

Brighton & Hove Emergency Accommodation Charter

Introduction

This charter has been developed to ensure a reasonable standard of accommodation is provided to homeless households who have to spend time in emergency accommodation. This document sets out expectations, aspirations and commitments to achieve this and has been developed in collaboration with a number of organisations. We want to see the Charter adopted by Brighton & Hove City Council and emergency accommodation providers who house Brighton and Hove residents experiencing homelessness, and for this Charter to be embedded into provider contracts.

Context: Emergency accommodation is accommodation used by Brighton & Hove City Council to house people who they have a legal duty to house, or while they investigate that legal duty, under the Housing or Care Acts. It is part of the broader temporary accommodation used in the city but is predominantly large units of between 12 and 60 rooms, many with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

We recognise that providing accommodation to homeless people can present significant challenges given the vulnerability often experienced and the disruption to their lives that homelessness brings. We are keen therefore to ensure that the accommodation and support provided in Brighton & Hove to homeless households meet reasonable standards to ensure the best outcomes for people.

It is recognised that a significant proportion of people placed in emergency accommodation will have multiple and complex needs and as a result will require additional support. Multiple and complex needs is defined by the Public Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment steering group ('JSNA') as people aged 16+ experiencing combinations of housing issues/homelessness, substance misuse, offending, mental health and domestic abuse issues, with an overarching focus on complex trauma and inequalities.

This document builds on the Charter developed by the Eastbourne Citizens Advice Bureau and the East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Action Group.

Vision

We want emergency accommodation placements to be seen as an opportunity to support somebody away from homelessness and towards long-term accommodation, and access to the support they identify and need. The Local Authority should work in collaboration with the support services and emergency accommodation providers to keep peoples stay in emergency accommodation to a minimum, ensuring they are as safe and healthy as possible.

Support for this Charter

Fulfilling Lives and Justlife have developed this Charter following their work with hundreds of people placed in emergency accommodation over the past 7 years. We hope the Local Authority, accommodation providers and other third sector organisations will support this Charter.



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Summary

This Charter calls for a formal commitment from the Local Authority to provide information and support where needed to everyone placed in emergency accommodation, and be proactive in their approach to working with people placed to move onto long term accommodation. This includes;

- Clear information provided by the Local Authority on the accommodation they are being placed in; rights; expectations and responsibilities of the local authority, the resident and the accommodation provider, including the 'Emergency Accommodation: Useful Stuff to Know' leaflet.
- Clear information on who to contact should they have concerns about the emergency accommodation placement and how they can make a complaint if they need to.
- With the consent of the resident, the Local Authority will provide information about the person's needs and any associated risks, including contact details for any support services involved, to safeguard the resident and other residents in the best way possible.

This Charter also calls for a formal commitment from the Local Authority that the emergency accommodation providers will maintain an approach, behaviour and commitment to ensure the conditions of their properties are at a reasonable standard consistently and that residents have the best chance possible to move on from homelessness. The Charter should be followed by providers and agreed in their contracts. This includes:

- Behaving in a manner towards residents that promote respect and empathy.
- Not engage in any abuse, bullying or any form of harassment of residents.
- Health and safety standards being adhered to.
- Engage with regular contract monitoring led by the local authority.
- Training their staff with a focus on safeguarding, Multiple Complex Needs awareness and trauma informed care (TIC) and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) approaches.
- Collaboration with the local authority and third sector support providers via attendance at a local Temporary Accommodation Action Group (TAAG).

Staff recruitment, support and conduct

Emergency accommodation staff are expected to treat everyone staying with them as residents. They will not engage in any abuse, bullying or any form of harassment. They should do their best to ensure their staff and other residents are also safe and free from any form of abuse. Where there are incidents where residents whose behaviour causes significant disruption or concern the emergency accommodation provider should instigate a discussion with the Local Authority housing team for advice on how best to respond.

All residents should be received in the same way as if they were themselves paying all the costs of the accommodation and services directly themselves. Providers should promote respect and actively seek to cultivate working environments that encourage empathy and understanding of the multiple factors that may have led people to be placed in emergency accommodation.

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Emergency accommodation providers staff members will be recruited, trained and supervised in an appropriate manner based on the needs of those people placed in their accommodation. This will include;

- Having a [basic DBS check](#).
- Having training including safeguarding adults and children, Multiple Complex Needs awareness and working within trauma informed care (TIC) and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) approaches.

Reasonable standard of emergency accommodation

Health and Safety

Providers of temporary accommodation have legal responsibilities for Health and Safety and will keep written records of their risk assessments and all safety checks and actions undertaken.

Safeguarding Children and Adults

Providers of emergency accommodation will have up to date policies and procedures for safeguarding children and adults. This will include will appropriate training (completed every 2 years) for all staff (caretakers and office-based staff) in understanding safeguarding and the appropriate action to take when safeguarding concerns arise. Staff will be appropriately supervised on an ongoing basis.

Evictions

Evictions should only take place following consultation between the emergency accommodation provider and the Local Authority and there should be a clear written process for evictions and appeals. Where support workers are identified, they too should be notified, before the eviction notice is served, of any evictions to help support the household during this time. Occupants will be given sufficient notice of eviction which will be at least 48 hours.

Information & Safe spaces for support

Residents will be provided information on the standards they can expect and equally, it will be clear what is expected of residents regarding payment, standards of behaviour and proactive cooperation in efforts to maintain the placement.

Where the premises allow, the temporary accommodation provider will allocate a private room to be used as a safe space for support services to be delivered such as advice or counselling services.

Services supporting people should be actively supported to access the building when they need to.

Information about key services and about local opportunities should be made available to residents in the form of leaflets provided by support services/Local Authority and on a notice board in every property.

Disrepair

Emergency accommodation will be maintained in a good state of repair, free of mould and damp, and accessible to all guests where reasonably practical. Any maintenance issues reported by

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residents should be dealt with as quickly as possible and an order placed for repair within 2 working days with an emergency response within 24 hours.

Service Charge

Service charges should be ideally removed from temporary accommodation. If it is needed, then it should be at a fixed rate across all properties of no more than £12.50 per room per week. What is included in this service charge should be made transparent and should be the same for all residents no matter what address or provider they have. This should include all heating and electricity costs, and meters should not be used.

Furniture & Bedding

All temporary accommodation units will include enough beds for the household placed there, somewhere to store possessions and clothing, and a chair as a minimum. Clean bedding should be in the room for people when they arrive at the accommodation, this includes duvet, pillow, bedding covers and bed sheet. No charge or deposit should be incurred by the resident.

Temperature

Temperatures will be comfortable to protect health. 18C/64F is the World Health Organisation's recommended room temperature for healthy people; 20C/68F for older people or very young children; 16C/60.8F for those with allergies or respiratory problems. No rooms should have metered electricity so residents can maintain these temperatures and not be left without heating due to restricted funds. All measures will be taken to insulate the rooms effectively.

Security

Guests should feel safe and secure in their accommodation. Any suspected crime should be recorded and reported immediately to the police.

Rooms and storage areas will be lockable to protect the household's privacy and property.

All incidents, accidents and near misses should be recorded by the emergency accommodation provider and reported back to the Local Authority.

Efforts should be made to minimise noise and disturbances, especially at night, and this should be managed by trained security staff.

Cooking facilities

Shared or individual cooking facilities will be made available, including fridges. If shared, there will be a fully functioning, clean kitchen where residents can store their food securely.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms (where shared with other residents) will be kept clean and will be fully accessible. All bathrooms (shared and private) should have safety rails fitted as standard for those with mobility issues.

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Cleaning

Cleaning equipment will be made available to residents to borrow and will be properly maintained to allow people to clean their rooms (including access to vacuum cleaners).

Infestation

Every effort should be made to prevent infestations and to deal with any infestations as quickly as possible through contact with the local authority.

Collaboration

Providers will inform staff of support services, if the resident consents, when there are potential issues such as arrears, complaints or anti-social behaviour. This way the support service can work with the resident to avoid any further action needing to be taken.

Providers of emergency accommodation will attend the quarterly Temporary Accommodation Action Group (TAAG) and proactively collaborate with services and groups represented.

Monitoring and evaluation of emergency accommodation

The Local Authority will work with providers to inspect properties on a regular basis, help and support will be given to achieve compliance, but the Council may decide to cease using a provider if the standards are not met within a reasonable period of time. This will be at the Local Authorities discretion.

Residents will be asked for regular feedback on the accommodation.

A person with lived experience of emergency accommodation and a representative with learned experience from a voluntary sector group on behalf on the Temporary Accommodation Action Group (TAAG) should take part in inspections, contract meetings and gathering feedback from residents. This should all be reported back to the TAAG.

Charter agreed by Brighton & Hove City Council

Signed by:

Role:

On behalf of:

Date:

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Charter agreed by emergency accommodation providers

Signed by:

Role:

On behalf of:

Date:

Signed by:

Role:

On behalf of:

Date:

Signed by:

Role:

On behalf of:

Date:

The following support services and third sector organisations also agree with this Charter and commit to working alongside our colleagues at the council and the accommodation providers to support them to provide safe and suitable accommodation.