

Dover District Council

# Housing Options

Information Guide



August 2024

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# Introduction

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## **The demand for social housing in the Dover district is far greater than the available supply.**

Kent Home Choice advertises social-rented properties owned by the Council and Housing Associations to applicants on its housing register. It uses a banding system to identify those in the greatest housing need according to their housing circumstances. Band A applicants having the highest priority and band E the lowest. Applicants are then prioritised in date and band order.

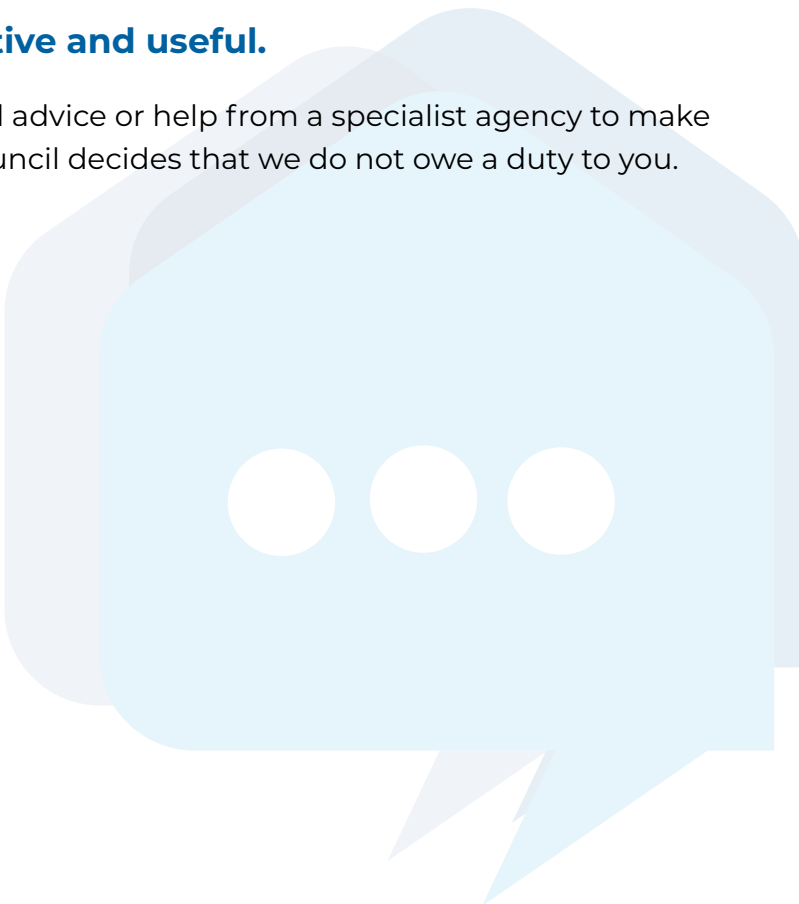
There are more than 3000 applicants on the housing register. Each year, approximately 300 social-rented homes become available to let. This means that only one in seven applicants are ever likely to be re-housed by the Council or a Housing Association.

## **What is the purpose of this housing options guide?**

This information guide will help you make informed decisions about your future options for housing, as it is your responsibility to find a home. We will support you through the process.

## **We hope you will find it informative and useful.**

You may need to seek independent legal advice or help from a specialist agency to make representations on your behalf if this Council decides that we do not owe a duty to you.



# Notices & Tenancies

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## Assured Shorthold Tenancies

After the fixed term ends, your tenancy continues and is then known as a periodic tenancy, and you still have the same rights. Your landlord may ask you to sign a new fixed term tenancy at the end of the fixed term.

However, if your landlord wants to end your tenancy, they must follow the correct procedure and give you a valid Section 21 or a Section 8 notice.

## When can a Section 21 notice be given?

If your AST started or was renewed on or after 1 October 2015 your landlord must wait at least 4 months from the start of your original tenancy before giving you a Section 21 notice. Otherwise your landlord can give you a Section 21 notice at any time.

If you have a fixed-term tenancy, the landlord cannot apply to the court for a possession order until the fixed term expires, unless there is a clause in the tenancy agreement enabling them to bring the fixed term to an end early (this is known as a 'break clause').

## Section 21: what does it look like?

### The notice must:

- Be in writing
- Include your correct name and address
- Not expire for at least two months or before the fixed term ends, unless there is a saving clause
- Signed and correctly dated.
- Form 6A must be used.

### And if you have a periodic tenancy it must also:

- Expire on the last day of a period of your tenancy (usually the day before your rent is due)
- State that possession is required under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988
- Not be acted upon until you have passed the initial 6 months of a tenancy.

## When the notice expires:

**You do not have to leave** when the notice period ends. If you stay after the notice ends your landlord must apply to the court for a possession order. Evicting you without a court order is illegal.

## When your landlord can apply to court

**After giving you a Section 21 notice your landlord can apply to the court for a possession order when:**

- Any fixed-term agreement you have has ended – unless there is a break clause in your agreement that allows your landlord to do this earlier, and
- The notice period in the Section 21 notice has expired
- If your AST started or was renewed on or after 1 October 2015 your landlord must start court action within 6 months of the date you received the Section 21 notice. If they leave it any longer your landlord must issue you another Section 21 notice.

## Section 21: Restrictions

There are some rules about when your landlord's Section 21 notice will not be valid. If it's not valid the court will not make an order to evict you.

## Breaking the tenancy deposit rules

**Your landlord must protect any tenancy deposit you pay. A section 21 notice given to you won't be valid if:**

- Your deposit hasn't been protected in a government- backed deposit protection scheme (DPS)
- Your deposit was protected but more than 30 days after you paid it
- The landlord hasn't given you the required information about the DPS used.

The '30-day' rule does not apply if your original fixed-term tenancy has ended and/or your tenancy agreement has been renewed.

As long as your deposit was protected any time before your original tenancy ended your landlord can use a Section 21 notice. If your landlord protected your deposit on time, they can issue a Section 21 notice any time after they provide the required information about the DPS used.

Your landlord must return your deposit before they can issue you a valid Section 21 notice if they didn't protect your deposit correctly in the DPS.

## No licence where one is needed

Most landlords don't need a licence to rent out a property. If a landlord doesn't have a licence (and is required to have one) they cannot issue a Section 21 notice.

### Your landlord may need a licence if:

- You live in a house in multiple occupation (HMO). Examples are houses with bedsits or bed and breakfast
- Your council requires private landlords to be licensed in some or all of its area.

Check with your Council if your landlord should have a licence.

## Retaliatory eviction if you ask for repairs

This rule only applies if your tenancy started or was renewed on or after 1 October 2015.

A retaliatory eviction is when a landlord tries to evict you after you ask for repairs or complain about conditions in your home.

### A Section 21 notice won't be valid if all of the following apply:

- It was given to you after you wrote to your landlord about repair problems
- Your landlord didn't deal with the issues
- You reported the problem to the Council
- The Council served your landlord with an improvement notice or a notice that they would do emergency works.

A Section 21 notice also won't be valid if it's given to you within six months of the Council serving your landlord with an improvement notice or a notice saying the Council will do emergency repairs.

## Information is not given

### These rules only apply if your tenancy started or was renewed on or after 1 October 2015. A Section 21 notice won't be valid if your landlord hasn't given you a copy of:

- An energy performance certificate (EPC) for your property
- A current gas safety record showing that gas safety checks have been carried out
- The government guide 'How to rent: the checklist for renting in England'.
- If your landlord has given you a replacement tenancy since your original tenancy started on or after 1 October 2015, then your landlord must also give you the latest version.

## What will happen at court?

Many landlords apply for a court order to evict tenants without the need for a court hearing. This is called the Accelerated Possession procedure.

You will always be sent a defence form by the court. Complete and return this within 14 days of receiving it if you don't think your landlord is entitled to evict you.

Provided the notice was valid and has expired, the court will have no choice but to issue a Possession Order. The Possession Order will give you a new notice period, normally 14 days.

Additionally you can ask the court for up to another 6 weeks notice if you can evidence to the court that without this you would suffer exceptional hardship.

## When my Possession Order expires

If the court makes an order for possession and you do not leave on the date in the order, your landlord must apply again to the court for a warrant for a bailiff to evict you. Get advice if your landlord tries to evict you without using a court bailiff.

## Assured Tenancies

If you are a Housing Association tenant and have completed your first 12 month 'starter' tenancy and have not been set to a 'demoted' tenancy, you will be an assured tenant. You will be entitled to a Notice Seeking Possession to begin possession action against you. You can only be evicted if your landlord can prove a reason (or 'ground') to the court.

## Notice Seeking Possession / Section 8 Notice

This notice will set out the grounds that the landlord is seeking possession of the property from you, specifically the way in which you have breached your tenancy. This is very different from a Section 21 which does not require a private landlord to have a 'ground' or stated reason to regain their property.

Firstly, the landlord must give you a written Notice Seeking Possession. The length of time on the notice can be either 14 days or two months, depending on the reasons for the eviction. Where warranted, the notice can be immediate.

The reasons for possession are split into two groups, known as mandatory grounds and discretionary grounds.

## Mandatory grounds

If your landlord proves a mandatory ground for possession, the court has no choice but to grant a Possession Order.

## Discretionary grounds

If your landlord is using discretionary grounds for possession, the court can only grant a Possession Order if the landlord proves the ground and it is reasonable to do so.

If you have been served this type of notice, seek independent legal advice from Shelter or Citizen's Advice as you may be able to create a defence and suspend possession action.

After the notice has expired, your landlord will apply to court for a hearing. You will receive a letter from the court advising of the date and time of the hearing.

**The outcome of the hearing will be one of the following dependant on the type of ground used:**

- The landlord's case is dismissed
- The hearing is adjourned. This is normally the case to give you time to resolve any minor issues, such as problems with benefits
- The judge grants a Suspended/Postponed Possession Order. This means as long as you stick to the terms issued by the court, you will not be evicted. It is a last chance
- The judge grants an Outright Possession Order. This means that eviction is only a few weeks away. If you receive a Possession Order you must seek urgent housing advice.



# Are you at risk of homelessness?

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**If you are homeless, or you are worried about becoming homeless, you will need to call our Housing Options Team on 01304 872265.**

Our phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

We will ask you details about your situation and we will invite you to attend an interview with a member of our team.

You can often avoid becoming homeless if you act quickly and get the right help. You can also get advice if you have a home that you may not be able to live in or need support to stay there. We try to help people remain in their homes wherever possible, whether you are a social housing tenant, private tenant, homeowner or living with friends and family.

## Housing Options interview

You will be asked to give further details of your situation. Our first priority will be to give you advice to help you remain in your current home. If you cannot remain in your current home we will explain your options. A Personal Housing Plan will be created authorising actions to be taken by yourself and Dover Council. The length of the interview will take up to 1 hour.

We will need to gather information from you to make an assessment of your case and advise you on what assistance we can provide to help you resolve your current housing difficulties.

### **We will require the following:**

- Evidence of why you are homeless or about to become homeless
- Evidence of where you live
- Other evidence of your personal circumstances.

**Please be aware that emergency accommodation will only be offered if you have a “priority need” and if you are eligible for help and assistance.**

## What do I need to bring to the interview?

**To help us help you as quickly as possible, please bring as many of the following documents with you to your appointment:**

- Proof of eligibility (passport / birth certificate / share codes)
- Proof of your identity (for example your passport or birth certificate, national insurance card, proof of immigration status). We do not accept driving licences.
- Proof of your income (for example your benefit award letters and / or 3 months most recent payslips)
- Proof of your children's identity (birth certificates)
- Proof of any tenancies or licence agreements you may have or used to have and letters from your landlord/agent such as a Notice to Quit
- Proof of any illness or disability you may have (your medicines and letters from your G.P. or hospital doctor)
- Crime number or copies of relevant police reports (for example, if you are leaving home because of violence or harassment)
- Letter from parents/friends/relations saying you have to leave, repossession letter from mortgage lender, eviction documents from the court.

## What will be discussed during the interview?

If you are unable to remain in your home the options available will vary depending on your circumstances. There are over 3000 households on the Council's Housing Register waiting for a Council or Housing Association home and there are currently around 300 properties let each year.

You should not rely on the Housing Register to assist you with your accommodation. Other options may include staying with family or friends or a privately rented accommodation.

**Please note: Your interview will be terminated and your access to our services restricted if you are abusive to our staff.**

# Renting through an agent

**Most agents will charge upfront fees for referencing and credit checks. These fees are normally non-refundable.**

Agents will normally insist on at least one month's deposit and one month's rent in advance. (We may be able to assist).

Most agents will require a guarantor. You will need to speak to the agents to find out what their criteria for a guarantor is. For example, a home owner or someone that is in full time employment.

If a deposit is required, your landlord must put your deposit in a government-backed tenancy deposit protection scheme (TDPS) if you will be renting your home on an assured shorthold tenancy.

If you are looking to rent a property through an agent then we recommend that you speak to them in person rather than by phone if possible.

## **A selection of agents in the district**

<b>Bright &amp; Bright</b> – Victoria Road, Deal	01304 374071
<b>Bank House</b> – The Strand, Walmer	01304 366122
<b>Colebrook Sturrock &amp; Co</b> – Sandwich/Deal	01304 612197
<b>Jenkinson Estates</b> – Deal	01304 375141
<b>Kent Sales and Lettings</b>	01304 268101
<b>Geering &amp; Colyer</b> – King Street, Dover	01304 240183
<b>Godwin Curtis</b> – Canterbury	01227 780700
<b>GW Finn &amp; Son</b>	01304 614471
<b>John Youden &amp; Sons</b> – Dover	01304 201633
<b>Martin &amp; Co</b>	01303 212797
<b>Regal Estates</b> – Market Street, Sandwich	01304 611227
<b>Tersons</b> – Castle Street, Dover	01304 202173
<b>The Accommodation Shop</b> – Dover	01304 226666
<b>Sandersons UK</b> – Canterbury	01227 784784
<b>Ward &amp; Partners</b> – Deal & Dover	01304 214876
<b>Your Move</b> – Deal & Dover	01304 204923



# Finding privately rented accommodation

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**You may find a property via the websites below. A landlord not connected to an agent may not charge you credit and referencing fees.**

You may also find a landlord that will offer you a tenancy without a guarantor.

[www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk)

[www.gumtree.com](http://www.gumtree.com)

[www.spareroom.co.uk](http://www.spareroom.co.uk)

[www.easyroommate.com](http://www.easyroommate.com)

[www.openrent.co.uk](http://www.openrent.co.uk)

[www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/flats/dover/](http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/flats/dover/)

<https://app.dssmove.co.uk/>

[www.placebuzz.com](http://www.placebuzz.com)

[www.roomads.co.uk](http://www.roomads.co.uk)

[www.movingsoon.co.uk](http://www.movingsoon.co.uk)

[www.roomgo.co.uk](http://www.roomgo.co.uk)

## Facebook

If you are on Facebook then you may find a property advertised on the following pages.

- Property Lettings & Sales, Dover, Deal, Folkestone, Sandwich
- House/ flat rentals Deal/Dover surrounding area don't pay estate agent fees.

## Local newspapers

You may find a property advertised in a local newspaper. The Dover Express and the East Kent Mercury are published every Thursday.

## Shop windows

Some landlords still place advertisements in shop windows. You are most likely to find these in newsagents or supermarkets.

# The Council Housing Register

You can register for social housing at [www.kenthomechoice.org.uk](http://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk)

If your housing application is accepted and you have provided all the requested supporting information, you will be placed into a band and given a priority date. You will then be able to bid on vacant properties that are advertised. Most homeless applicants are placed into a band C.

For more information, please visit our website: [www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-Needs/Getting-a-Home/Getting-a-Home.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-Needs/Getting-a-Home/Getting-a-Home.aspx)

Please note that being rehoused via the housing register can be a lengthy process depending on your band and priority date.

The table below is intended to give you a rough idea of how long people have waited on the housing register. These figures show the numbers of each property type let for the period 01/01/2023 to 30/06/2023.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered accommodation	25	16 days	5 years	12 months
Studio general needs	2	4 years	4 years	4 years
1-bed general needs	37	8 weeks	1 years	20 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	60	7 weeks	14 years	17 months
2-bed house	36	7 weeks	5 years	17 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	2	11 months	21 months	16 months
3-bed house	43	10 weeks	7 years	28 months
4-bed	4	10 months	3 years	20 months
5-bed	1	10 years	10 years	10 years

## Housing Banding System

The banding scheme reflects the legal requirement set out in section 166A(3) of the Housing Act 1996 which requires that the allocations system gives “reasonable preference” for people in five groups:

- People who are homeless
- People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others) .

We may award ‘additional preference’ to those that fall within one or more of the above groups and have ‘urgent housing needs’. We may take into account a wide range of actions when considering whether to give an individual ‘additional preference’ or whether to give a lesser priority, but we must be able to explain the reasons for the decision.

**Additional preference will be given to a person who:**

- Is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service
- Formerly served in the regular forces
- Has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service
- Is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service.

## Band A – Urgent Housing Needs

**Applications from persons who meet the following criteria:**

### 1. Urgent medical or welfare needs

Where an urgent medical need has been agreed or a high priority referral has been accepted under the Kent Agency Assessment procedure.

### 2. Management transfer and reciprocal arrangements

Where the social landlord requires the tenant to move or the tenant needs to move due to violence, harassment, intimidation or threats of violence likely to be carried out, major works or other urgent management reason.

## Band B - Serious Housing Needs

Applications from people where none of the above in Band A applies but who meet the following criteria:

### 1. People occupying very overcrowded housing or otherwise living in very unsatisfactory housing conditions

Where a household is suffering from the following:

- Major overcrowding - lacking two or more bedrooms
- Living in supported housing and needs to move, as support is no longer required, following recommendation from a support worker
- Where a Category One hazard exists under the Housing Health and Safety Hazard Rating System, which cannot be resolved within a reasonable time, as advised by Private Sector Housing.

### 2. Social housing tenants who are under-occupying by two or more bedrooms.

### 3. Households occupying a significantly adapted property where that property is no longer required.

## Band C - reasonable preference

Applications from persons where none of the above in band A or band B applies but who meet the following criteria:

### 1. People who are homeless

- Where we have accepted a rehousing responsibility, or determined that the person does not have a priority need for accommodation, or the household will be homeless soon.

### 2. People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions:

- Living in insecure housing, for example on a licence agreement or non-secure tenancy, but excluded occupiers
- Lacking bathroom or kitchen
- Lacking inside WC
- Lacking cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or adequate heating
- Minor overcrowding – lacking one bedroom (see Appendix 6)
- Sharing living room, kitchen, bathroom/WC
- Property in disrepair, with a Category 1 hazard which can be resolved within a reasonable time
- Social housing tenants under-occupying by one bedroom

**3. People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.**

Where a significant medical need has been agreed or a priority referral has been accepted under the Kent Agency Assessment procedure.

**4. Mobility**

People who need to move to a particular locality in the district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others. For example, to give or receive care, or to take up employment.

## **Band D - General**

Applications from people where none of the above in band A, band B or band C applies, or:

**1. People who are adequately housed**

Where a household has a local connection and no means to purchase a property but their current accommodation meets their needs.

**2. People who are intentionally homeless, or who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances**

**3. People who are homeless by another local authority**

This applies where a duty is owed by another local authority, or who are occupying accommodation secured by another local authority

**4. Where band A, B or C applies but they have no local connection with the district**

**5. Where band A, B or C applies but they have the means to sustain either a mortgage or private rental.**

## **Band E - General Without Priority**

Applications from people where none of the above in band A, band B or C applies, and:

**1. They have no local connection with the district, and/or,**

**2. They have the means to sustain either a mortgage or private rental (see Assessment of Financial Resources).**

## **Contact Housing**

Tel: **01304 872265**

Website: [www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-Advice/Getting-a-Home/Banding-System.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-Advice/Getting-a-Home/Banding-System.aspx)

Email: [housing.enquiries@dover.gov.uk](mailto:housing.enquiries@dover.gov.uk)



# Universal Credit

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Universal Credit is one of the government's welfare reform changes.

Universal Credit has replaced the following benefits and tax credits and will be paid to you in a single monthly payment:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit.

Universal Credit has now been rolled out in Dover to all new claimants in the following postcodes - CT14, CT15, CT16, CT17, CT3 3 and CT13.

**This means that if you live in one of the above postcodes, you will not be able to make a new claim for Housing Benefit unless you:**

- Have reached State Pension age
- Have more than two children, unless you have received Universal Credit within the last six months
- Are in exempt accommodation (you will need to claim Universal Credit but you may also get some help from Dover District Council).

If you don't fall into one of these categories, you will need to make a claim for housing costs through Universal Credit.

If you do fall into one of these categories, you will need to complete a Housing Benefit claim form.

You can apply online at [www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit) or by calling 0800 3289 344. You can apply online in our offices where staff are available to help you with your application.

## Housing costs under Universal Credit

Your universal credit payment will include money to help with the cost of your rent or mortgage. You don't need to make a separate claim for help with housing costs but you must ensure you advise the officer who your landlord is (see our Universal Credit leaflet).

## Who gets help with housing costs

If you claim universal credit you get a single monthly payment into your bank account. The payment will include a housing costs element if you pay rent or a mortgage.

### Universal credit can help with the costs of:

- Rent if you're not in paid work or have a low income
- Mortgage interest if you're not in paid work.

If you live in a shared ownership property, the housing costs element could help with both rent and mortgage interest.

# Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit is a scheme to help people pay their rent, it is a benefit based on your financial and household situation.

You can find out more about Housing Benefit on our website: [www.dover.gov.uk/Benefits/Housing-Benefit/Home.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Benefits/Housing-Benefit/Home.aspx)

## Local Housing Allowance

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a way of working out Housing Benefit for private tenants.

If you are renting a property or room from a private landlord, the Local Housing Allowance is used to work out how much Housing Benefit you get.

The amount of Housing Benefit you get will depend on where you live and who lives with you. Benefit is based on the number of bedrooms you need and not how much the rent is.

Local Housing Allowance rates are set for different types of property in each area. The rates range from a single room in a shared house, up to properties with four bedrooms.

The rates that are set are the maximum amounts, the actual amount of entitlement will depend on your income, savings and circumstances.

Local Housing Allowance ensures that people with the same circumstances, living in the same area, will receive the same amount of benefit. You can choose your property, knowing how much rent we will use to work out your benefit, from the LHA rates set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

**Most properties within the Dover District Council (DDC) area will have the following maximum Local Housing Allowance rate:**

### DOVER DISTRICTS COUNCIL RATES FROM APRIL 2024

Number/type of rooms	Weekly amount	Monthly amount
Shared Accommodation	£99.30	£431.48
1 Bedroom	£117.37	£510.00
2 Bedroom	£159.95	£695.02
3 Bedroom	£199.07	£865.01
4 Bedroom	£276.16	£1199.98

Some rural properties are treated by the Valuation Office Agency as being in the Canterbury area. Some properties in the following areas may qualify for the Canterbury maximum rate of Local Housing Allowance:

- Ash
- Aylesham
- Goodnestone
- Preston
- Richborough
- Shatterling
- Staple
- Stourmouth
- Wingham
- Woodnesborough

You can check which LHA rate the property falls within as <https://lha-direct.gov.uk>.

#### CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL RATES FROM 1 APRIL 2024

Number/type of rooms	Weekly amount	Monthly amount
Shared Accommodation	£97.81	£423.84
1 Bedroom	£155.34	£673.14
2 Bedroom	£205.97	£892.53
3 Bedroom	£253.15	£1096.98
4 Bedroom	£302.63	£1311.40

#### THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL RATES FROM 1 APRIL 2024

Number/type of rooms	Weekly amount	Monthly amount
Shared Accommodation	£87.45	£378.95
1 Bedroom	£132.98	£576.25
2 Bedroom	£172.60	£747.93
3 Bedroom	£207.12	£897.52
4 Bedroom	£264.66	£1146.86

If you have any questions regarding Housing Benefit or the LHA rates then please see the contact details below:

Email: [revenues@dover.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@dover.gov.uk)

Phone: **01304 872199**

Website: [www.dover.gov.uk/Benefits/Housing-Benefit/Home.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Benefits/Housing-Benefit/Home.aspx)

## Advice for young people and single people under 35

If you are a young person wanting to live independently, our advice is to stop and think. Unless you have a reasonable income, can save enough money to cover a tenancy deposit, a month's rent in advance and can afford to pay the rent of a studio or one-bedroom flat without the help of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) payments, your options are very limited.

If you are single, under 35 and privately renting, the maximum LHA rate you may be entitled to will be limited to the shared room rates.

There are some exemptions to this rule. A useful factsheet can be found at [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk) titled 'Housing benefit for under 35s.'

If you are working, you could consider getting together with a group of working friends to share a privately rented property.

If three friends share the rent of a three-bedroom house, their individual rental responsibility could be much more affordable and council tax and utility bills can be shared.

Another suggestion is to ask your friends, family and colleagues if they have a spare room; this could provide an income for them as in many (but not all) circumstances a room can be let without the income from rent affecting household benefits.

**Please seek advice before leaving your present home.**



# Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

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## What are discretionary housing payments (DHPs)?

Discretionary housing payments (DHPs) are extra payments to help people pay their rent. We give DHPs to people receiving Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit who need more help with their housing costs. DHPs are paid in addition to your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement.

As discretionary housing payments are not payments of benefit, we are able to decide who to give this extra help to, and how much to give. The amount we can spend on discretionary housing payments is limited. Once this money has been used up we will not be able to give extra payments

## Who can apply for discretionary housing payments?

You can only apply for a DHP if you are currently entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit. There are no set circumstances, but you will need to prove that you are in need of further help. We can also accept an application from someone acting on your behalf, if it is reasonable to do so.

## Discretionary housing payments for help with rent deposits and rent in advance

You may be able to get a discretionary housing payment (DHP) to help meet rent in advance or a rent deposit. There are limited funds of DHP available so this type of award will only be made to those most in need.

You should only apply for a DHP for help with rent in advance or a rent deposit once you have found a property and the landlord or agent agrees that you can rent it. You should not commit to a tenancy until your DHP has been agreed.

If you are receiving Universal Credit but don't get the housing costs element, you won't be able to get a DHP to help with rent in advance or deposit. If you currently receive Housing Benefit and need help to move to somewhere more suitable, you may be able to get a DHP. You must complete a change of address form at the same time as making a DHP application. Without this we will not be able to award you a DHP. You will need to provide a letter from the new landlord detailing the address of the property, accommodation details, the amount of rent due and the amount of rent in advance and/or deposit required.

For further information or to download a copy of the application forms visit: [www.dover.gov.uk/Benefits/Discretionary-Housing-Payments/Discretionary-Payments.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Benefits/Discretionary-Housing-Payments/Discretionary-Payments.aspx)

## What are we unable to give discretionary housing payments for?

- Help with Council Tax
- Service charges not covered by Housing Benefit
- Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears
- If we take any amount from your Housing Benefit because your Jobseeker's Allowance has been sanctioned (has not been paid because you have broken the terms of your claim)
- When your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payments are suspended.

## How much could you get and for how long?

How much we can give you depends on your circumstances. We look at each case individually. Discretionary Housing Payments are normally paid on a temporary basis and can start and stop at any time during your claim. We cannot guarantee that you will definitely receive payment.

We cannot give you more than your total rent less amounts for services such as electricity or water. We will usually pay the discretionary housing payment with any Housing Benefit you get, although this is not a benefit payment.

## How we decide if you can have a discretionary housing payment

If you want to apply for a DHP you will need to fill in an application form. The form will allow you to write down the reasons why you think you need extra help. You will also need to fill in a form to show the money you have coming in and the money you spend. We can help you to complete the application form.

### We look at the following when we make a decision:

- Your income
- Your savings
- If anyone else in your house can help you
- If you have any loans or debts
- If you could manage your money better
- If you or anyone in your family is ill or disabled; and
- If you have tried to put the situation right.

We will ask you for a lot of information and may ask you to come and see us to discuss your claim in more detail. We will send you a letter telling you our decision and our reasons for that decision.

# Schemes for Single People only

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## Porchlight

### Referral Line 0300 365 7699

They help people who have nowhere to go and no-one to turn to. Some people are homeless, others are struggling to cope with the pressures in their lives and need support to keep on track.

Working across Kent and the South East, they help vulnerable and isolated people get support with their mental health, housing, education and employment. They provide young people and adults with the advice, guidance and skills to live independently in the future, play an active role in their local community and fulfil their potential.

## Fern Court, Porchlight

4 Leyburne Road, Dover, Kent CT16 1SN Tel: **01304 216 325** Fax: **01304 216 471**

Email: [ferncourt@ekc.org.uk](mailto:ferncourt@ekc.org.uk) Website: [www.porchlight.org.uk](http://www.porchlight.org.uk)

Fern Court offers supported accommodation. It has the facilities to accommodate 12 people for the duration of their tenancy or licence

- Each tenant has an individual bedroom with en-suite facilities, but kitchen facilities are shared
- An assigned key worker helps each tenant develop a support plan to address their housing and support needs
- Tenants have access to other appropriate support services

## Prospects, Porchlight

65 Douglas Road, Dover CT17 1BB. Tel: **01304 216 325**. Website: [www.porchlight.org.uk](http://www.porchlight.org.uk)

Support for single homeless people aged 18 plus, who are enduring mental illness. Their mission is to manage, develop and facilitate coherent, innovative responses to the problems suffered by homeless people and those with complex needs.

Their vision is to end the cycle of homelessness and social exclusion by providing accommodation and support services to single people.



Tenants pay a small personal contribution when in residence. People must be referred by their Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) or Social Worker, and will require:

- Porchlight referral form
- Mental Health Needs Assessment
- Mental Health Risk Assessment
- ADL Assessment
- Kent Agency Assessment

## St Martin's Emmaus

Archcliffe Fort, Archcliffe Road, Dover CT17 9EL Tel: **01304 204 550**

Email: [admin@stmartinsemmaus.co.uk](mailto:admin@stmartinsemmaus.co.uk)

St Martin's Emmaus offers homeless men and women:

- A home: all residents have a private room and shower room
- Work: St Martin's Emmaus does its best to preserve the environment, and as part of this ethos runs a re-cycling and recirculating business.
- The chance to rebuild their self-respect in a supportive, community environment.



# Domestic Abuse

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Domestic abuse can be physical, emotional, coercive behaviour, harassment or threats. It could be financial control, stalking, inappropriate sexual behaviour or shouting at you in front of the children.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse or know someone that needs help or advice please call the 24 hr National Centre for **Domestic Violence Helpline on 0844 804 4999 or 0800 970 2070.**

To find out more please call **01304 872165** or **07815 429755** or email [kayleigh.jones@dover.gov.uk](mailto:kayleigh.jones@dover.gov.uk).

[www.dover.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety/Crime-safety-advice/Domestic-abuse.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety/Crime-safety-advice/Domestic-abuse.aspx)

## Domestic abuse services

If you or your family are in immediate danger don't be afraid to call the police on 999. Otherwise please contact Kent Police on the non-emergency telephone number 101 or visit your local police station to speak with an officer in confidence.

Alternatively, you can contact the freephone **24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership with Women's Aid and Refuge on 0808 2000 247 or the Men's' Advice Line on 0808 801 0327.**

**Immediate danger call the Police on 999**

## Domestic abuse one stop shop

The one stop shop is held virtually and coordinated by Oasis Domestic Abuse services there is support for those experiencing domestic abuse. Free and confidential advice and information is available from different agencies.

These 5 '7 Minute Snippet' videos are easily accessible and can be watched in the time it takes for a quick cup of tea.

Signs of abuse: <https://youtu.be/uLI5jyc7c2c>

Safety Planning: <https://youtu.be/7P1NcZjE9h8>

Safe Enquiry: <https://youtu.be/SLZVPBPxohQ>

Support & Signposting: <https://youtu.be/cs5ri7B52go>

Understanding Risk: [https://youtu.be/\\_f4Bj7m2jPw](https://youtu.be/_f4Bj7m2jPw)

## Other support

- [www.oasisdbservice.org](http://www.oasisdbservice.org): 0800 917 9948 - Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (there is an answerphone outside of these hours)
- [www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk](http://www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk): 0808 168 9111 - 24 hour service
- [www.domesticviolenceuk.org](http://www.domesticviolenceuk.org) - 24 hour support
- [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk): National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 - 24 hour Freephone helpline
- [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk): Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327 - 24 hour Freephone helpline
- [www.risingsunkent.com](http://www.risingsunkent.com): Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Service: 01227 452852 - Monday to Friday 9am–4.30pm
- [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk): Freephone 0808 16 89 111 - Monday to Friday 8pm-8am and 24 hours on the weekend
- [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/gender-violence/domestic-violence-and-abuse](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/gender-violence/domestic-violence-and-abuse)
- [www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence)
- [www.childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/domestic-abuse](http://www.childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/domestic-abuse) - Legal steps that can be taken to protect a person and/or a child experiencing Domestic Abuse
- [www.desiblitiz.com/content/domestic-abuse-organisations-for-british-asian-women](http://www.desiblitiz.com/content/domestic-abuse-organisations-for-british-asian-women) - Support for Asian women experiencing Domestic Abuse
- [www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk) - National Honour Based Violence helpline
- [www.opoka.org.uk](http://www.opoka.org.uk) - Support for Polish women and children experiencing Domestic Abuse
- [www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net) - Work with Perpetrators and victims of Domestic Abuse
- [www.imkaan.org.uk](http://www.imkaan.org.uk) - Support for Black and Minoritised women experiencing Domestic Abuse
- [www.lawadv.org.uk/en](http://www.lawadv.org.uk/en) - Support for Latin - American women experiencing Domestic Abuse
- [www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk) - Supporting LGBT+ experiencing Domestic Abuse
- [www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk): Rights of Women
- [www.hiddenhurt.co.uk](http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk): Women who have moved to the UK and suffering from Domestic Abuse
- [www.Refuge.org.uk](http://www.Refuge.org.uk): Help for sufferers and information and advice for friends and family

# Additional help and advice

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## Ex Forces

### “One days service, a lifetime of support”

If you have served in the Forces you may be entitled to help by Soldiers, Sailors, Airman and Families Association (SSAFA).

**For more information call 0800 260 6767 or visit their website: [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)**

## Royal British Legion

Housing and homelessness help and advice for those that have served in the Forces. The Royal Legion serves anyone who has been paid 7 days or more including reserves.

They:

- Serve husbands, wives, children (under 17), under 21 year olds in further education, partners, reserves, army, navy, armed forces
- Provide grants for the essentials
- Help with completing statutory benefit forms
- Provide advocacy around homelessness
- Have 6 care homes – 4 with specialist dementia services
- Have team of advisers for debt advice – **0808 802 8080**
- Assist divorced people until they re-marry but children would continue to be supported even after marriage
- Have a veterans Gateway with a team of advisors available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **0808 802 1212**

## Kent Home Choice

The Kent Home Choice website has lots of useful links regarding housing. For example, you will be able to find information on sheltered housing schemes and help for ex-serviceman. The website is updated regularly with a wide range of information. [www.kenthomechoice.org.uk](http://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk)

## Shelter

Contact Shelter's free housing advice helpline on **0808 800 4444** (calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks) or visit their website: [www.England.shelter.org.uk/](http://www.England.shelter.org.uk/)

## Citizens Advice

Dover, Deal and District Citizens Advice are an independent local charity. They provide free information and advice to everyone who needs it.

You can contact them on **0808 278 7961** or visit their website: [www.doverdealadvice.co.uk](http://www.doverdealadvice.co.uk)

## Dover Outreach Centre - Snargate Street, Dover

The Sunrise Café is a community café supporting Dover's homeless, offering a warm meal, kindness and true community spirit.

You can contact them on **01304 448070**

## Dover Food Bank - Charlton Centre, Dover

This organisation provides the community of Dover with emergency food support.

## Emmaus Dover - Homelessness Charity - Archcliffe Fort

High quality furniture at low prices supporting Dover's homeless, providing a bed for the night, meaningful work and a sense of belonging.

Contact Emmaus on **01304 204550**

## Dover District Council website (Housing)

For further information on housing please visit our website: [www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Home.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Home.aspx)

## Storage Companies

### **A&S Storage**

The Storage Centre  
Menzies Road Whitfield Dover  
CT16 2HQ  
Tel: **01304 822 844**

### **Lok'n Store Storage**

White Cliffs Business Park  
Dover  
Kent  
CT16 3FJ  
Tel: **01304 827 353**

### **Easy Storage**

Tel: **0330 912 0125**  
Website: [www.easystorage.com/self-storage/dover](http://www.easystorage.com/self-storage/dover)

## Removal companies

### **Minters of Deal**

Ramsgate Road Sandwich  
Kent CT13 9LY  
Tel: **01304 615331**

### **Castles**

Deal Business Park South  
Tel: **01304 374876**

### **Ants On The Go**

Tel: **07719 184001**  
Email: [contactus@antsonthego.co.uk](mailto:contactus@antsonthego.co.uk)





# **Housing Options** Information Guide