

The Homelessness Reduction Act – what it means for you

The new Homelessness Reduction Act increases the requirements for Eden Housing Association (on behalf of Eden District Council) to help all eligible applicants – rather than just those with a ‘priority need’.

It builds upon previous Acts by requiring public authorities (such as the NHS) to notify Eden Housing Association (on behalf of the Council) if someone they’re working with is facing homelessness.

It adds two new duties:

- **Duty to take steps to prevent homelessness:** Eden District Council will have to help people at risk of losing suitable accommodation as soon as they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This means people should get help on receiving a valid notice from their landlord if they are struggling to find a letting, rather than being told to come back when they have a bailiff’s date.
- **Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness:** Eden District Council will have to help all those who are homeless to secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are ‘intentionally homeless’ or ‘priority need’. This should mean that all eligible households are offered help to find a home, rather than some people being turned away. It should also ensure that the true scale of homelessness is recorded.

If neither of the above steps work and the household becomes, or remains, homeless, then those in priority need retain their right to be rehoused, but non-priority households will not be entitled to further help.

The 2017 Homelessness Monitor shows that half (49%) of English councils, and virtually all (94%) London boroughs, report that helping homeless people to find a self-contained private rental is “very difficult” because of the combined effects of rising rents and welfare benefit restrictions, particularly frozen Local Housing Allowance rates. In addition to this almost two-thirds (64%) report difficulties in helping homeless people access social housing, with three-quarters of London boroughs describing this as “very difficult” because there is such a chronic shortage.

Within Cumbria, all of the Housing Association (social rented) properties are advertised via one scheme; Cumbria Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. The properties are advertised weekly and anyone facing homelessness will be supported by the Housing Options Team to register an application.

More information about Cumbria CBL scheme can be obtained at www.cumbriachoice.org.uk