Problems at home? This is a guide to help you and the Parent/s, Family or friends that you live with. It contains practical ideas to help you all to try and work out a solution so you don’t have to leave home.

The Council’s Housing Options Team can also provide help and support to try to find a solution, you can make an appointment with them by calling 01623 457252 or contacting HousingOptions@ashfield.gov.uk. You should start to look through this guide together immediately as it contains actions for you all to start to work on now even if you have made an appointment to see the Housing Options Team.

**Ashfield District Council recognises that not all individuals living in a family or lodging environment will do so with their parents. Therefore, wherever parents are subsequently mentioned this can be also taken to mean, other family friends or any other relevant relationship.**

If you have made an appointment with the Housing Options Team they can help you immediately by:

1. Contacting your parents, family or friends to let them know that you have contacted us about the situation and that we would like to help you and them to sort things out.
2. Asking them to look at this guide with you so that you can start to talk about how you can sort things out at home.

3. Inviting them to your appointment, so that we can help you to talk things through or visit you at home to do this.

4. Advising both parties of your realistic options with regards to alternative housing.

Being asked to leave a family home and becoming homeless is a very big problem so the first thing we want to tell you and your parents is that the Council will help you as much as possible. The best place for you to be is at home until the time comes when you are ready to leave and become independent. If however, the problems that you are having cannot be sorted out, we want to work with everyone to plan the best way you can leave home without being made homeless. It is rarely going to be the best outcome for you and I’m sure your parents will want the best for you.

Before your appointment with the Housing Options Team want you and your parents to take some time to sit down and talk through the problems at home and the possible solutions. We ask everyone to try and solve their problems first as a family unless there has been violence or abuse at home or a threat of violence or abuse.

We want to let everyone know that you are not on their own and that we will do everything we can to help, but if by using this guide you can manage to sort things out as a family you can cancel any appointment made with the Housing Options Team.

**What you should do now…**

Show your parents this guide and explain that you want to talk to them to make things better at home so that you can continue to live together.

If you have made an appointment to see Ashfield District Council’s Housing Options Team let your parents know when it is and invite them along to see what you are told and ensure that you are being open with each other.

Ask your parents to put aside some time to go through this guide and talk about what the issues are and what can be done to solve them. Record what you have all said and agreed in the spaces provided, this way when you attend your appointment with ADC Housing Options Team you can let them know what you have already done as a family.

Before you all talk it might be best to write down what the issues are and how you feel about them. This way the discussion should remain calm and focussed.

Before starting to talk about the issues everyone should agree:

* To listen to each other.
* Not to interrupt.
* That everyone will get their chance to talk and explain their thoughts and feelings.
* That no one will shout or swear, especially at each other.
* To remain calm

Then start by all present reading out what their issues are (without being interrupted). Start with the parents issues, then the persons who is being asked to leave followed by any other family member present.

The person being asked to leave needs to try to understand how the problem is having an impact on your parents and possibly other members of your family who live with you. Listen to what they are saying about their feelings and how unhappy or upset they are. Try and be grown up about the things your parents are unhappy about and understand things from their point of view. Don’t be angry or abusive yourself.

Parents should remain calm whilst talking things through, we understand that you are upset about the situation but allow your child/lodger the chance to explain and to let you know how they feel as well. Transitioning from childhood to adulthood can be a difficult time and young people can find it difficult to express their feelings constructively so it can come out as anger.

Living together is difficult for any family and everyone has to compromise a bit and at times will feel very unhappy or upset. It is important that you all begin to agree ground rules together and to make decisions about some of the common problems like privacy and personal space. Try to negotiate rather than argue. Be prepared to compromise and don’t be afraid to admit you were wrong and say you’re sorry. Remember it is your parents’ home so try to listen to what they have to say and try to see their point of view.

You may need more than one meeting and if you feel it would be better to have someone from the Council along for the first or a second meeting just email or call us to let us know and we will arrange it.

Once you have all talked through the problems you should move onto trying to agree clear actions to resolve these. We have set out below a number of suggested actions for you all to consider taking.

Write down what all parties have agreed for example changes in behaviour/attitude, agreement to contribute to the household financially or through chores. Also everyone should sign at the bottom to say that they agree with this plan. This way everyone can be confident that things will change and if there are any slips they can refer to the written agreement.

In any family that live together there will be tensions and occasional rows. We don’t expect that just by having a meeting and talking through problems and concerns everything will be perfect, but by being clear about the problems and setting down in writing the actions and promises that have been agreed together to try and sort these out there is a better chance of everyone being able to live together with fewer problems.

In the following pages we have set out the most common problems or concerns we see when someone comes to see us saying their parents want them to leave and we have also set out the best way to express promises to address these concerns. Work your way through them to see if they apply to your situation.

**But first write down what has been said so far…**

**Parent’s issues and how they feel:**

**Issues of the person being asked to leave and how they feel:**

**Issues of anyone else in the family and how they feel:**

**Trying to find a solution, actions for everyone…**

Put together a written agreement that you are all happy with.

Look at the issues that everyone mentioned above, taking one at a time, if it is your issue explain what you think would make it better and say why. If people know why they are more likely to take notice of it. After the person with the issue has finished talking, everyone else can take it in turns to say whether they think that it is reasonable to ask the person being asked to leave to take that action. If everyone agrees write the action below then move onto the next issue. If you don’t agree say why and offer an alternative.

The Councils Housing Options Team come across the following issues a lot when people are being asked to leave home. The may help you to identify the problems if you are finding it difficult.

* Not paying anything towards the rent or household bills
* Not contributing to running of the home by e.g. – helping with household tasks
* Not keeping their room and the home clean and tidy
* Not following house rules not to smoke, drink, or take drugs in the home
* Causing rows in the family – *give reasons for the rows*
* Behaviour which is a nuisance to the parents or neighbours
* Inviting visitors to the home without the parents’ permission
* There was an unacceptable incident that led to them being asked to leave
* There are no rows – it’s just time they got their own place
* There are too many people in the home
* There are financial problems at home and this is the reason the parents feel they can no longer afford to keep their son/daughter. (*See offer of help from the Council to sort out financial problems or debts below)*

Here are some ideas to help and make the situation better:

* I will pay ***[£xxx.00***] a week towards my keep.
* I will make a non-financial contribution to the running of the home by e.g. – helping with household tasks *(Be as specific as you can – will do the washing up after every meal.*
* I will keep my room and the home clean
* I will not smoke, drink or take drugs in the home
* I will not carry out any behaviour that is a nuisance to the parent/s or neighbours and will not do anything that might be criminal.
* I will treat my brothers or sisters with respect and not argue with them.
* I will not bring my friends to the home without my parent/s permission
* I will cooperate with any support if it is provided to me and my family
* I will not cause or take part in any anti-social behaviour in the area that we live or in any other named area.
* I will look to find somewhere else to live within the next 3 months, 6 months, 12 months (Be specific and remember the Council may be able to help you with this)

**Write your agree solutions/actions here:**

Now that you have a list of the issues and a list of solutions put together a written agreement that you can all sign so that everyone is clear on what is required from all parties and if there are any further issues you can refer back to it. There is an example of such an agreement later in this guide. Once completed everyone should get a copy. If you are able to type it up do so. The Council can print it out for you so that it can be signed. They can then either make copies for you are send a copy to your email address.

If you are struggling to put an agreement together the Council can help you at your appointment.

**Do you need any further help as a family?**

Hopefully you have agreed a way forward and written it all down but ifyou think as a family you might need a bit of support to make sure what has been agreed is kept to, then consider the following areas and ask the Housing Options team to make a referral to an appropriate service for you and/or your family:

* Mental Ill Health
* Financial difficulties such as debt or trouble making ends meet
* Family Support
* Drug and/or Alcohol Addiction or Misuse
* Physical Ill Health and or Disability
* Learning Disabilities
* Sexual Abuse and/or exploitation (this include the risk of as well as experienced)
* Domestic Violence, Abuse or Coercive Control
* Due to having been in the Armed Forces.

Using the area of financial, examples of the support that can be offered are:

* Referral for a household item that is needed, such as a cooker, washer, fridge-freezer or carpets.
* If you are claiming benefits towards the cost of your housing but it is not covering the whole amount you may be able to claim a Discretionary Housing Payment for a short time until you are able to get back on your feet or find cheaper accommodation.
* Referral to a service to help you to deal with your debts.

**If, however, you have been unable to come to an agreement that keeps you in your current home or you think that the agreement can only be short term, you should start to look for alternative accommodation now so that you can move in a planned way.**

Given the small number of Council or Housing Association homes available the person being asked to leave will almost certainly have to rent from a landlord in the private rented sector.

There is an advice guide for people privately renting that you can download from the Ashfield District Council Website.

**Take these actions:**

1. Down load a copy of ‘Advice for People Privately Renting’ from the ADC website.
2. Do you have any other friends or family that you can lodge with? If so ask them if they would be willing to take you in as their lodger.

**Information for Parents regarding the Housing Options of your child.**

Before you decide whether the person being asked to leave definitely has to leave immediately please consider the facts.

Everyone who is in housing need would all like to receive a quick offer of a Council home in an area they would like to live in. This would be the best housing solution and would allow them to settle and plan their future from the security of long-term social housing. Years ago the Council was able to help everyone who came through the door, which may have been your experience when you left home. Unfortunately there are no longer enough council homes available to help everyone and many people needing help are unable to obtain an offer of a Council home.

Please understand that we are not telling you these difficult facts because we are trying to put you off asking your family member to leave. We think it is important to tell you the facts so you are able to make decision on whether you want them to leave fully aware about the likely long term housing outcome for them.

If despite all our best efforts to help sort things out at home you still want them to leave we would prefer to work with you to plan the best way they can leave home without being made homeless, as this is rarely the best outcome and as their parent, family member or friend I know you will still want the best for them.

What are your son or daughter’s chances of getting an offer of a Council home if they were to become homeless?

If your child has to leave home immediately, we would assess whether or not they had a priority need for housing. This means that we would assess whether or not they are a vulnerable person. If they met the criteria we would place them in temporary accommodation, this would be anywhere in the district and sometimes at busy periods can also be out of the district. We would then look into your child’s situation to see if the reason that they are homeless is their own fault. If it was the Council would have no duty to find them a home. Of course whilst this is all happening we would be working with your child to see if we could help them to find suitable housing. Even if they are homeless due to their own fault the Council does not want anyone to have to sleep rough.

If your child is not vulnerable, we would not be able to offer them any accommodation immediately but would work with them find alternative accommodation.

In all cases:

* we would start working with them immediately to find alternative accommodation.
* it is unlikely that this would be Council or Social Housing as the numbers are very limited.
* we would look at any areas of support that your child may benefit from.
* look at ways that we can support your child with the financial side of privately renting.

If your child was able to stay with you at least in the short term they would be less likely to get into debt because of moving in a hurry. For example, fi your child is not currently working the Housing Options Team work closely with the DWP and so would be able to assist your child in claiming their entitlement. As you may be aware Universal Credit payments are not awarded from the 1st day of the claim and so your child would be forced to take out a loan against their claim in order to pay for the cost of renting in the first few weeks. Paying this loan back will mean that your child will struggle financially until it is repaid. If they stayed at home and their UC claim was already up and running, they would not need to take out the loan. They would also be able to contribute to your household financially and save small amounts each week to pay for house hold essentials and moving costs. We would also be able to work with them on a realistic budget for when they moved and provide advice on low cost furniture and white goods so that they didn’t blow their money on takeaways or high cost hire purchase items. We are sure that you would also like some time to prepare them with the life skills that they may not yet have developed.

Now that you have all of the information in order to make an informed decisionwe ask you to please think carefully about how you would like to move forward.

If you decide that your young person can only stay for a limited time they should start to plan and we ask they you help them to look at the financial side of living independently.

**What will you be able to afford to pay in rent?**

Firstly, you need to complete a full financial assessment.

1. Money Saving Expert has a useful and detailed resource to do this. <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/banking/Budget-planning/#bplanner> there are two versions of this resource, one is electronic and does the calculations for you the other is a version that you can print out and fill in yourself.
2. Consider how you can reduce your outgoings such as reducing TV packages, cancelling them altogether or switching energy providers. There are more money saving tips on <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/money-help/>
3. Is there any way to maximise your income? <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/make-money/>
4. Do you have any debt, if you need help to manage these contact Ashfield CAB. Visit [www.ashfieldca.org.uk](http://www.ashfieldca.org.uk) for ways to contact them and for more information about their services.

**Record your findings below:**

Total Income:

Total Outgoings:

Total Income minus Total Outgoings =

**Record ways that you can reduce you outgoings below**:

**Record ways that you can maximise you income below:**

New Total Income:

New Total Outgoings:

New Total Income minus New Total Outgoings =

Next you should have downloaded a copy of ‘Advice for People Privately Renting’ from the ADC website. This document advises of the Local Housing Allowance rates for the Ashfield area. You should look for the amount that suits your situation. For example, if you are a single person under the age of 35 the most you will receive in benefits towards the cost of your housing is £66.50 per week or £80.55 for areas classed as Nottingham City.

It also reminds you of the costs that you may have forgotten about such as water bills and cleaning products.

With this information you can put together a probable budget for when you live independently so that you can see what you can afford to pay in rent.

 **Appendix A**

**Example of a “Promised Behaviour Agreement” between the Parent and the person being asked to leave setting out the terms under which they will be given permission to continue to live at home.**

**PROMISED BEHAVIOUR AGREEMENT**

**THIS AGREEMENT** is made on the [**date**]

**BETWEEN** [name and address of Parent/Parents/relative] **AND** [name of individual]

The [**name of individual**] **AGREES** the following in respect of their future conduct

(Add, amend as appropriate to your situation:

1. I will make a non-financial contribution to the running of the home by e.g. – helping with household tasks (it is best to be as specific as you can)
2. I will keep my room and the home clean
3. I will not smoke, drink or take drugs in the home
4. I will not cause or permit any behaviour that is a nuisance to the parent/s/relative or neighbours and not to engage in activities which are criminal.
5. I will not act in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to anyone living in the same home as me.
6. I will not bring visitors to the home without permission
7. I will cooperate with any support provided to myself and my family (list any support provided by the council or another agency or charity if this has been set up).
8. I will not take part in any anti-social behaviour on the estate that I live or in any other named area.
9. I will pay rent or a weekly contribution to the running of the home of £xx.00 per week.

Add more detail if required -

This will cover the following items (list e.g. – room, food, contribution to utilities, washing).

This will be paid every put in the day of the week it is to be paid.

**Breach**

If [**name of individual**] does anything which he/she has agreed not to do under this contract the following actions will occur:

Unless there is a very serious incident all parties agree to follow the procedure set out below:

1. Where the person/s who has granted permission for the person to carry on living at home if they sign this agreement has a concern they will sit down and discuss that concern. Where there is no improvement they will issue a verbal warning.
2. Where there is no improvement in behaviour or the incident is considered by the person/s to be more serious a written warning will be given.
3. At any time either party named in this agreement can ask to call a meeting to discuss any problems or concerns.
4. Where the situation may lead to the person/s who has been granted permission to carry on living at home being asked to leave either party may call on help from any agency who have agreed to support them or can contact the Council Housing Options Team by telephone or e-mail (for the Council to insert here the name and contact details of the case officer that dealt with the case or any specialist officer), or contact any agency providing support to see what help can be given.
5. Finally if the situation cannot be resolved a written note will be given to the person named giving reasonable notice that they must leave the property and by when.

**DECLARATION**

I confirm that I understand the meaning of this agreement and that the consequences of breach of the contract have been explained to me.

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[Signature of individual]

**DATE**..................

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Parent

[Signature of parent/s/relative]

**DATE**..................

**WITNESSED**

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Officer

[Name of Council housing Options Officer or support worker/agency]

**DATE**..................