Our Office is Open
Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm,
We are open during lunchtimes.

Information can on request be made available in Braille, on tape, in large print and in different languages (русский, 汉语, evsjv, Polski, ภาษาไทย).

For further information please telephone Housing on 01595 744360, or email housing@shetland.gov.uk.
Please look after this booklet.

It contains information that will be useful when speaking to your Housing Officer.

There are spaces in the booklet where you can note down any questions you may have for your Housing Officer.

Your name__________________________________________

Date of first application/interview    /    /

Your Housing Officer’s name____________________

Housing Officer’s number ☎____________________

This booklet is intended as a summary of your rights and responsibilities. It is not a precise statement of the law.

The Council is generally referred to as ‘we’ throughout this leaflet. Applicants are normally referred to as ‘you’.
Pre Interview Checklist

At the homeless interview you will be asked ask questions about your circumstances to help us make a decision in line with the homeless legislation.

You can bring along a friend or advisor to the interview. You must be happy for them to be aware of all aspects of your application.

If you need an interpreter or signer we can arrange this.

If you would prefer to be interviewed by someone of the same or opposite sex, we can arrange this.

The information you give at the interview should be accurate. It is an offence to make a statement that is false.

We may contact others (with your consent) to make enquiries that will help us make a decision on your application.

You will be asked to sign the application. This is your declaration that the information you have given is correct and gives us permission to contact others to find out more or to confirm circumstances.

The interview is confidential (except where there is an allegation or threat to the safety of others). SIC Housing has a responsibility to seek assistance from Social Work if there are allegations of sexual abuse or other child protection issues.

Other staff within Housing may check some of the information in your application to make sure the correct decisions are made.

If you need somewhere to stay while we are carrying out our investigations into your homeless application, we may offer you temporary accommodation.
Notes and questions...

Use this space to write down any questions you may want to ask your Housing Officer.

Pre Interview Checklist

Depending on your situation we will see if there is anything that can be done to prevent you from becoming homeless.

We will give you a decision in writing within 28 days. If you do not agree with the decision on your application, you have the right to appeal by requesting the decision be reviewed by a Senior Officer.

The interview can be continued at a later time if you are distressed. This will not delay you being offered any temporary accommodation, if this is appropriate in the circumstances.

Any changes to the information you give during the interview, should be notified to your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

We will arrange follow up interviews with you (and your representative) to review progress and/or refer you to other services.

We can provide you with a record of your interview on request.

Signature:__________________________________________

Date:____________________________________________
Preventing Homelessness/Housing Options

The SIC Housing Service is committed to preventing homelessness wherever possible.

We suggest you seek advice at an early stage—the earlier you seek help, the better chance we can take action to prevent you becoming homeless.

Your Housing Officer can work with you by exploring all of the housing options that are available to you, some of which you may not have considered.

We can help with advice and information and can also arrange mediation services or negotiate on your behalf.

Am I homeless?
You might be homeless if you are:
• Staying with friends
• Living in unsuitable accommodation
• Staying in a refuge, hostel or B&B
• At risk of violence or abuse.

How do I apply?
Go to SIC Housing and say that you want to make a homeless application.

What should I bring?
• Some form of ID
• Proof of income (benefit book or pay slip)
• National insurance number

What if the Council say I can’t apply?
This may be because you:
• Are an asylum seeker
• Have lived abroad
• Already have accommodation
• Previously made an application

What happens when I apply?
A Housing Officer will interview you. A friend or relative can be with you.

We will also ask questions about any health, support or particular needs you have.

These do not affect your homeless decision but can help us decide on any support needs you may have.

What is a ‘local connection’?
If you have family or if you have lived or worked here for a certain length of time.

‘Intentionally homeless’?
If you did something that meant you lost your home.

The council has to carry out these enquiries and may contact your family, friends or other agencies.

Nowhere to stay?
If you are homeless we may offer you somewhere to stay. This may be a room in a flat, hostel or B&B. This is temporary accommodation.

You can seek independent advice from:
Citizens Advice Bureau; Advocacy Shetland; Shelter.

If you are homeless and entitled to a permanent home you wait in temporary accommodation until a suitable home is available.

If you are not homeless we will offer you advice and information to help you find a home.

What happens when I apply?
Next the council will look into your situation to find out whether:
1. You are homeless
2. You are intentionally homeless
3. You have a local connection.

You might be homeless if you are:
• Staying with friends
• Living in unsuitable accommodation
• Staying in a refuge, hostel or B&B
• At risk of violence or abuse.
What is temporary accommodation?
Temporary accommodation is usually part-furnished, and can be a house, shared accommodation, bedsit, bed & breakfast or a chalet. We have temporary accommodation situated throughout Shetland and may provide you with temporary accommodation while:
- We look into your circumstances
- You look for a new home
- Your appeal is reassessed.

When can I expect a permanent home?
If you are in temporary accommodation and entitled to a settled home, you may have to wait some time as demand is high. For some sizes of houses and in some areas, you may wait longer.

Am I homeless?
Losing your home is very stressful. The SIC Housing Service can help, but the help we can give depends on your individual circumstances. Please remember that even if you think you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, our legal duties may mean we do not have to find you a home.

You may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 2 months if:
- You have no home in the UK or elsewhere in the world where you and your family can live.
- You have no rights to live where you are currently staying.
- The place where you are currently staying is unsuitable or unsafe.
- You have no accommodation; or you and your family have nowhere to stay together.
- You have accommodation but living there could lead to violence, or threats of violence from someone living with you or from someone you used to live with.
- It is a moveable home such as a caravan and you have nowhere to put it.
- Your house is overcrowded and affecting your health.
- You can’t gain entry to your home, e.g. because the landlord has changed the locks.
- It is not reasonable for you to stay in your house, e.g. because it is in a very poor condition.
What help is available?

The help we offer will depend on your individual circumstances:

- Firstly we will try to prevent your homelessness.
- If you are already homeless and cannot return to your accommodation, we will give you advice and help to find a new home.
- If you have nowhere to stay while we look into your situation we may provide you with temporary accommodation.
- We can advise or refer you to others for advice on legal, financial or other concerns you may have.

**Homeless Process**

 Interview  
↓  
(Temporary accommodation if needed)  
↓  
Investigation  
↓  
Decision → Appeal  
↓  
Advice and Assistance  
Temporary accommodation → Follow up interviews  
Outreach Support (if required)  
↓  
Permanent accommodation  
Outreach Support (if required)

What if I am homeless?

If we agree that we have a legal duty towards you under the homeless legislation, we will help you find a home, but the type of home we can offer you may not be what you expect.

We will give you the best service possible within our resources, but we only have a legal duty to provide a settled home for those who are accepted as homeless and unintentionally homeless.

A Senior Officer who has not been part of the first decision will deal with your review request. They will consider your request as either:

- If you provide new or additional information as part of your review request that would have changed the original decision, a full review is not appropriate and the original decision is updated.
- Review of the decision made. In this case no additional information is provided, but the decision is reviewed in line with the relevant legislation and policies.

The outcome of a review can be that the first decision is overturned (changed) or that it is upheld (not changed).

If a decision is changed, the Housing Officer may then make further investigations into your circumstances to assess the assistance you are entitled to.

If the decision is not changed, your application will continue as before.

Once your decision has been reviewed, there is no further review available. You should still advise the Housing Service of changes in your circumstances that may affect your situation.

You can seek independent advice from:

**Citizens Advice Bureau**,  
14 Market House, Lerwick, ☎ 01595 694696 or

**Advocacy Shetland**,  
14 Market House, Lerwick, ☎ 01595 743929

**Shelter Scotland**  
[www.scotland.shelter.org.uk](http://www.scotland.shelter.org.uk), ☎ 0808 800 4444
What if I disagree with the homeless decision?

Within 28 days we will make a formal decision on your homeless application. The decision letter tells you the decision the Housing Officer has made on your case, and what duties we have to assist you.

If you disagree with the decision we make, you have the right to appeal (within 21 days of our decision letter). The Council has a legal duty to reassess their decision if you submit a request for a review.

You can ask the Council to review the following decisions:

- The assessment decision and the Council’s duties to you;
- The decision to notify another local authority under the local connection criteria;
- The decision that any accommodation secured for you fulfils the Council’s duty to you.

You can ask for support through the appeals process from a friend, family member, advocate or independent advisor. For them to support you fully, you will need to make them aware of all aspects of your application.

A request for a review must be made in writing, and a form to help you to complete a review is included with your decision letter. The Housing Office can also provide you further forms if needed.

What will happen in my interview?

Anyone presenting as homeless can expect to have a confidential interview with a Housing Officer. The interview can take place in a private room at our offices at 6 North Ness or can be a meeting in another confidential environment.

Declaration

You will be asked to sign your application form. This is your declaration that the information you have given is correct and also gives SIC Housing permission to contact others* to confirm your circumstances.

Information given at the interview should be accurate. It is an offence to make a statement which is false.

If there are any changes to your circumstances whilst we are looking at your circumstances, you should advise your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

*Doctors, solicitors, building societies, the Home Office, landlords, friends/ family, other agencies.

Housing Support

SIC Housing can offer you support, assistance and advice to manage and maintain a home— budgeting; managing debts and applying for the right benefits and grants; advising or assisting settling into a new tenancy or with tenancy rights including disputes.
Notes and questions...

Use this space to write down any questions you may want to ask your Housing Officer.

You can view the Homelessness Code of Guidance produced by the Scottish Government at:


What will happen after my interview?

No matter what situation you are in, we have a legal duty to provide you with advice on waiting lists, procedures, housing options and any financial or legal options.

- If you are **homeless and not intentionally homeless** we will provide you with temporary accommodation until we can help you find a settled home. A settled home could be with the SIC, Hjaltland Housing Association or an assured tenancy in the private rented sector.

- If our decision is that **you are threatened with homelessness**, we will help you keep your current accommodation or help you find an alternative place to stay. If this is unsuccessful, we will provide you with temporary accommodation and advice and assistance.

- If our decision is that you are **not homeless**, we will advise you about any rights you may have to continue to live in the accommodation you have been living in.

- If our decision is that you are **intentionally homeless** we will provide you with temporary accommodation and advice and assistance for a reasonable period of time whilst we help you look for your own accommodation.

- If our decision is that you have **no local connection** with Shetland but with another local authority we may refer you back to that area.