

This Factsheet is about complaints about Homelessness. It should be read together with our general information leaflet about our service; and, if you have made a Housing Application to the Council or a Housing Association you should also read our factsheet on Housing Applications.

The Council has responsibility by law to provide help to certain people who are or may become homeless.

Only certain people (known as People in Priority Need) are entitled to emergency accommodation and help with their belongings. Examples are people with dependent children and people who are disabled.

The Council may have less responsibility if you are found to have caused your own homelessness ("intentionally homeless").

What the Ombudsman can do

He can look at whether the Council has:

- prevented you from making a homelessness application or has failed to recognise that you could be homeless e.g. your housing application says that you are overcrowded.
- failed to offer you emergency accommodation if you are in the group entitled to it e.g. you are pregnant.
- looked at your homelessness situation properly e.g. if you have been evicted has the Council contacted your former landlord to find out why.
- taken too long to reach a decision on your case e.g. it ought to reach a decision within 33 working days.
- failed to give you a written decision telling you: (i) if it will help you, (ii) if not why that is, (iii) about your rights to appeal.
- looked after your furniture and belongings e.g. arranged storage.
- failed to deal (or unreasonably delayed dealing) with your case properly.

What the Ombudsman cannot do

He cannot:

- force the Council to provide you with accommodation.
- overturn a properly made decision on your homelessness case.

Issues to bear in mind

The Council will normally only have a responsibility to those people who usually work or live in its area (called having a local connection). There are certain exceptions e.g. if you are fleeing violence.

Even those with no Priority Need are entitled to advice and assistance from the Council on their housing situation.

Further information

You may want to consider contacting the following organisations for advice:

Shelter Cymru which provides independent and free housing advice and support. You can contact them by phone on **0845 075 5005** or the internet at www.sheltercymru.org.uk.

Citizens Advice Cymru which provides independent and free advice and support on a range of problems (including homelessness). You can contact them via the internet at www.citizensadvice.org.uk (selecting the 'Wales' site page option) and entering your postcode for details on how to reach your nearest CAC advice office.

Cardiff Law Centre provides independent and free advice and support on a range of problems (including homelessness) for those living and working in the City and County of Cardiff only. You can contact them by phone on **029 20498117** or via the internet at www.lawcentres.org.uk. The Law Centres Federation also operates a Community Legal Advice helpline (which covers England and Wales) on **0845 345 4345** or via the internet at www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk.

Welsh Women's Aid which provides independent and free advice and support on a range of problems (including homelessness) for those who are fleeing domestic violence. You can contact them **0808 8010 800** or via the internet at www.welshwomensaid.org.uk

Your local **Assembly Member** may also be able to offer advice and assistance.

The Ombudsman is independent and impartial; he cannot order public bodies to do what he recommends – but, in practice, they almost always do. Examples of cases that the Ombudsman has looked at can be found on our website. Please see www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

If you are unsure whether the Ombudsman would be able to look into your complaint, please contact us:

- **phone** 0845 601 0987;
- **e-mail** ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk;
- **visit the website at** www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk;
- **write to:** The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

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