



Information for private tenants and single homeless people

Irish people and Irish women in particular have for years relied on the private rented sector for housing. Today, Irish people depend upon this sector for housing more than many other ethnic minority groups. Yet this sector contains some of the worst housing in the country. And although it is now illegal for landlords to display signs in their accommodation stating 'No Irish, no Blacks', the problems that confronted Irish people in the 1940s and 50s are as prevalent today as ever. Disrepair, harassment and rocketing rents are widespread throughout London. It is now practically impossible to find decent affordable accommodation to rent and as cutbacks in housing services continue, it has become harder to challenge landlords with the support of the local authority. In this climate it becomes all the more important that we know our rights and work collectively to defend them.

This booklet is intended as a guide for single homeless people and private tenants. Even if you are not eligible for local authority housing, we strongly advise you to apply to be placed on the council's housing register. This may come in useful in case you ever need to prove that you have a local connection as a criteria for obtaining accommodation. It is also very important that policy makers recognise the extent of the housing crisis and the disproportionate numbers of Irish people who are affected by it.

Finding somewhere to live in London

If you haven't already got somewhere to live, the search for accommodation in a capital which has 64,500 single homeless people is not going to be an easy one. The following tips are worth remembering.

Be prepared

Irish women coming to London for the first time should try and arrange to stay with a friend or relative beforehand. Make sure that they have agreed to put you up before you set off. Check that they haven't moved or gone on holiday.

If this isn't possible, look for London flatshares and lodgings in the Irish papers. **Emigrant Advice, Dublin** (01 873 2844) give information on short-term hostel accommodation in London. **Women's Link** (020 7248 1200) publish lists of hostels who accept self referrals.

Failing that, there are emergency hostels and nightshelters in London, including refuges for women who are fleeing domestic violence and abuse. (*See Appendix.*)

Make sure you bring your full Birth certificate and other means of identification, eg. passport, cheque card, driving licence. The Department of Social Security (DSS) will not accept copies of Birth certificates or Baptismal certificates as valid identification. You will also need references and at least £500 to cover initial accommodation costs. It is best to arrive during weekdays when the DSS and housing advice agencies are open to the public.

Securing a safe temporary base for yourself will make the search for longer term accommodation a lot less stressful. It will also make it easier for you to make friends and contacts and hopefully find a place through word of mouth.

Consider all your options

The private rented sector can mean anything from living with a family and sharing meals, to having your own self contained flat with a tenancy agreement.

You might also want to consider housing associations, housing co-ops, short life housing and hostels, all of which may be safer and more suited to your needs. (*See pp16-17.*) A small number of schemes cater specifically for Irish people in mixed or women only houses. Others provide places for particular groups, eg. lesbians, women with disabilities, ex-offenders, women with alcohol/drug dependencies, mental health problems, or HIV/AIDS.

Advice Agencies

It is a good idea to contact Irish and general housing advice agencies as part of your search for housing. These provide a free and confidential service and they may be able to refer you to a housing association or hostel. (See p16.)

The local authority

You are also entitled to help from your local council. What help they give you will depend on your particular circumstances. To make a homelessness application you should go to the homeless person section (HPS). The council must then make enquiries into your situation and inform you in writing of its decision and what form the help will take.

Part VII of the Housing Act 96 places a legal responsibility on councils to provide accommodation for you if:



- you are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days
- you are eligible for assistance
- you are in 'priority need'
- you have not made yourself homeless 'intentionally', and
- you have a local connection with the council.

The legislation states that you are in priority need if one or more of the following apply:



- you are pregnant
- you have dependant children under 16, or under 19 if in full time education
- you have been made homeless by fire, flood, or other disaster
- you are vulnerable because of old age, poor mental health, have learning difficulties, a physical disability or for some other special reason.

Councils might also consider you to be in priority need, if you are:



- a woman in a violent relationship (even if you don't have children)
- a young woman who could be taken advantage of, sexually or financially
- a woman who is experiencing or threatened with racial/sexual harassment and abuse.

Even if you are not considered to be 'in priority', the council still has a duty to provide you with 'advice and assistance' to help you find your own accommodation.

This assistance is usually provided by local authority housing aid centres and varies from borough to borough. Some councils give out lists of letting agencies. Others give grants or loans to cover the cost of your rent deposit. A list of councils operating Rent Deposit schemes is included on pages 25-27.

It is best to contact an advice agency before approaching your local authority to find out how that council interprets its legal duties towards homeless people.

It is also worth reading the Irish Women's Housing Action Group (IWHAG) booklet '**What to do if you are Homeless**' and familiarising yourself with your rights under the Homelessness Legislation. This is obtainable from the London Irish Women's Centre (LIWC) and other Irish advice centres.

Social Services Department

Finally, if you are homeless and under 18, you can contact the council's social services Department for help.

The **Children Act 1989** places a duty on social services to assist or provide accommodation for children and 16 & 17 year olds "in need". The same duty applies to young people under 21 if they have been in care. They also have discretionary powers to assist 16–20 year olds, eg. those in full time education. If this applies to you and the HPS refuses to help, it is possible that the social services may have a legal duty to assist.

Where to look for housing

There are a number of ways you can look for accommodation to rent. Generally, the further you move out from Central London, the cheaper this accommodation will be.

1. Personal contacts

Ask friends if they know anybody who has a room to rent.

2. Newspapers and magazines

Many newspapers and magazines have sections advertising accommodation to let. Loot offer free advertising facilities.

Look for adverts in daily papers such as the *Evening Standard* and *Loot*. You can also try the weekly locals published in different areas of London.

Other weekly magazines and papers advertising accommodation include:

Time Out – Tuesdays

Irish Post / Irish World – Thursdays

Pink Paper (lesbians & gay men) – Thursdays

Midweek and *Girl About Town* – freely distributed

3. Flatshare lists

Capital Flatshare Service publish a list of flatshares every Wednesday at 5.00am, Capital Foyer, 30 Leicester Square, WC2H (Leicester Square Tube). The list is included in *Space* magazine which is published free with the *Guardian* on Thursdays. There are also local flatshare lists for people in specific areas. For example, **The Threshold Centres** in Wandsworth (020 8333 6947/8) and in Hammersmith (020 8749 2925) collate lists of local lettings on Tuesdays.

4. Shop windows and public buildings

Newsagent's shops frequently have window displays advertising accommodation, particularly in areas like Archway, Camden Town, Finsbury Park and Kilburn. You will also find adverts on notice boards in public buildings – in libraries, community centres, women's centres, churches, hospitals and colleges. It is worthwhile checking these boards regularly.

There are Women Only accommodation noticeboards at the **Silver Moon Bookshop**, 64–68 Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (020 7836 7906). There is a Lesbian and Gay Men accommodation noticeboard at **First Out Cafe**, St Giles High St, WC2 (020 7240 8042).

'DSS Welcome' notices mean the landlord is willing to rent property to people on benefits.

5. Estate Agents and Accommodation Agencies

Estate Agents keep lists of accommodation and sometimes have separate sections for private lettings.

Accommodation agencies are private businesses which landlords use to advertise flats and rooms. Some councils keep lists of local accommodation agencies. It is illegal for these agencies to charge for placing you on their register, but they can ask for a fee if they secure specific accommodation for you. Remember:



- **Never part with any money to an accommodation agency until you have accepted and signed for the accommodation which was offered to you through the agency.**
- **Ask for and keep all receipts for any money paid out. You will not be able to get any help from the DSS for accommodation agency charges.**
- **Always be careful about signing any Guarantor or other agreements with accommodation agencies. Get advice first.**

Discrimination problems

If you experience discrimination whilst applying for accommodation, you may have grounds for legal action.

It is illegal under the **Sex Discrimination Act 1975**, the **Race Relations Act 1976** and the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** for non-resident landlords to carry out discriminatory practices.

If you believe a landlord or letting agency has 'treated you less favourably' on grounds of disability or gender or because you are Irish, or a Traveller contact a law centre or the local council.

You can also complain to the **Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)** (020 7828 7022) or the **Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)** (0161 833 9244).

Councils can refuse to publicise accommodation agencies and to use landlords who are guilty of discriminatory practices.

Moving into accommodation: things to check

Once you're interested in a place, make sure you think carefully before accepting it. Even if you are desperate to take any accommodation, it is important that you know what you're letting yourself in for. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the landlord and agent.

The following checklist may come in handy when you are viewing accommodation:

1. Health and safety

Take a good look at the condition of your accommodation.



CHECK:

- Are there any essential repairs outstanding, eg. dampness, leaking roof?
- Do the gas, heating, lighting and plumbing appliances work?
- Would you be able to escape safely in the event of fire?
- Are the locks on the doors and windows secure?
- Will anybody else have access to the keys?
- Is public transport close by, particularly if you work late nights?

Under the **Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998** your landlord must service your gas appliances every year and keep a record of checks and works carried out. This record must be made available to both existing and new occupants.

Tell the landlord/agent if you want repairs and improvements made before or as soon as you move in and keep a record of your request.

2. Money

Always ask for and keep receipts on payments made to your landlord. If possible, use a cheque for deposits, rents and for all transactions.

Deposits

A deposit is meant to guarantee your landlord against any damage done to the property, or in case you leave without paying outstanding bills or rent. It is usually equivalent to four weeks rent.



CHECK:

- How much is the deposit? Can a lower one be negotiated?
- What is the deposit for? Get written details of this and the circumstances under which it can be withheld when you leave.

Rent

Most landlords ask for four weeks rent in advance of you moving in. If you are on Income Support, you may be able to get a Social Fund Crisis or Budget Loan for this from the DSS.



CHECK:

- How much is the rent?
- When is it payable?
- Will you get a rent book or receipts for each payment made?
Tenants paying rent weekly are legally entitled to have this.
- What does the rent include – eg. does it include service charges, gas, electric, water rates?
- How and when are these bills to be paid if they are not included in the rent?
- If you're sharing with others, how will bills be calculated and what happens in the event of someone not paying their share?
- If you are claiming housing benefit, will it cover the whole rent or is it subject to either single room rents or other restrictions?

3. Inventory

You will need to get an inventory or a list of the contents of the accommodation in order to re-claim your deposit when you leave. Before you sign this



CHECK:

- Is it correct?
- Is the furniture in good condition?

Ask your landlord to sign the list and keep it safe for when you move out.

If your landlord refuses to repay your deposit when you leave, get advice. You may be able to take action to get it back, eg. in the small claims court.

4. Contract with the landlord

Last but not least in importance, is the agreement you make with your landlord when you move into accommodation. When you accept accommodation you may be asked to sign a written tenancy or license agreement. Don't worry if you don't sign one of these. Verbal agreements are just as legally binding.



CHECK:

- Do you understand the agreement? If not, get advice before you sign anything.
- What is the landlord's name, address and telephone number?

If you are renting accommodation from a private landlord you will either be a tenant or a licensee. The most common types of agreement are listed below. You may find that none of them apply to you. Again, don't worry if this is the case. Just as there are many different types of living arrangements in the private rented sector, so are there many different types of agreements. The law is very complicated in this area and if you are unsure about your own agreement, it is best to get advice.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST) and Assured Tenancies(AT)

These agreements have been around since 15th January 1989. They usually exist if:



- you pay rent
- you have exclusive use of at least one room
- you do not share any of your accommodation with your landlord

AST and AT are charged at market rents for their accommodation.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST)

AST are the most common type of agreement in the private rented sector. They can be fixed term, eg, 6 months or for an indefinite period. i.e periodic. Since 28th February 1997 all tenancies are automatically AST unless your landlord has taken special steps to establish an assured tenancy. Tenancies agreed after 28/2/99 do not have to be for any minimum length of time.

Landlords of AST created after 28th February 1997 do not have to provide a written agreement. However if you are not given a written agreement you can ask your landlord for a written statement. You should apply for this in writing and the statement must include the following information:



- the date your tenancy started
- your rent
- the dates the rent is due
- any rent review arrangements
- details of how long the tenancy is for.

If your landlord fails to provide this information within 28 days of receiving your request s/he can be fined. Get advice if this happens.

Assured Shorthold Tenants have security of tenure for whatever period was agreed at the start of your tenancy. If you have a fixed term tenancy your landlord can *automatically* regain possession at the end of the fixed term provided that they follow the correct legal procedures. They must give you at least two months notice to leave and if you don't leave at the end of the notice period your landlord will have to obtain a Court Order if they want to evict you.

Once your Fixed Term expires you can continue to remain in the accommodation paying rent. The landlord can still obtain possession after the expiry period as long as they give you a valid two months notice. Again, if you ignore this notice, the landlord will have to obtain a Court Order to evict you.

Your landlord does not have an *automatic* right to possession during the fixed term. They would need special grounds to do this. Always seek advice if you are facing eviction. You may be able to challenge your landlord in court, particularly if the correct procedures have not been followed.

Assured Tenants (AT)

All AT agreements issued after February 1997 have to be in writing. These tenancies are the best agreement you can hope for these days. Assured tenancies can be for a

fixed term or for an indefinite period. If you have an assured tenancy you have the right to remain in your accommodation at the end of the initially agreed period. Your landlord has to apply to court if they want you to leave. So stay put if you receive a Notice of Seeking Possession and get help to defend yourself in court.

Tenants with a Resident Landlord

If you live in the same house as your landlord and the accommodation is the landlord's only or principle home, then you will most likely have a Resident Landlord and the type of agreement you will have will be a license. This includes living with family or friends.

Resident Landlords can usually charge whatever rent they like and the people living in their accommodation have limited security of tenure.

If you have a Resident Landlord and you moved in after 15 January 1989, your rights will depend on whether or not you share living space with your landlord.

If you *do not* share living space (eg. bathroom, kitchen) with your landlord or a member of the landlord's family, your landlord must give you a Notice to Quit if they want you to leave. When this runs out, your landlord must obtain a Possession Order from the Court.

If you *do* share living space with your landlord or a member of their family and the landlord wants you to leave, s/he does not have to give you a notice to quit. However, you should still be given reasonable notice before you have to leave, but this may be verbal and the landlord does not need to obtain a Court Order to get you out. Remember, any agreement you have may cover the type and length of notice required and is legally binding on the landlord.

If you are thinking of renting accommodation in the same house as your landlord, or are already doing so and are asked to leave, get advice. Your rights may be limited, but they are always worth defending.

General rules for all fixed term agreements

If you have a fixed term agreement, be it a tenancy or license and want to leave before the term expires, you will only be able to do so if your contract allows you to. If you ignore the contract, you risk losing your deposit and may be liable for rent. Get advice if you want to leave. It may be possible to negotiate a settlement with your landlord.

Other letting arrangements

It is not possible to cover every situation in this booklet. There are many different types of tenancy and license agreement, some of which are very complicated. For example:



- **You may have started living in the accommodation before 28th February 1997. If you were an AST or AT before 28/2/97 you have more rights than tenancies created after then.**
- **You may be a pre-15/1/89 Protected tenant.**
- **You may live in a hotel or hostel and receive meals and services.**
- **Your accommodation may be tied to your work, eg. nanny, pub worker.**

- **You may live in a Nursing Home or a College or University.**
- **you may be squatting.**

Whatever the case may be, it is important to check out your rights if you are unsure about your living arrangements.

And remember – always get advice if you are told to leave.

Some landlords may insist that you are not entitled to a court order when you are. If you leave accommodation in which you are legally entitled to remain, *you could jeopardise your eligibility for rehousing as a homeless person or your place on the Housing Register.*

Rights for new and existing occupiers

Repairs

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, S11 makes most landlords responsible for maintaining and repairing the fabric and structure of the building, eg. leaking roofs, broken toilets etc.

They are also supposed to keep installations such as heating and hot water in proper working order.

The tenancy agreement often sets out the rights and obligations of both landlord and tenant and may include procedures for getting work done.

Don't worry if you don't have a written agreement. The landlord's legal responsibility for repairs exists regardless.

Getting repairs done

If you need a repair done, tell your landlord or the person who collects the rent what is required.

Put your request in writing and keep a copy of the letter.

Your landlord is normally entitled to enter your accommodation to inspect or carry out repairs. However s/he should give you at least 24 hours written notice before doing so.

Repairs should be carried out at reasonable times and should not interfere with your peace and comfort.

If your landlord asks you to move out whilst repairs are carried out, get advice before signing anything.

You will need to be sure that any temporary accommodation offered is suitable and that you are not forfeiting your right to return to your original home.

If your landlord fails to do repairs

If your landlord will not repair your home, you can take action to force them to do so.

Before doing so, check your tenancy.

Repairs, especially those concerning your health and safety are of paramount importance.

If you are worried about your security of tenure or about landlord harassment, get advice first.

1. *Complaining to the council*

The **Housing and Public Health Acts** give local authorities responsibility for and extensive powers to tackle bad housing.

These powers have been strengthened under the **Environmental Protection Act, 1990**.

If you need help getting the landlord to do repairs, contact the Environmental Health Department. *Tell them if you don't want your landlord to know you have complained.*

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) are allowed to do spot checks on any properties in the Borough. They can serve Notices to make landlords carry out urgent and essential repairs, and to install basic amenities.

If landlords refuse to comply with council notices:



- **They can be taken to court and fined.**
- **The local authority can carry out the repairs and charge the landlord.**
- **In extremely bad cases the council can take over control of the house (if it is a multi-occupied house). They can also compulsorily purchase the property or close it down, in both cases taking responsibility for rehousing the tenants.**

In practice, councils vary enormously in the amount of assistance they are willing to give private tenants.

Cutbacks in public spending have meant that Environmental Health Departments are poorly staffed and many are reluctant to use the legal powers available.

So, you have to be persistent if you want the local authority's help.



- **Contact the council's Environmental Health Department by telephone, letter or by visit. Early morning is the best time to phone as officers go out on visits.**
- **Take careful note of the officer(s) dealing with your case.**

Get together with other tenants if you have similar problems. Campaigning collectively is much more effective than fighting on your own. Private Tenants Groups listed on page 23 can advise on how to organise a Tenants Association.

If the council fails to act or drags its feet, don't give up!



- **Ask your local councillors to help.**
- **Get a magistrate to make a complaint under section 606 Housing Act 85 Notice. This forces your council to at least inspect your home.**
- **Make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.**
- **Tell the local press about your housing problems.**

Whatever you decide to do, don't put up with bad housing.

2. *Taking Court action yourself*

You can also take your landlord to Court if necessary to force them to do repairs.

The County and Magistrates Courts can order landlords to do repairs and award damages to tenants.

Taking legal action yourself may be a last resort if the council are unhelpful.

It can also be an effective alternative to council intervention, particularly if you are eligible for legal aid and want quick results.

If you do decide on this course of action, get the support of a housing solicitor. S/he can advise on the most appropriate legislation to use and can seek Injunctions to get urgent repairs carried out.

Always make sure you check what costs are likely to be incurred before you proceed with legal action.

3. Doing the repairs yourself and withholding rent

You may in desperation consider carrying out the repairs yourself and withholding rent to cover the costs.

Get advice first before you take this kind of action. There are risks involved, particularly as rent arrears are one of the grounds for eviction.

Rent

Rents are astronomical in London. You can expect to pay from £60 per week for a room and from £120 per week for a one bedroomed flat.

Paying your rent regularly is important if you want to remain in your accommodation. But this can be difficult particularly if your landlord increases the rent and you're unsure of your rights.

What to do about rent increases

If your landlord wants to increase your rent, get advice. Your ability to fend off the increase will depend on the type of agreement you have and on how amenable the landlord is to negotiation.

Protected tenants (pre-15/1/89 tenants)

These have full security of tenure and can resist unlawful rent rises without fear of eviction. You can apply to the Rent Officer to have a fair rent registered. This will confirm your protected tenancy status and your rent will be set in line with other fair rents rather than market rents. Get advice first. A 'fair' rent may work out higher than what you are paying now.

- *To contact the Fair Rent Officer, ring your local council.*

Assured tenants (on or after 15/1/89)

These are usually charged market rents. You pay the rent agreed at the start of your tenancy. If your landlord wants to increase the rent, they will have to serve written notice on a special form.

In most cases, landlords cannot propose a new rent for at least a year. You can also refer the landlord's increase to the Rent Assessment Panel (RAP) if the proposed increase is too high. This will assess whether the rent is a 'fair' market rent, but again, get advice first, otherwise you might find that your rent goes up even more.

- *To contact the Rent Assessment Panel, ring 020 7436 3791.*

Assured Shorthold tenants (on or after 15/1/89)

AST are also charged at market rents. The rent you pay is the amount stated in your contract. If your landlord wants to increase the rent and serves you written notice of this, get advice.

You may be able to apply to the RAP, but since your landlord can regain possession on your home fairly easily, careful consideration is needed here.

Resident landlords and other lettings

Most occupiers of resident landlords can be charged whatever rent the landlord chooses. The rent payable is that agreed at the start of the letting.

Get advice if you live with a Resident Landlord or occupy another type of letting and your rent is increased. Your rights may be very limited, but it may be possible to negotiate directly with the landlord with the help of an experienced adviser.

Rent books and information for tenants

Weekly paying tenants have a legal right to a rent book which includes the name and address of the landlord.

If your landlord fails to provide this, get advice. S/he may be committing a criminal offence and you will need to check your security of tenure before considering what action to take.

The **Landlord & Tenant Act 1987, s48** entitles all tenants to receive an address from their landlord which is in England or Wales and to which legal notices can be sent. You have the right to withhold your rent until this information is made available, but you are still liable to pay it. Get advice before taking any action.

If you don't have a rent book, make sure you get a receipt every time you pay your rent and keep the receipts somewhere safe.

What to do if your landlord stops collecting the rent

If your landlord stops collecting your rent, you need to be on your guard. Some landlords do this deliberately so that their tenants fall into arrears and are then liable for eviction.



- **Make sure you hold on to your rent if it is not collected.**
- **Write to your landlord stating that you want to pay the rent and keep a copy of the letter.**
- **If you are in receipt of housing benefit, ask the council to keep the money until the landlord asks for it.**

These actions may be important if you are taken to Court at a later date for non payment of rent.

Help with paying the rent: Housing Benefit

If you are on a low income or in receipt of Income based Job Seekers Allowance/ Income Support or other benefits, you may be able to get help with paying your rent.

This is called housing benefit.

Housing benefit is paid by the local council. It covers your rent only. You cannot get any money for heating, hot water, lighting or fuel costs. Sometimes housing

benefit is restricted, so it will not cover all the rent. It will then be your responsibility to pay any shortfall.

For example, the council may reduce your housing benefit if they think that your accommodation is too expensive or too large for your needs. If you are severely disabled or have other special needs, you may be able to claim an "exceptional hardship addition" from the council.

If you are a single person under 25, your housing benefit will be restricted to the amount of rent payable on a single room in your area.

Full time students are not eligible to claim *any* housing benefit unless they are single parents, or have a disability. Neither are people who have over £16,000 or more in savings.

Part time students are entitled to claim housing benefit if they have a low income or are in receipt of benefits.

Finally, if you are responsible for paying council tax for your accommodation, you can apply for council tax benefit. This may be on the same form as your housing benefit application. Tenants of multi-occupied houses, whose landlords have responsibility for collecting the council tax will find that special rules apply. Get advice.

How to claim

To claim housing benefit, contact the housing benefit section at your local council. Ask for a housing benefit claim form.

Answer the questions on this form and return it to the housing benefits section with evidence of your accommodation costs, identification and income.

Get an advice agency to help you complete the form if necessary. The housing benefits section will want to see original documents to support your claim. Make sure you get a receipt for your form and for any documents handed in.

Don't delay in applying for housing benefit if you haven't got the evidence to hand or have difficulty completing the form.

As long as you send the completed form back within four weeks of receiving it, you can ask for your housing benefit to be backdated to when you first made contact with the council.

If you are making a new claim for Income-based Job Seekers Allowance/Income Support, tell the DSS that you want to claim housing benefit. The DSS should inform the council that you are getting Income-based Job Seekers Allowance/Income Support by sending the housing benefits section a stamped NHB1 form.

You will need to check that they have done this. If you think your NHB1 form hasn't been forwarded, get a copy of the form from the DSS and bring it along to the council yourself.

Make sure you also complete a housing benefit form and take it to the council housing benefits section. Again get a receipt for this and for any supporting documents handed in.

Delays

Don't be surprised if there are long delays in dealing with your claim. If you begin falling into arrears as a consequence, and are experiencing problems with your landlord, you can insist that the council makes you an interim payment.

If the council refuse to pay this, get advice.

Reviews

The council can refuse to pay sufficient housing benefit to cover your rent if they consider it to be 'high'.

If this causes you hardship, and especially if you are pregnant, over 60 or incapable of work, get advice immediately.



- **Ask the council to give you a written explanation for their decision.**
- **Ask for the decision to be reviewed by Senior Officers and Councillors.**
- **The same applies if the council refuses to backdate a late housing benefit claim and you have good cause for being late, eg. illness.**

No matter how offputting the bureaucracy may seem, if you think you are in the right, don't give up! Be prepared to challenge the system at all levels.

Harassment and unlawful eviction

The **Protection from Eviction Act 1977** makes it a criminal offence for a landlord to harass or illegally evict their tenants.

Harassment is any action taken by the landlord and/or someone acting on the landlords behalf which interferes with your peace and comfort and which is likely to make you want to leave your accommodation:

It can be obvious:



- **Interfering with the gas, water or electricity supply.**
- **Threatening or using physical violence to make you leave.**
- **Racial or sexual harassment, or harassment on grounds of sexuality.**

And it can be subtle:



- **Pressure to make you sign agreements which undermine your rights.**
- **Failure to collect your rent or to carry out repairs.**
- **Interfering with your mail and other possessions.**

Unlawful eviction is where a landlord or another person acting on the landlords behalf forces an occupier to leave without going through the court procedures.

To know whether your landlord has acted illegally, you will need to get advice and to check how much security of tenure you have.

It is a *criminal offence* for anyone to use harassment or physical violence to make you leave your home.

What to do if you are being harassed



- **Keep a diary of times, events, what was said and who witnessed it.**
- **Get a friend to stay with you as a witness if the harassment is occurring overnight.**

- Check if other people in the house are suffering harassment. It may be possible to set up a tenants association and to combat the harassment collectively.
- Put complaints of harassment to your landlord in writing and keep copies.
- Report all incidents to the council or an advice centre with a housing solicitor.
- If you are being harassed or illegally evicted outside office hours, contact the council's emergency service and report the matter to the Police. Make sure they log a report. You have a right to protection and Police records can be used in any further legal action.

Councils



- Many councils have Tenancy Relations Officers or Housing Aid Centres who can help you tackle these problems. (See list of HAC's on pages 25–27.)
- Councils can warn your landlords of the consequences of harassment.
- They can advise you of your rights to take civil action and to claim damages.
- They have powers to re-connect your gas or electricity.
- They can take out a criminal prosecution against your landlord.
- And if your landlord is found guilty, s/he can be fined or even jailed for up to two years.
- In cases of very serious harassment in multi-occupied properties, councils have the power to serve a Control Order and to take over the running of the house from the landlord.

Civil proceedings



- Law centres and solicitors can help you take out civil proceedings against your landlord.
- You can go to the county court and get an Injunction to force your landlord to stop the harassment and to let you back into your home.
- You can also get a court order to make the landlord re-connect your gas and electricity.
- Injunctions can be effective because your landlords can be sent to prison if they are not obeyed.
- The county court can also award damages for any loss or suffering you have experienced.

Racial/sexual harassment

If you experience racial or sexual harassment, regardless of whether your landlord is intending to evict you, you don't have to suffer in silence.

Ask the council's Harassment or Race and Equality Officers to help you take action.

Or contact one of the Irish Advice Agencies or Law Centres listed in the appendix. Ask them to refer your complaint to the local Race Equality Council or to the CRE/EOC as appropriate.

Other housing options

Some of the housing options listed below may be preferable to renting from a private landlord, but all rented accommodation involves risk.

The earlier information on tenancy agreements, rents, repairs, and so on still applies.

Always check before signing any agreements and get advice if you are unsure of your rights.

Hostels

There are a large number of hostels in London providing accommodation for unemployed and low paid people.

These are usually run by Charities and provide mainly temporary mixed or single sex accommodation.

Hostel accommodation varies, from large purpose built hostels with shared bedrooms to ordinary houses divided into single rooms with residents sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities.

Always check what you are being offered in accepting a hostel place and what costs are involved.

Many hostels only take particular groups of people. For example, students, people with special needs, alcohol related problems and so on. Information about the various hostels in London can be found in the 'Hostels Directory'.

Advice agencies sometimes have a copy of this.

You can apply to some yourself by ringing or writing in advance. For example, **St Louises**, 33 Medway Street, SW1 accept direct referrals from women between 18-25 years (0207 222 2071).

Or you can ask a Referral Agency such as **Shelter Line** (0808 800 4444) to put you forward for a hostel vacancy.

Some hostels provide emergency bedspaces for a few nights. Others provide accommodation for 3-6 months. Some will allow you to stay much longer, from 2-3 years with the possibility of move on permanent accommodation.

Facilities also vary in hostels. There are hostels with single and double rooms and others with dormitories in which six or more people are expected to sleep.

Housing Associations

These are non profit making organisations and they are run by voluntary management committee members.

They provide mostly shared accommodation for single people but some provide move on into permanent self contained housing.

Housing associations sometimes target special groups. For example, **CARA** and **INNISFREE** cater for Irish applicants and provide 'special needs', mixed and women only accommodation.

Most other housing associations in London have to give all their spare vacancies to the council. So you have to qualify for council housing before you can be nominated.

However some accept referrals from Irish and other advice agencies.

A small number accept direct referrals from individuals. (*See page 20.*)

For information about housing associations in your area, contact the council Housing Department or a local Advice Agency.

Short life housing

A few housing associations and co-ops provide short life housing. This type of accommodation is increasingly drying up in London.

Again these housing schemes will sometimes target particular groups; **AN TEACH** for example provide accommodation for young newly arrived Irish emigrants.

Short life housing is temporary and it is almost always in poor condition.

Help is given with structural repairs but you are normally expected to decorate and maintain the accommodation yourself.

Short life housing is unfurnished, although landlords can sometimes help you obtain free or low cost furniture. The DSS can also provide grants and loans.

The advantage of this type of accommodation is that it is cheap.

You pay a weekly fee as rent, but the accommodation is only temporary. Some Associations will help you find alternative move on accommodation, but there is no guarantee of this.

Housing Co-ops

Housing co-ops are set up by people who manage, and nearly always own, their own housing.

There are only a small number in existence, but it may be possible to find ones which suit your particular needs.

The advantage of co-op housing is that you have more control over your own home and have a say in setting rent levels etc.

However, you are also expected to contribute your time and energy to running the co-op and this can be difficult if you have other commitments.

Support for women who are interested in establishing their own co-ops can be obtained from **Solon Community Network: 020 7780 2220.**

Shared ownership schemes

Some housing associations run shared ownership schemes which are funded by the Department of Environment (DOE).

They assist people who want to own their own home but who cannot afford to buy it outright.

Shared ownership schemes enable you to buy a share of the property, while you pay rent on the remainder.

For details of housing associations who run these schemes, contact **The Housing Corporation: 020 7393 2000.**

Squatting

If in desperation you are considering squatting:



- **Don't do it alone.**
- **Don't just squat anywhere, check it out first.**
- **Contact the Advisory Service for Squatters. They can advise you of your rights and put you in contact with local squatters groups.**
- **Squatting in itself is not illegal, but you don't have many rights and you can be evicted very quickly.**
- **If you move into a squat, always make sure that the gas, electricity and water are securely connected.**
- **If possible, leave someone in the property at all times. Check who is calling before answering the door.**

Squatters can be evicted with or without a Court Order, depending on the circumstances. However you have some legal protection from being physically thrown out. It is a criminal offence for any landlord to use physical violence to make you leave.

Councils and housing associations frequently use the **Criminal Law Act 1977, S7** to evict squatters by issuing 'Protected Intending Occupier' (PIO) certificates to prospective tenants.

This enables them to bypass the Courts and to recover the properties quickly.

If you receive a PIO certificate, contact the ASS or Law Centre immediately. If it is genuine, you will have no alternative but to move out.

Squatters can claim Income Support and have some rights to essential services such as gas and electricity.

Advice and help with squatting can be obtained from **Advisory Service for Squatters: 020 7359 8814** (Mon–Thurs & Sunday 2–6pm).

Sleeping rough



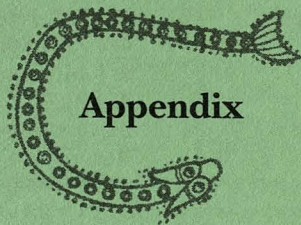
- **Never sleep rough.**
- **Always try and find an emergency hostel first.**

If, as a last resort, you have no choice but to sleep rough remember:



- **Never sleep directly on the ground.**
- **Keep your head covered; most body heat is lost through your head.**
- **Avoid being alone. You will be safer with a group of people.**
- **Drink and eat hot meals.**
- **There are day centres for homeless people throughout London. These provide laundry and washing facilities, health care, housing advice and so on.**

Some of these are listed in the Appendix.



Appendix

Housing advice and help with finding accommodation

TELEPHONE ADVICE LINES

The following give housing advice and information on hostel vacancies.

Shelterline

0808 800 4444 – freephone
24 hrs

Piccadilly Advice Centre

100 Shaftesbury Avenue,
London, W1V 7DH
Drop-in advice service open
Weekdays 5pm–8.30 pm
Weekends and bank holidays
10am–1.30pm

Refuge Domestic Violence Helpline

0990 995 443
For women experiencing domestic
violence
24 hrs

Women's Link Advice Line

020 7247 3380
Mon–Thurs 10am–1pm & 2–4pm.

*For local authority Homeless Persons Sections
– see IWHAG yellow booklet or telephone
directory.*



DIRECT ACCESS HOSTELS

Emergency hostels accept self referrals from single homeless people although a few will only accept agency referrals. If there is a vacancy and you fit their criteria, you can move in immediately. Length of stay generally varies in direct access accommodation from a few nights to a couple of months and even longer. **Shelterline** and **Piccadilly Advice Centre** keep details of hostel vacancies. Self referral hostels include the following.

Bridge Housing Association

020 7278 6466 – 24 hrs
4 Birkenhead St, WC1
For women 17–60
(Kings Cross Tube)

Centrepont Shelter

020 7287 9134 – 24 hrs
25 Berwick Street, W1
For men & women 16–21
(Tottenham Court Road Tube)

Riverpoint

020 8746 0091 – 24 hrs
160 Coningham Road,
W12 8BY
For men & women 16–60
(Shepherd's Bush Tube)

Providence Row – Dellow Centre
020 7375 3915 – 24 hrs
82 Wentworth Street, E1 7SA
For men & women 25–65
(Aldgate East Tube)



**DAY CENTRES FOR SINGLE
HOMELESS PEOPLE IN
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

These Centres provide services ranging from health care, housing advice and training to washing and laundry facilities. They also have women only drop-in facilities. Contact Shelterline for details of other Day Centre's in London.

Baron's Court Project
020 7603 5232

Drop In Centre,
69 Talgarth Road, W14 9DA
Men and women 16 yrs and over
Women only morning, Fri 10–12pm
(Baron's Court tube)

Cricklewood Homeless Concern
020 8208 1608

60 Ashford Road, NW2 6TU
Women and men 16 yrs and over
Women only drop-in with creche facilities. Tues 12–3pm
(Willesden Green tube)

London Connection
020 7766 5544

12 Adelaide Street, WC2N 4HW
Women and men 16–25 yrs
Women only drop-in, Mon 6–9pm
(Charing Cross tube)

New Horizon Youth Centre
020 7388 5580

68 Chalton Street, NW1 1JR
Women & Men 16–21yrs
Women Only sessions Friday pm's
(Euston tube/BR)

North Lambeth Day Centre
020 7261 9622
St John's Crypt, 73 Waterloo Road,
SE1 8UD
Men and women 16 yrs and over
Women only drop-in, Fri 1–3.30pm
(Waterloo tube)

Spectrum Centre
020 7267 4937

15 Parkway, NW1
Men and women 18 yrs and over
Women only drop-in, Tues 2–4pm
(Camden tube)



**DIRECT REFERRAL HOUSING
SCHEMES**

Some housing associations accept referrals from Irish and other advice agencies. A small number accept direct referrals from individuals for their waiting lists. These include:

An Teach

020 8365 1751
Haringey Irish Centre,
Pretoria Road,
N17 8DX
Short life housing for young single Irish, mostly in North London. Mixed, women only, lesbian and gay houses.
(For Irish men & women 18–31)

Eaves Housing Association
020 7735 2062

Lincoln House, 1/3 Brixton Road,
SW9 6DE
Medium term housing for single women with some support needs in North & South London.
(For women between 18–60)

Irish Centre Housing Limited

020 7485 8889

50/52 Camden Square,
NW1 9XB

Short stay hostel accommodation for young Irish people.

St Louises hostel 020 7222 2071 –

women 18–25

Conway house 020 7372 6633 –

men 18–26

Irish Women's Refuge

Solas Anois Irish Women's Domestic Violence Project

Direct referrals: 020 8664 6089

Refuge accommodation for Irish women who are experiencing domestic violence. Single women and women with children accepted. Advice and support with housing and resettlement, legal, health and welfare issues.

Counselling, childrens support service and employment training. Referrals can also be made through **Refuge Domestic Violence Helpline (0990 995 443)** and Irish agencies.



IRISH HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

The following accept referrals from Irish organisations and other advice agencies.

An Teach

(See above.)

CARA Irish Housing Association

020 8800 2744

339 Seven Sisters Road,
N15 6RD

Medium term & move on housing for single homeless Irish people with some support needs. Mixed & women only houses. Resettlement programme into permanent housing. Accommodation in North & South London.

(For Irish men & women 18 – 60)

Innisfree

020 7625 1818

190 Iverson Road,
NW6 2HL

Mainly general needs and sheltered housing for families & single people via nominations from local authorities.

Also accepts referrals from agencies for shared supported houses. Resettlement programme into permanent housing. Some short life. Accommodation mainly in North London.

(For Irish men & women over 18)

Irish Centre Housing Limited

(See above.)

Solas Anois

(See page 28.)



IRISH ADVICE AGENCIES

These are independent agencies offering a range of services for Irish people, including housing advice and help with finding accommodation. Some organisations have referral rights to Irish and mainstream housing associations.

Brent Irish Advisory Service

020 8459 6655

Willesden Green Library Centre,
95 High Road,
Willesden,
NW10 2ST

(Willesden Green tube)

Brent Irish Travellers Project

020 8868 6788

332 Rayners Lane,
Pinner,
Middsx
HA5 5ED

(Rayners Lane tube)

Cairde na nGael
020 8519 5457
57 Woodgrange Road,
Forest Gate,
Newham,
E7 OEL
(*Forest Gate BR*)

**Haringey Irish Cultural &
Community Centre**
020 8365 1125
Pretoria Road,
Tottenham,
N17 8DX
(*White Hart Lane BR*)

Haringey Irish Community Care Centre
020 7272 7594
72 Stroud Green Road,
Haringey,
N4 3ER
(*Finsbury Park Tube*)

Irish Chaplaincy in Britain
020 7482 5528
50/52 Camden Square,
NW1 9XB
(*Camden Town Tube*)

Irish Families Service
020 7928 7800
c/o South London FSU
21 Frazier Street,
SE1 7BG
(*Waterloo tube*)

Irish in Greenwich Project
020 8854 4466
24/24a Green's End,
Woolwich,
SE18 6JY
(*Woolwich Arsenal BR*)

Irish Support & Advice Centre
020 8741 0466
Hammersmith & Fulham Irish Centre,
Blacks Road, W6 9DT
(*Hammersmith Tube*)

Islington Irish Centre
020 7281 3225
131 St John's Way,
Islington, N19 3RQ
(*Archway Tube*)

Lewisham Irish Community Centre
020 8695 9608
2a Davenport Road,
SE6 2AZ
(*Catford tube*)

London Irish Centre
020 7916 2222
52 Camden Square,
NW1 9XB
(*Camden Town Tube*)

London Irish Women's Centre
020 7249 7318
59 Stoke Newington Church Street,
N16 0AR
(*Dalston Kingsland BR*)

Safe Start Foundation
020 8902 8999
Hazell House,
1/3 Lancelot Road,
Wembley,
HAO 2AL
(*Wembley Central BR/tube*)

**Southwark Irish C & A Development
Centre**
020 8299 9940
116a Lordship Lane,
SE22 8HD
(*Peckham Rye tube*)

Action Group for Irish Youth (AGIY)
(**020 7278 1665**) produce a Guide to
London for young Irish people which
includes useful housing and other
information. **Federation of Irish
Societies (020 7916 2725)** also produce
an Information Directory.



**HOUSING ADVICE FOR
PRIVATE TENANTS**

Telephone advice lines

Shelter Line – 0808 800 4444
free 24 hour housing advice service

CHAS (020 7723 7273)
10–1pm and 2–5pm weekdays
except Wed.



**PRIVATE TENANTS RIGHTS
ORGANISATIONS**

Camden Federation of Private Tenants
020 7267 5328

Brent Private Tenants Rights Group
020 8961 6551

**Hammersmith & Fulham Private
Tenants Rights Project**
020 8563 0002

**Private Tenants Project,
Finsbury Park Action Group**
020 8800 2630



LEGAL ADVICE

Rights of Women Advice Line
020 7251 6577
Tues, Wed & Thurs 2–4pm and 7–9pm.
Fri 12–2pm.

Law Centres

Law Centres provide independent legal advice and assistance on housing and other problems. They can also refer people to specialist housing solicitors in the local area.

Brent

Brent Community Law Centre
020 8451 1122
389 Willesden High Road,
NW10 2JR

Camden

Camden Community Law Centre
020 7485 6672
2 Prince of Wales Road,
NW5 3LG

Greenwich

Greenwich Law Centre
020 8853 2550
187 Trafalgar Road,
SE10 9EQ

Plumstead Community Law Centre

020 8855 9817
105 Plumstead High Street,
SE18 1SB

Hackney

Hackney Community Law Centre
020 8985 8364
236/238 Mare Street,
E8 1HE

Hammersmith & Fulham

**Hammersmith & Fulham Community
Law Centre**
020 8741 4021
142/144 King Street,
W6 OQU

Haringey

Tottenham Law Centre
020 8347 9792
415 Green Lanes,
N4 1EZ

Hillingdon

Hillingdon Law Centre
020 8561 9400
12 Harold Avenue, Hayes,
Middx, UB3 4QW

Hounslow

Hounslow Law Centre

020 8570 9505

51 Lampton Road, Hounslow,
Middx, TW3 1JG

Islington

Islington Law Centre

020 7607 2461

161 Hornsey Road,
N7 6DU

Kensington & Chelsea

North Kensington Law Centre

020 8969 7473

74 Golborne Road,
W10 5PS

Lambeth

North Lambeth Law Centre

020 7582 4373

14 Bowden Street,
SE11 4DS

Stockwell & Clapham Law Centre

020 7720 6231

57/59 Old Town,
SW4 OJQ

Lewisham

Lewisham Law Centre

020 8692 5355

28 Deptford High Street,
SE28 3NU

Luton

Luton Law Centre

01582 481 000

28 Clarendon Road,
Luton, LU2 7PQ

Newham

Newham Rights Law Centre

020 8555 3331

285 Romford Road,
E7 9HJ

Southwark

Southwark Law Centre

020 7732 2008

14/16 Hanover Park,
SE15 5HG

Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets Law Centre

020 7247 8998

214 Whitechapel Road,
E1 1BJ

Wandsworth

Wandsworth & Merton Law Centre

020 8767 2777

101a Tooting High Street,
SW17 OSU

Westminster

Central London Law Centre

020 7839 2998

19 Whitcomb Street,
WC2H 7HA

Paddington Law Centre

020 8960 3155

439 Harrow Road,
W10 4RE



LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Housing Aid / Advice centres (HACs) are provided by local authorities.

The Housing Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to provide housing advice to anyone who has a housing problem or who is in housing need. Advice and help for private tenants is also given by environmental health and legal departments. Many councils have Tenancy Relations Officers (TRO's) who deal with harassment and illegal evictions. Services may vary between local authorities but all have the same legal powers and responsibilities.

** indicates which councils operate rent deposit or guarantee schemes.*

***Barking and Dagenham Housing Advice**

512a Heathway
Dagenham
Essex RM10 7SL
020 8592 4500

***Barnet Housing Aid**

36b Woodhouse,
Finchley,
N12 ORG
020 8446 2504

Bexley Housing Advice Centre

Bexley Civic Office,
Bexleyheath, DA6 7LB
020 8303 7777

***Brent Private Housing Information Unit**

Quality House
249 Willesden Lane
NW2 5JH
020 8937 2772

Bromley Environmental Housing Department

Bromley Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
BRU 3UH
020 8313 4830

***Camden (North)**

179-181 West End Lane,
NW6 2LH
020 7625 0251

***Camden (South)**

Bidborough House,
20 Mabledon Place
WC1 H 9NJ
020 7860 5801

City of London Housing Enquiries

The Guildhall
EC2 P 2EJ
020 7606 3030

Croydon Taberner House,

Park Lane,
Croydon
CR9 1DH
020 8686 4433

***Ealing Housing Advisory Service**

Town Hall Annexe,
New Broadway,
W5 2BY
020 8579 2424

***Enfield Housing Advice Centre**

Civic Centre,
Silver Street, Enfield,
EN1 3XA
020 8379 4384

***Greenwich Housing Aid Centre**

125 Powis Street,
Woolwich
SE18 6NL
020 8921 2618

Hackney Housing Advice Service

For postcodes E5 & E9

Clarence House
2/4 Clarence Road
Hackney
E5 8HB
020 8356 5000

For remaining postcode

Texryte House
26 Southgate Road
N1 3JH
Tel: as above

**Hammersmith & Fulham
Homelessness & Housing Advice
Service**

The Housing Centre
77 Glenthorne Road
W6 OLG
020 8576 5693

Haringey Housing Advice Team

Apex House
870 Seven Sisters Road
N15 5PQ
020 8489 4309

Harrow Housing Advice Service

Civic Centre,
Milton Road, Harrow,
HA1 2XH
020 8861 4079

*** Havering Housing Aid Centre**

2nd Floor
Mercury House,
Mercury Gdns, Romford,
RM1 3DT
01708 77 2222

Hillingdon Housing Advice Centre

Civic Centre, Uxbridge,
Middx,
UB8 1UW
01895 250 381

*** Hounslow Housing Advice Service**

Civic Centre,
Lampton Road
Hounslow,
TW3 4DN
020 8583 3844

Islington Housing Aid Centre

1 Garnault Place,
EC 1R IUS
020 7527 6300

*** Kensington & Chelsea Homelessness
Advice & Assistance**

2nd Floor
Kensington Town Hall
Hornton Street
W8 7NX
020 7937 5464

Kingston Housing Advice Service

Guildhall 1,
St James Road,
Kingston,
KT1 1EU
020 8547 5468

Lambeth Housing Services Unit

2/7 Town Hall Parade
Brixton Hill
SW2 1RJ
020 7926 4200

Lewisham Housing Department

Laurence House,
1 Catford Road,
SE6 4RU
020 8314 7144

Merton Housing Advice Centre

Civic Centre
Crown House,
London Road,
Morden, Surrey
SM4 5DX
020 8545 3734

Newham Housing Advice Centre
236 Romford Road
Forest Gate
E7 9RF
020 8519 6666

Redbridge Housing Advice Centre
17/23 Clements Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 1BL
020 8478 9273

Richmond Housing Needs Section
Civic Centre,
44 York St, Twickenham,
TW1 3BZ
020 8891 7486

***Southwark Housing Department**
25 Bournemouth Road,
Peckham
SE15 4UY
020 7525 5000

***Sutton Housing Advice Centre**
Civic Offices
St Nicholas Way
Sutton
SM1 1EA
020 8770 5000

**Tower Hamlets Private Lease
Accommodation Section**
Great Eastern House
3 Millharbour
E14 9XP
020 7364 5000

Waltham Forest Housing Advice Unit
869 Forest Road,
Walthamstow
E17 4UH
020 8527 5544

Wandsworth Housing Aid Centre
17/27 Garratt Lane,
SW18 4AE
020 8871 6840

**Westminster Assessment &
Advice Centre**
261 Harrow Road
W2 5XF
020 7641 1000



SPECIALIST CONTACTS & HELPLINES

● **Alcohol Dependency**

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
020 7833 0022
10–10pm

Alcohol Recovery Project
020 7403 3369
Mon–Fri 9–5pm

Women's Alcohol Centre
020 7226 4581

● **Asylum/Immigration**

Refugee Council
020 7820 3000
Mon–Fri 9–5.30pm

Refugee Legal Centre
020 7827 9090
Mon–Fri 8.30–6pm.

● **Children**

Children's Legal Centre
01206 873 820
Mon–Fri 10–12.30pm and 2–4.30pm.

Childline
0800 1111 Freephone
24hrs

● **Counselling**

London Irish Women's Centre
020 7249 7318

Immigrant Counselling & Therapy Service
020 7272 7906
Mon-Fri 8.30-8.30pm

Islington Women's Counselling Centre
020 7281 2673
Mon-Thurs 9-5pm

● **Disabilities**

Disability Alliance Rights Line
020 7247 8763
Mon & Wed 2-4pm

Disability Law Service
020 7791 9800

Greater London Association for Disabled People (GLAD)
020 7346 5819

● **Domestic Violence/Rape**

Refuge Domestic Violence Helpline
0990 995 443 - freephone
24 hrs

Solas Anois Irish Womens Refuge
c/o 0990 995 443

Rape & Sexual Abuse Helpline
020 8239 1122
Mon-Fri 12-2.30pm & 7-9pm.
Weekends 2.30-5pm

London Rape Crisis Centre
020 7837 1600
Tues 6-8pm & Fri 2-5.30pm

● **Drug Dependency**

City Road Drugs Crisis Centre
020 7278 8671 - 24 hrs

National Drugs Helpline
0800 776 600 - 24 hrs

Narcotics Anonymous
020 7730 0009
10-10pm

Release
Drugs & Criminal Law
020 7603 8654 - 24 hrs

● **Ex-offenders/Prisoners**

Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO)
020 7482 4148

Women's Prisoners Resource Centre
020 8968 3121

● **Health**

Women's Health Helpline
020 7251 6580
Mon,Wed,Thurs,Fri 10-4pm

Health Information Service
NHS Freephone Helpline
0800 66 55 44
Mon-Fri 9.30-5pm

NHS Direct
0845 4647

● **HIV/AIDS**

National Aids Helpline
0800 567 123 - Freephone - 24hrs

Positively Women
020 7713 0222

Terrence Higgins Trust Helpline
020 7242 1010
12pm-10pm daily

● **Lesbians**

London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard
020 7837 7324
24 hrs

London Lesbian & Gay Helpline
020 7837 3337
7.30-10pm each evening

**Stonewall Housing Association
Advice Line**
020 7359 5767
Tue & Fri 10-1pm
Wed & Thur 2-5pm

● **Mental Health**

Mind Information Line
020 8519 2122

**National Schizophrenia Fellowship
Advice Service**
020 8974 6814
10-3pm weekdays

Samaritans
0345 90 90 90 - 24hrs

Saneline Helpline
0845 767 8000
12pm-2am daily

● **Older Women**

Age Concern
020 8765 7200

Camden Irish Elderly Support Network
020 7428 0471

Elderly Accommodation Counsel
020 7820 1343

Greater London Pensioners Association
020 7267 6151

● **Parents/Carers**

Family Rights Group Advice Line
020 7249 0008
Mon-Fri 1.30pm-3.30pm

Parents National Helpline
080 88 002 222
Mon-Fri 9am-9pm
Sat 9.30am-5.00pm, Sun 10am-3pm

● **Single Parents**

Gingerbread
0800 0184 318
Mon-Fri 9-5pm

**National Council for One
Parent Families**
0800 0185 026
Mon-Fri 9.15am-5.15pm

● **Squatters**

Squatters Advisory Service
020 7359 8814
Sun-Thurs 2-6pm

● **Students**

National Union of Students
020 7272 8900
Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm

● Travellers

BIAS Irish Travellers Project
020 8868 6788

**National Association of Health Workers
for Travellers (NAHWT)**
0121 446 2306

Irish Travellers Movement
c/o 020 8868 6788

London Gypsy & Traveller Unit
020 8533 2002

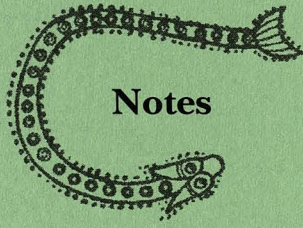
● Young women

If you are young and homeless, advice
and help is available at:

Alone in London Service
020 7278 4224
16–21 years

London Connection
020 7766 5544
16–25yrs

New Horizons Youth Centre
020 7388 5580
16–21yrs



Notes



This leaflet was written by Angie Birtill, Housing and Employment Rights Worker at the London Irish Women's Centre. It was compiled in conjunction with the Irish Women's Housing Action Group (IWHAG). Special thanks to Alison Jiggins (Shelter), IWHAG members: Mary Connolly, Eibhlin Ni Duibheannaigh, Mary McDonnell, Claire McElwee, Biddy Mitchell, Kate Scannell, Maura Schley, Mary Walsh. London Irish Women's Centre staff and management committee: Fran Clayton, Housing & Welfare Rights Worker: Andrea Carr, Finance Worker: Maggie O'Keeffe, Information & Reception Worker: Angie Smith, Cleaner: Caitriona Spellman, Counsellor and Development Worker: Former staff: Mary Cate MacLennon, Margaret O'Keeffe, Fundraiser. Management Committee members: Kat Blake, Ailish Duffy, Katie Foley, Anna O'Brien, Jo O'Leary. Former mc members: Geraldine Hickey, Emma Ketterer, Roismaire McGill, Shelagh O'Connor. Special thanks to Deborah Hart (Microsyster) and Maggie O'Keeffe (LIWC) for computer support.

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THE LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE is an independent advice, support and counselling centre for Irish women. There are 3 full time staff and 4 part time staff. Services include Housing, Employment & Welfare Rights Advice, Publications & General Information. The building has ground floor access and WC/Disabled. The Centre is open: Tue, Wed & Thurs 10-1pm & 2-5pm.

The IWHAG was established at the Fourth London Irish Women's Conference in April 1988. In addition to producing information booklets and leaflets, the group has campaigned on housing issues that are relevant to Irish women.

For further information, contact the LIWC on 020 7249 7318

London Irish women's centre

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