Who is helping me with my housing needs?

Three teams. Three different jobs. One joined-up service.

Lichfield District Council

You may speak to more than one of our teams during your housing and homelessness journey.

Each team has a different legal role and must make the decisions it is responsible for. Our teams work together and will help you reach the right service.

Our tenancy sustainment team

We help you try to stay in the home you already have.

lichfielddc.gov.uk/tenancyhelp

Our tenancy sustainment team will try to help you stay in the home you already have.

As part of this we will:

- understand what is putting your home at risk.
- look at your income, bills, debts, and essential spending.
- check whether you could claim benefits or other income you do not currently receive.
- explore practical ways to make your tenancy or housing costs more manageable.
- make a referral for specialist financial advice and additional support.
- work with you and other services to try to prevent you from losing your home.

Why might our tenancy sustainment team ask you about your finances?

Your tenancy sustainment officer may work with you on a financial assessment to understand your situation and identify benefits, income or other support that could help you keep your home. The assessment is not about judging how you spend your money or deciding whether you are homeless due to financial reasons.

Extra help from CASES

We also work in partnership with Citizens Advice South-East Staffordshire (CASES). With your agreement, your tenancy sustainment officer may refer you to CASES for specialist support. This can include help with debt, budgeting, income maximisation and dealing with creditors, which could help you keep your home.

What our tenancy sustainment officers cannot decide

If staying in your home is not possible, you may be referred to our housing options team for a homelessness assessment. Our tenancy sustainment officers cannot decide whether you are legally homeless or what homelessness duty the council owes you.

Our housing options team

We help if you may lose your home or have nowhere suitable to live. **This includes being at risk of losing your home within 56 days.**

lichfielddc.gov.uk/homeless

Our housing options team is the only team that can determine if the council owes you a homelessness duty.

As part of this we will:

- assess your circumstances and current accommodation.
- make further enquiries and ask for evidence where needed - we may carry out a further financial assessment if your financial situation is linked to your homelessness.
- decide whether you meet the legal homelessness tests.
- agree a **Personalised Housing Plan** with you, where required.
- work with you to prevent or relieve your homelessness.
- decide whether the council has a duty to provide interim, or temporary accommodation.

All officers review all information on file before asking for further information. *To assess your homelessness application, we will need a lot of information from you. We are sorry if we ask for the same or similar information as our tenancy sustainment or housing register teams have already requested.* ***If we ask for anything extra,*** *it is because we need it to make a legal decision on your homelessness application.*

Read our 'what to expect when you register as homeless' leaflet to find out more.

A homelessness decision is a legal decision

Our housing options officers must look at the tests set out in homelessness law.

Depending on your circumstances, this can include whether you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, eligible for assistance, in priority need, intentionally homeless and whether you have a local connection. These factors will impact the decision we make in relation to your homelessness application.

What our housing options officers cannot decide

Whilst your housing options officer may help you to apply to the register, they do not decide whether you will qualify for the housing register or what priority you receive under the council's housing allocations scheme.

The housing register has its own eligibility and priority rules and is separate from the homelessness application process. Making a homelessness application does not automatically place you on the housing register or give you a particular priority.

Our housing register team

We assess whether you can join the Housing Register and your priority for social housing.

lichfielddc.gov.uk/housingregister

Our housing register team makes decisions under the council's housing allocations scheme.

As part of this we will:

- assess your application to join the Housing Register.
- ask for the information and evidence needed.
- decide whether you qualify to join the register.
- assess your housing priority under the allocations scheme.
- explain your banding and what happens next.
- update your application when your circumstances change.

What our housing register officers cannot decide

Housing-register officers cannot decide whether you are legally homeless or what homelessness duty the council owes you.

If you may be homeless or at risk, they can help you reach Housing Options. The homelessness decision must be made by that team.

Easy guide to who does what?

Tenancy Sustainment Team: Can we help you keep the home you already have?

Housing Options Team: Are you homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and what help must we provide under homelessness law?

Housing Register Team: Do you qualify for the housing register, and what priority should your application have?

How we work together to help you

You do not have to work out the right team to speak to on your own - whichever team you first speak to will help you reach the correct service and may help you complete an application or referral.

The team helping you may not be the team responsible for deciding your application. Another team may ask you for similar information so that we can make the right decisions about the help and support you need. This is not to make things difficult for you. Our tenancy sustainment team helps you explore every realistic opportunity to keep your home. Our housing options officers make homelessness decisions. Our housing register officers make housing register decisions.