

Housing advice

Not having access to secure, stable housing that meets basic needs can put people's lives on hold: it affects their ability to work, stay in good health and to look after their family.¹

Housing problems can arise regardless of housing type and quickly escalate – from deteriorating landlord relationships, through to difficulties making payments.

Our knowledge of legal rights and local processes is vital, especially in helping de-escalate situations where someone might lose their home.

Local Citizens Advice in 2015/16:



255,000

clients



432,000

housing
problems

Managing accommodation that leads to poor living standards

There can be a damaging effect on people's lives and health when their accommodation doesn't meet adequate standards or their needs:² either because a landlord hasn't made repairs or a homeowner can't afford to.

1 in 6 privately rented homes are physically unsafe,³ and moving might be too costly an option for many.

With disputes, we inform tenants of their rights but also their responsibilities, such as continuing to pay their rent. We aim to bring about an informal resolution where possible, facilitating the right conversations with landlords. If this doesn't work, we help them get support from the local authority which enforces such issues. For homeowners, we help them consider their financial options.



2 in every 3

clients will have their
housing problem solved



Our biggest housing advice issue is private rental housing: **82,000** clients sought our help about this last year

¹ National outcomes and impact research, 2014.

² Shelter. (2006) *Chance of a lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives*.

³ Citizens Advice and New Policy Institute. (2015) *A nation of renters*.

Managing a situation where someone could be made homeless

Being made homeless has a devastating impact and the state often has to step in – either through local authority funded temporary accommodation or as social services – to an estimated cost of £24-30,000 per person.⁴ There are currently an increasing number of households turning to local authorities for assistance.

We assess whether threatened evictions or repossessions have a legal basis and if due process is being followed. Where action is due to arrears, we help manage these debts and prevent eviction, especially with social landlords.

44,800 people came to us last year with threatened homelessness⁵

We help clients assess their options, including any right to challenge. We also advise people how to minimise the risk of acting in a way that will harm their rehousing options. Our local understanding is vital as local authority housing allocation criteria varies.

4 Department for Communities and Local Government. (2012) *Evidence review of the costs of homelessness*.

5 18,500 clients came to us with actual homelessness.