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ACCOMMODATION

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In this chapter you will find information on accommodation in the UK. You will find information on hostels, private rented accommodation including information on what you can expect to pay for accommodation in some of the most popular cities in the UK.

Finding suitable accommodation should be a priority when you move to the UK. If you have family or friends already living in the UK you should try to organise to stay with them for your first few weeks. It will be easier to apply for a National Insurance Number, claim benefits and find a job when you have an address.

There is also information for people who go to the UK and find themselves homeless. **It is very important for you to know that if you leave Council Accommodation here in Ireland and move to the UK you will find it very difficult to access similar accommodation** as almost all Councils in the UK require that you have been living in the area for at least 6 months. They will also consider that you made yourself intentionally homeless and they are under no obligation to find you Council Accommodation.

Please read this chapter carefully to make sure that you understand what your options are in advance of moving to the UK.

I am going to the UK but have nowhere to stay-what are my options?

There are a number of options available if you are going to the UK and do not have any accommodation.

Hostel accommodation

If you not have any family or friends in the UK then you should try to organise temporary accommodation before you go.

A lot of people stay in hostels for the first few weeks when they arrive in the UK.

Depending on the area you are going to you will need to find the contact details for local hostels and contact them to book accommodation in advance as a lot of the hostels may be full.

The accommodation available in hostels can vary from a single room, which will be more expensive to shared rooms and dormitories, which are cheaper.

For more information on hostels you can contact an Irish organisation in the UK, as they may be able to provide you with a list of hostels in the area.

Hostels for the Homeless are generally oversubscribed and difficult to access. If you are accepted into a hostel as a homeless person you will need to prove your entitlement to Housing Benefit. Therefore, it may be very difficult for you to access a hostel for the homeless if you are newly arrived in the UK as you will not have a National Insurance Number.

Rented accommodation

Rented accommodation in the UK can be a flat/apartment, house sharing or lodgings. If you are planning to rent a flat or apartment you can expect to pay more than you would if you were house sharing.

The **minimum** average rent per week (2007 figure) (depending on the area) for accommodation in the some of the most popular cities is:

London

Bedsit	*Sterling rates £100 - £150 per week
House share	£50 - £80 per week
Flat (1 Bedroom)	£170 - £250 per week
House (2/3 Bedroom)	£400 - £600 per week

Liverpool

Bedsit	*Sterling rates £100 - £150 per week
House share	£50 - £80 per week
Flat (1 Bedroom)	£170 - £250 per week
House (2/3 Bedroom)	£400 - £600 per week

Manchester

Bedsit	*Sterling rates £100 - £150 per week
House share	£50 - £80 per week
Flat (1 Bedroom)	£170 - £250 per week
House (2/3 Bedroom)	£400 - £600 per week

Coventry

Bedsit

House share

Flat (1 Bedroom)

House (2/3 Bedroom)

***Sterling rates**

£100 - £150 per week

£50 - £80 per week

£170 - £250 per week

£400 - £600 per week

Birmingham

Bedsit

House share

Flat (1 Bedroom)

House (2/3 Bedroom)

***Sterling rates**

£45 - £70 per week

£50 - £80 per week

£80 - £150 per week

£250 - £400 per week

** At the time of publication €1 euro was equal to £0.67 sterling.*

£1 sterling was equal to €1.49 euro.

How can I find rented accommodation in the UK?

When looking for housing in the UK you have many options but some of these can be expensive. You must remember to look carefully at what you can realistically afford.

Guest Houses/Bed and Breakfast accommodation is often expensive and would be suitable for a short-term stay.

To find listings of available properties try looking at:

- Local newspapers
- Notice boards in community centres
- Local shops
- Post Offices
- Accommodation agents.

Private landlords will in most cases require references, a deposit and one months rent in advance.

Accommodation agents

An accommodation agency may be able to help you find private rented accommodation. When you register with an agency you will be asked the type of property you are looking for and how much rent you are willing to pay. You will normally be asked to give details of your job and income, and may also be asked to provide references from your employer, bank and present or previous landlord. You will be charged a fee if the agency finds you somewhere to live and you have signed a tenancy agreement. The fee you will have to pay can vary, so it is a good idea to shop around and ask what fees you will be charged if the agency finds accommodation for you.

If you are offered accommodation by an agency you should inspect the property before accepting it and ensure you have full details about:

- The terms of the tenancy agreement
- The amount of rent you will have to pay, and whether it includes any services, fuel and water charges
- How much rent you will have to pay in advance
- Whether you will have to pay a premium and/or a security deposit and, if so, how much?

- Whether the property has a mortgage. You can lose your accommodation if the property is repossessed due to the landlord's failure to keep up mortgage payments
- The name and address of the landlord
- In Scotland, whether the landlord is registered. All private landlords in Scotland should be registered with the Local Authority.

Local newspapers

Most local newspapers will have a list of private rented accommodation available in the area.

In **Liverpool** you can find accommodation listings in the *Echo* and the *Daily Post*.

In **Manchester** you can find accommodation listing in the *Manchester Evening News* and *The Evening Standard*.

In **London** you can find accommodation listings in *The London Metro*, *The Evening Standard* and the *Guardian*.

In **Birmingham** you can find accommodation listings in the *Birmingham Evening Mail*.

Will I have to pay a deposit or premium for accommodation?

There are two types of deposit that you may be asked to pay by a landlord or accommodation agency acting on your behalf. They are a holding deposit and a security deposit.

Holding deposits

You may be required to pay a holding deposit directly to a landlord or letting agency when you agree to rent a property but have not yet taken up the tenancy. This deposit will probably be deducted from the security deposit you pay when you move into the property. Before making any payment you should be sure you want to take up the tenancy, as a holding deposit cannot be returned unless you are unable to move in for reasons beyond your control. If you cannot get a holding deposit back (even though you have a good reason not to take up a tenancy) you should contact your nearest Irish Organisation or Citizens Advice Bureau for advice.

Security deposits

You will have to pay a security deposit to a landlord or letting agency acting on the landlords behalf as security against things like rent arrears and damage to the property.

If you are asked to pay a security deposit you should check the condition of the property and its contents carefully to make sure that when your tenancy ends you are not held responsible for anything which was already damaged, as you may lose some or all of your deposit.

When a tenancy ends your security deposit should be returned to you. It is reasonable for deductions to be made to cover damage to the property or furniture, missing items listed on the inventory, or outstanding rent you owe.

Since April 2007, if you pay a deposit to a private landlord or Letting Agency your landlord must place it in a tenancy deposit protection scheme. This means you can be sure that you will get your deposit back at the end of the tenancy as long as you are entitled to it. The scheme also provides a service to sort out any disagreements about the deposit between you and your landlord without going to court.

Are there schemes available to help me to pay for a deposit if I cannot afford to pay for it?

Yes, in some cases you can access the rent deposit guarantee schemes. Some local authorities, housing associations and charities do offer loans to pay a deposit of a month's rent on a private flat. The money is lent in advance and is then repaid by the tenant, possibly through Housing Benefit.

For more information on this scheme you can contact your nearest Irish organisation or Citizens Advice Bureau. You can also get details of rent deposit and guarantee schemes throughout the UK from the Crisis Smart move website at www.crisis.org.uk/nrdf/index.php

Note

If you have only just arrived in the UK or you have not been there very long you will probably not be eligible to access the rent deposit guarantee scheme.

Local Authority accommodation

If I leave my Council Accommodation in Ireland will I be able to get Council Accommodation in the UK?

If you leave your Local Authority housing here in Ireland you may find it very difficult to apply for Local Authority housing in the UK. The Local Authority in the UK may consider that you have made yourself 'intentionally homeless' and they are therefore under no obligation to provide you with accommodation. Each Local Authority will look at each case individually.

The Local Authority may also refuse to accept responsibility if they feel that you have no connection with the area where you are looking for help with housing. You would usually be expected to live, work or have family links in an area to be considered to have a local connection. In this situation you may be referred to an area where you do have a connection.

What should I do if I want to apply for Local Authority housing in the UK?

If you are looking for Local Authority accommodation you should first check whether you qualify. If you have just arrived in the UK from Ireland the chances are that you will not qualify for housing.

However, the rules on who can qualify for Local Authority housing are complicated, especially if you have just arrived in the UK. For more information on this you should contact your nearest Irish Organisation or Citizens Advice Bureau.

How do I register with the Local Authority in the UK?

You will need to contact the Local Authority responsible for housing in the area you are living in the UK. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Irish organisation will be able to give you the contact details for your Local Authority

When you find the contact details for your Local Authority, you should contact them and ask them for a housing application form. You must complete an application form and return it to your Local Authority including all documents you may be requested to provide with your application. Most local authorities in the UK have a housing register or waiting list of people who have applied for Local Authority accommodation.

The local authorities in the UK use different criteria to give priority to applicants on their waiting lists. How priorities are decided and allocated can vary from one Local Authority to another but the common factors taken into account will be:

- Ill health which may be made worse by housing conditions
- No facilities or shared use of some facilities, for example a bathroom or toilet
- Overcrowding - Not enough bedrooms for the size of your family

- The length of time you have lived in the area
- Your age
- The length of time you are on the waiting list
- Separation from your family (including family overseas) because of inadequate accommodation
- Homelessness.

If you are accepted on a Local Authority waiting list you may have to wait a long time before you are offered accommodation.

Your Local Authority may be able to give you an idea of how long you will have to wait.

You should make sure that you keep the Local Authority informed of any changes likely to affect your application, for example, changes in the numbers and/or ages of your children. You may also have to renew your application regularly.

If you are offered accommodation it may be accommodation owned by the Local Authority, or by a housing association. You will only be able to turn the offer down if it is unsuitable for your needs, for example, if you have a disability and the accommodation, for example, has no lift. There is a limit to the number of offers a Local Authority will make. You should ask your Local Authority for more information on this.

Housing Associations

Housing Associations in the UK are 'not-for-profit' organisations that provide housing for rent. Some housing associations provide housing for certain types of people, for example, single parents or people with disabilities. Others provide general housing in the same way as a Local Authority.

To access Housing Association accommodation in the UK in most cases the housing association will require you to be nominated by the Local Authority, which means that you will need to apply to go on the Local Authority waiting list and ask to be nominated for Housing Association accommodation. Where a Housing Association does not insist on this, it may require that you be nominated by a local agency, for example, an advice agency or the Social Services Department.

There are a small number of Housing Associations that will accept direct applications. The selection criteria of each Housing Association uses for selecting tenants will vary.

In some areas the Housing Associations and Local Authority have joint waiting lists. This means you can register with the Local Authority and housing associations on the same form.

For more information on Local Authority and housing association accommodation in the UK, contact your nearest Irish Organisation or Citizens Advice Bureau in the UK.

Homeless accommodation

What can I do if I am homeless?

If you are homeless you should contact your nearest Irish organisation or Citizens Advice Bureau (see **Chapter 13 - Useful Contacts**) for information. If you travel at the weekend these organisations are not open and if you find yourself homeless you should contact your nearest Local Authority Housing section.

You may be considered '**intentionally homeless**' if you give up accommodation in Ireland and move to the UK. If the Local Authority considers you are 'intentionally homeless' or if you have no connection with the area you are in, they may refuse to accept responsibility to find you accommodation.

You will be considered to be in 'priority need' for housing if you are homeless and you:

- Are pregnant
- Have dependent children under 16 years of age or under 19 years of age if they are in full-time education
- Are homeless because of an emergency such as a flood or a fire
- Are 16 or 17 years of age.

You may also be in priority need if you fall into one of the following groups (in some cases you may have to show that your situation has made you vulnerable):

- You are elderly or have a physical or mental illness or disability
- You are over 18 years of age and have been in care
- You are at risk of domestic violence, racial violence or other threats of violence
- You are homeless after leaving hospital, prison or the armed forces.

Are there any other schemes available for young people?

Yes there is a scheme called The Foyer scheme for young people. Foyers provide temporary hostel accommodation for young people, mostly aged 16-25 who are homeless or in housing need. As a Foyer resident you may also be offered guidance, support, access to learning and help with finding work. The average length of stay in a foyer is between 9 and 12 months.

If you want to stay in a foyer you can contact the nearest one to you and ask for an interview, or you can ask another agency such as your local housing authority, probation service or care home to refer you.

Some Foyers will only accept young people who have been referred by their local housing authority.

To find details of your nearest foyer contact:

The Foyer Federation

3rd Floor

5-9 Hatton Wall

London EC1N 8HX

Telephone: 00 44 (0) 20 7430 2212

Website: www.foyer.net

Further information on homeless services in the UK

For more information on Irish Organisations, Citizens Advice Bureau's and Homeless Services please see **Chapter 13 - Useful Contacts**.

Important note

It is very difficult to access Homeless Services in the UK if you are newly arrived as hostels are almost always full and you must be eligible for Housing Benefit and you must have a National Insurance Number. Also in most areas you will have to be resident in the area for at least 6 months before you can access homeless services.

Important information

If you have an addiction problem or if you plan to get on a drug treatment programme or detox programme in the UK please be advised that you need to plan carefully. Please contact Crosscare Migrant Project for assistance. Some people go to the UK with this intention but they do not plan or prepare properly and some people end up homeless.

