Housing Register application at: www.movingwithdacorum.gov.uk where you can also use the Council's Housing Options Wizard to find helpful advice about getting a job and applying for benefits.

Help from probation services to find housing

Offenders serving sentences of 12 months or more are released on licence and live in the community supervised by the probation service until the end of their sentence. If you are released on licence, your probation officer can help you find accommodation, so long as you have spent a continuous period of at least twelve months in custody.

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 money to help with your costs until your benefits are sorted out. If a prison housing adviser has found you accommodation for your first night, you may be given a higher discharge grant (about an extra £50), which is paid directly to the accommodation provider.

You may also be able to get help from Dacorum Borough Council. A prison adviser or other adviser may be able to help you with your application. You could apply for help with paying for:

- essential belongings lost when you were away
- clothes
- a fridge for your new home
- help with the costs of moving into accommodation

You may be able to prepare for your release when you are in prison by saving some of your prison wages. You could consider opening a credit union account when you are in prison. Ask at the prison for details.