

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT POLICY – Oxford City Council

September 2025

Introduction:

An initial duty to accommodate homeless applicants arises if Oxford City Council has reason to believe the applicant is homeless, eligible and in priority need, outlined in the Housing Act 1996 (amended). Provided the first two elements are met, a 'relief' duty is accepted; accommodation is provided if all these parts are accepted. A further duty also occurs when the Council accepts it has a main duty to secure accommodation for an applicant.

The Council will provide interim accommodation using its own stock (including that leased from private landlords), or it will use bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels. Whilst the Council always tries to place within its boundary, accommodation may also be located out of area.

This policy explains the factors that Oxford City Council will have regard to when it provides accommodation, both initially and on an ongoing basis.

In writing this policy, the Council has taken account of both section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018, particularly its guidance on the suitability of accommodation, including interim or temporary accommodation.

Background:

Over the last two years Oxford City Council has received an increasing number of homelessness applications. Furthermore, of these, the number of applicants owed a statutory duty to secure temporary accommodation (TA) has more than doubled.

Oxford City Council has taken measures to increase its stock of units of temporary accommodation. This includes moving units of its social (Part 6) accommodation for use as temporary accommodation, the Council has secured long term leases with landlords in the private sector, it has purchased additional units for use of TA, and is working in partnership with Registered Providers in the City to source accommodation.

To date, the Council has doubled the number of units of temporary accommodation, but this hasn't been sufficient to keep up with demand and therefore has continued to need to use nightly paid hotel and B&B accommodation. The Council continues to develop and implement further plans to grow its owned and leased temporary accommodation to lower nightly paid use.

Use of bed and breakfast accommodation:

A duty to accommodate arises if the housing authority has reason to believe an applicant is homeless, eligible and in priority need.

For such applicants, due to demand for temporary accommodation being greater than what the Council can currently source, it is likely that bed and breakfast accommodation will be provided for most applicants and households initially, until a

point in time the Council has sufficient TA stock to avoid B&B use. On acceptance of a relief duty, a personal housing plan will be prepared. This will set out the housing needs of the applicant together with agreed actions from both the applicant and Council to help secure suitable accommodation. This will be kept under review during the relief period (usually 56 days from its acceptance). The Council will seek to ensure that all applicants with dependent children, or an applicant who is pregnant, spend no more than six weeks in bed and breakfast accommodation.

There may also be some applicants, or members of a household, with specific disabilities, for whom bed and breakfast accommodation is unsuitable.

We recognise that accessibility is a fundamental aspect of suitable accommodation. Oxford City Council will always endeavor to source hotel and bed and breakfast rooms that are accessible to applicants and households who require them, ensuring that individual needs related to mobility and disability are met wherever possible.

The Council will move such applicants, as soon as reasonably possible, to more suitable accommodation to help provide for the disability.

A duty to provide interim, or temporary accommodation, will end if an applicant refuses an offer of the accommodation or, after occupation, is required to leave the property because of their conduct.

Allocation of temporary accommodation:

Oxford City Council will prioritise placements into temporary accommodation using a structured tiered system. This system is defined by a protocol, aligned with policy, that will define how cases are prioritised, detailing the assessment of criteria and allocation process (see Housing Needs Common Operational Protocol – Temporary Accommodation). Officers will follow clear guidance for fair distribution of temporary accommodation. Regular reviews will ensure ongoing best use of TA stock to meet the needs of people housed in accommodation, and transparency.

This system ensures that households with the highest need—such as families with children, pregnant applicants, and those with safeguarding concerns—are prioritised for being moved on from hotel/ B&B accommodation and for in-city placements. All out-of-area placements will be reviewed weekly, and efforts will be made to relocate households back into Oxford as soon as suitable accommodation becomes available. Placement decisions will be governed by a multi-disciplinary panel where necessary, and all placements will be accompanied by a support plan and risk assessment.

Location:

Despite the addition of properties to its stock of temporary accommodation, there is a need to use accommodation outside the geographical area covered by Oxford City Council due to insufficient temporary stock in the city. This includes the Council's TA properties and bed and breakfast accommodation. Nevertheless, all accommodation provided will have transport links to Oxford.

The Council accepts there may be applicants who have a need to be in Oxford. For applicants placed outside of Oxford, the Council will consider whether a move to within the city is necessary for the individual applicant (and household if applicable). Each case will be considered on its merits, having regard to employment, caring responsibilities, medical needs, and education of the household. These will be considered against necessary travel, and if a similar service is available close to the accommodation.

These principles apply both for applicants under a relief duty and for those where a main duty has been accepted.

A move will be dependent upon there being available accommodation within Oxford City Council's geographical area.

In most situations, given the short-term nature of temporary accommodation, a placement outside the district will be treated as being suitable. However, specific examples where it would normally be considered necessary to have accommodation in Oxford include:

- Households containing a child with special educational needs who are at a school in Oxford and where a change to another school would be detrimental to their progress and development.
- Households with a child subject to a Child Protection Plan where there is evidence that a move to another area may harm the child's welfare.
- Applicants with a serious health condition requiring intensive specialist medical treatment only available in Oxford.
- Applicants who are receive a significant care package which cannot easily be transferred. This could be for a physical or mental illness.

It is also likely that applicants who are currently have employment of at least 16 hours in Oxford and where the additional costs of travel would render accommodation in another area unaffordable would be moved.

Where an applicant is provided accommodation out of area, the Council will notify the local housing authority in whose district the accommodation is situated in line with section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

Acceptance of the main housing duty:

This may apply for those applicants for who are still homeless after the relief period. There is a main housing duty to secure accommodation for an applicant if that person is homeless, eligible, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and has a local connection. (A local connection is not required for an applicant who is homeless because of domestic abuse.)

At this stage, Oxford City Council will allocate an officer to help move the household onto a final offer of accommodation or to longer term temporary accommodation with support. This would either be a social tenancy or a tenancy in the private rented sector. On some occasions, for those with support needs, an offer of temporary accommodation will be made into supported accommodation, either directly or

through the Access Panel. (This is to ensure an applicant is offered accommodation (if available) to match their support needs.)

For some applicants (without children in their household), it may be necessary to continue to provide bed and breakfast accommodation after the acceptance of a main duty for a limited period. This is due to the current shortage of self-contained properties. Where this occurs, Oxford City Council will ensure it is satisfied that the accommodation remains suitable during the time of occupation.

Storage of belongings:

It is the applicant's responsibility for storage of furniture and belongings that may need to be stored during a stay in temporary accommodation. The Council have a number of garages that can be rented to applicants for this purpose. If storage is required, an applicant should let their case officer know as soon as possible.

Pets:

In accommodation that is neither owned nor leased by Oxford City Council, pets are usually not allowed. If the pet is a recognised emotional support animal, the Council will take this into account when considering move-on options from bed and breakfast accommodation.

Financing temporary accommodation:

Although Oxford City Council will cover the initial cost of the accommodation, applicants will be required to repay the Council for a reasonable charge to help pay towards the cost of accommodation. For those on a low income, it is recommended that an application for housing benefit is made which can cover all or some of the cost depending on the circumstances of the household. (It should be noted that the Council's Allocation Scheme for social housing excludes those who have rent arrears, including those in temporary accommodation.)

Ending a duty to provide temporary accommodation:

Oxford City Council will end its requirement to provide interim or temporary accommodation when an applicant is no longer homeless, or when an offer of suitable accommodation has been refused (either during the relief period or after the acceptance of a main housing duty). The duty may also end if an applicant or household member engages in unreasonable behavior, or breaches the terms of their license or tenancy agreement, for example, by accruing rent arrears or failing to comply with other key conditions.

Review of the Temporary Accommodation Policy

The Rapid Rehousing Manager will review the policy annually, considering any changes required due to changing demand and needs, or changes in legislation.

The Director of Housing will consider and can approve any minor changes, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.

More significant changes will be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

If you would like a large print version, a translation of, or any other information about this document you should contact the **Housing Needs** team at Oxford City Council



Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford OX1 1BX



housingneeds@oxford.gov.uk



01865 249811

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