

Leaving prison or youth detention

This factsheet is for people leaving prison or youth detention, who need housing advice in Kent.

Resettlement support before your sentence ends

You can get housing advice if you are on remand, serving a sentence or are being released from **Kent Housing Brokerage Service**. The service is provided by Nacro and Centra and more details can be found at <https://www.nacro.org.uk/resettlement-advice-service/support-for-individuals/housing/>.

There are several supported housing schemes in Kent run by charitable organisations, including **Pathways, Porchlight, Change Grow Live (cgl), Stonham, Sanctuary** and others. The Resettlement Service at your prison can help you apply to their waiting lists. You should receive a discharge grant when you leave prison. 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.

If you are a low risk adult prisoner and eligible for release on bail or home detention curfew (tag) but don't have suitable accommodation to go to, you may be able to get help with supported accommodation through the bail accommodation and support scheme ('bass'). Find out more about this through www.stonhambass.org.uk. Find out about other housing providers who will accept applications from those on tag by contacting the **Resettlement Advice Service** on 0300 123 1999.

Homelessness and threatened homelessness

A local housing authority will consider you to be threatened with homelessness, if you have no accommodation that you have a right to return to (or cannot safely return to) on your release - if your release will occur within 56 days. This means you can approach any local authority in England and make a homeless application. The council will assess your needs, and draw up a Personalised Housing Plan, to help you resolve your housing problem. The Plan will list the steps that both you and the council must take, in order that you can find suitable housing. It does not mean that you will necessarily be made an offer of social housing, either now or in the future.

If you become homeless, if there is a reason to believe you are in priority need, you will be provided with temporary accommodation while the situation is investigated further. In deciding if you are in priority need, the council will consider whether you are more vulnerable than an ordinary person. In making this assessment, the council will take into account the length of your sentence, and the effect it has had on you (among other things). The council will also consider any other problems such as physical or mental ill-health, drug or alcohol dependency, and what support is available to you to deal with these issues. 'Vulnerability' has a particular meaning for homelessness applications and is not the same as being labelled vulnerable in prison.

If the council cannot establish a local connection with their area, you may be referred to another local authority with which you do have a connection. You would normally have a local connection if:

- You have lived in the area for some time in the past, through your own choice;
- You work in the area;
- You have close family relations in the area;
- You cannot return to any other area where you have a connection, because of violence;
- There are other special reasons why you have a local connection, which the council accepts as valid;
- You do not have any local connection with any area in the UK.

Being detained within a local authority area will **not** give you a local connection to that area.

Whether the council you apply to, or another council accepts a duty to relieve your homelessness, that council will work with you to create or amend your Personalised Housing Plan. If, despite following all the steps that are in your Plan, you cannot find somewhere to live within 56 days, the council will go on to consider whether they owe a duty to offer accommodation. This duty will be owed if the council decides:

- you are in priority need, and
- you are not homeless as a direct result of something you have deliberately done, or not done.

In some circumstances, if you knew that your offending might result in the loss of your last settled home, you may be considered to be 'intentionally homeless'. This means the Council would not have a duty to provide housing.

Hostels

You may need to use emergency accommodation such as a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast accommodation if you have nowhere to go following your release. Hostels provide temporary accommodation. Some are direct access, which means you don't need a referral from an agency to use them. Search the **Homeless England** directory to find hostels, accommodation and day centres in your area. This information can be found at www.homeless.org.uk.

Help with Private Renting

Private Renting is likely to be the quickest solution for most people. Most local councils have schemes aimed at improving your access to private renting. This might be loans to help with upfront costs such as deposits or advance payments of rent. Ask your local council. For more information about private renting, please see our 'Finding Private Rented Accommodation' leaflet.

Getting on the housing register

Local housing authorities in Kent accept direct applications onto their housing registers from anyone who is eligible, but there is usually a very long wait. Go to <https://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/>.

Contacting your local Council

Ashford: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk>
Canterbury: <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk>
Dartford: <https://www.dartford.gov.uk>
Dover: <https://www.dover.gov.uk>
Gravesham: <http://www.gravesham.gov.uk>
Maidstone: <https://self.maidstone.gov.uk>
Medway: <https://www.medway.gov.uk>
Sevenoaks: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk>
Folkestone & Hythe: <https://www.shepway.gov.uk>
Swale: <https://www.swale.gov.uk>
Thanet: <https://www.thanet.gov.uk>
Tunbridge Wells: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>
Tonbridge & Malling: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk>