



Housing (Scotland) Act 1987

1987 CHAPTER 26

PART II

HOMELESS PERSONS

Main definitions

24 Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness

- (1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation in Scotland, or England or Wales.
- (2) A person is to be treated as having no accommodation if there is no accommodation which he, together with any other person who normally resides with him as a member of his family or in circumstances in which the local authority consider it reasonable for that person to reside with him—
 - (a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court, or
 - (b) has a right or permission, or an implied right or permission to occupy, or in England and Wales has an express or implied licence to occupy, or
 - (c) occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of any other person to recover possession.
- (3) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but—
 - (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or
 - (b) it is probable that occupation of it will lead to violence from some other person residing in it or to threats of violence from some other person residing in it and likely to carry out the threats, or
 - (c) it consists of a movable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it; or
 - (d) it is overcrowded within the meaning of section 135 and may endanger the health of the occupants.

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- (4) A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days.

25 Priority need for accommodation

- (1) The following have a priority need for accommodation—
- (a) a pregnant woman or a person with whom a pregnant woman resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
 - (b) a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside;
 - (c) a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
 - (d) a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or any other disaster.
- (2) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument—
- (a) specify further descriptions of persons as having a priority need for accommodation, and
 - (b) amend or repeal any part of subsection (1).
- (3) Before making such an order the Secretary of State shall consult such associations representing relevant authorities, and such other persons, as he considers appropriate.
- (4) No such order shall be made unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

26 Becoming homeless intentionally

- (1) A person becomes homeless intentionally if he deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he ceases to occupy accommodation which is available for his occupation and which it would have been reasonable for him to continue to occupy.
- (2) A person becomes threatened with homelessness intentionally if he deliberately does or fails to do anything the likely result of which is that he will be forced to leave accommodation which is available for his occupation and which it would have been reasonable for him to continue to occupy.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (1) or (2) an act or omission in good faith on the part of a person who was unaware of any relevant fact shall not be treated as deliberate.
- (4) Regard may be had, in determining for the purpose of subsections (1) and (2) whether it would have been reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation, to the general circumstances prevailing in relation to housing in the district of the local authority to whom he applied for accommodation or for assistance in obtaining accommodation.

27 Meaning of "local connection"

- (1) Any reference in this Part to a person having a local connection with a district is a reference to his having a connection with that district—

- (a) because he is, or in the past was, normally resident in it and his residence in it is or was of his own choice; or
 - (b) because he is employed in it, or
 - (c) because of family associations, or
 - (d) because of any special circumstances.
- (2) Residence in a district is not of a person's own choice for the purposes of subsection (1) if he became resident in it—
- (a) because he or any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him—
 - (i) was serving in the regular armed forces of the Crown, or
 - (ii) was detained under the authority of any Act of Parliament, or
 - (b) in such other circumstances as the Secretary of State may by order specify.
- (3) A person is not employed in a district for the purposes of subsection (1)—
- (a) if he is serving in the regular armed forces of the Crown, or
 - (b) in such other circumstances as the Secretary of State may by order specify.
- (4) An order under subsections (2) or (3) shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

Duties of local authorities with respect to homelessness and threatened homelessness

28 Inquiry into cases, of possible homelessness or threatened homelessness

- (1) If a person ("an applicant") applies to a local authority for accommodation, or for assistance in obtaining accommodation, and the authority have reason to believe that he may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they shall make such inquiries as are necessary to satisfy themselves as to whether he is homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- (2) If the authority are so satisfied, they shall make any further inquiries necessary to satisfy themselves as to—
- (a) whether he has a priority need, and
 - (b) whether he became homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally;
- and if the authority think fit, they may also make inquiries as to whether he has a local connection with the district of another local authority in Scotland, England or Wales.

29 Interim duty to accommodate in case of apparent priority need

- (1) If the local authority have reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless and have a priority need, they shall secure that accommodation is made available for his occupation pending any decision which they may make as a result of their inquiries under section 28.
- (2) This duty arises irrespective of any local connection which an applicant may have with the district of another local authority.

30 Notification of decision and reasons

- (1) On completing their inquiries under section 28, the local authority shall notify the applicant of their decision on the question whether he is homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- (2) If they notify him that their decision is that he is homeless or threatened with homelessness, they shall at the same time notify him of their decision on the question whether he has a priority need.
- (3) If they notify him that their decision is that he has a priority need, they shall at the same time notify him—
 - (a) of their decision on the question whether he became homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally, and
 - (b) whether they have notified or propose to notify any other local authority under section 33 that his application has been made.
- (4) If they notify him—
 - (a) that they are not satisfied—
 - (i) that he is homeless or threatened with homelessness, or
 - (ii) that he has a priority need, or
 - (b) that they are satisfied that he became homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally, or
 - (c) that they have notified or propose to notify another local authority under section 33 that his application has been made,they shall at the same time notify him of their reasons.
- (5) The notice required to be given to a person under this section shall be given in writing and shall, if not received by him, be treated as having been given to him only if it is made available at the authority's office for a reasonable period for collection by him or on his behalf.

31 Duties to persons found to be homeless

- (1) This section applies where a local authority are satisfied that an applicant is homeless.
- (2) Where they are satisfied that he has a priority need and are not satisfied that he became homeless intentionally, they shall, unless they notify another local authority in accordance with section 33 (referral of application on ground of local connection) secure that accommodation becomes available for his occupation.
- (3) Where they are satisfied that he has a priority need but are also satisfied that he became homeless intentionally, they shall—
 - (a) secure that accommodation is made available for his occupation for such period as they consider will give him a reasonable opportunity of himself securing accommodation for his occupation; and
 - (b) furnish him with advice and such assistance as they consider appropriate in the circumstances, in any attempts he may make to secure that accommodation becomes available for his occupation.
- (4) Where they are not satisfied that he has a priority need they shall furnish him with advice and such assistance as they consider appropriate in the circumstances, in any attempts he may make to secure that accommodation becomes available for his occupation.

32 Duties to persons found to be threatened with homelessness

- (1) This section applies where a local authority are satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homelessness.
- (2) Where they are satisfied that he has a priority need and are not satisfied that he became threatened with homelessness intentionally they shall take reasonable steps to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for his occupation.
- (3) Where—
 - (a) they are not satisfied that he has a priority need, or
 - (b) they are satisfied that he has a priority need, but are also satisfied that he became threatened with homelessness intentionally,they shall furnish him with advice and such assistance as they consider appropriate in the circumstances, in any attempts he may make to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for his occupation.
- (4) Nothing in subsection (2) shall affect any right of a local authority to secure vacant possession of accommodation, whether by virtue of a contract or of any enactment or rule of law.
- (5) In section 31 and in this section, "accommodation" does not include accommodation that is overcrowded within the meaning of section 135 or which may endanger the health of the occupants.

33 Referral of application to another local authority

- (1) If a local authority—
 - (a) are satisfied that an applicant is homeless and has a priority need, and are not satisfied that he became homeless intentionally, but
 - (b) are of opinion that the conditions are satisfied for referral of his application to another local authority,they may notify that other local authority in Scotland, England or Wales of the fact that his application has been made and that they are of that opinion.
- (2) The conditions of referral of an application to another local authority are—
 - (a) that neither the applicant nor any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him has a local connection with the district of the authority to whom his application was made,
 - (b) that the applicant or a person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him has a local connection with that other local authority's district, and
 - (c) that neither that applicant nor any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him will run the risk of domestic violence in that other local authority's district.
- (3) For the purposes of this section a person runs the risk of domestic violence—
 - (a) if he runs the risk of violence from a person with whom, but for the risk of violence, he might reasonably be expected to reside, or from a person with whom he formerly resided, or
 - (b) if he runs the risk of threats of violence from such a person which are likely to be carried out.

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- (4) The question whether the conditions for referral of an application are satisfied shall be determined by agreement between the notifying authority and the notified authority, or in default of agreement, in accordance with such arrangements as the Secretary of State may direct by order made by statutory instrument.
- (5) An order may direct that the arrangements shall be—
 - (a) those agreed by any relevant authorities or association of relevant authorities, or
 - (b) in default of such agreement, such arrangements as appear to the Secretary of State to be suitable, after consultation with such associations representing relevant authorities, and such other persons, as he thinks appropriate.
- (6) No order shall be made unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

34 Duties to persons whose applications are referred

- (1) Where, in accordance with section 33(1), a local authority notify another authority of an application, the notifying authority shall secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant until it is determined whether the conditions for referral of his application to the other authority are satisfied.
- (2) If it is determined that the conditions for referral are satisfied, the notified authority shall secure that accommodation becomes available for occupation by the applicant; if it is determined that the conditions are not satisfied, the notifying authority shall secure that accommodation becomes available for occupation by him.
- (3) When the matter has been determined, the notifying authority shall notify the applicant—
 - (a) whether they or the notified authority are the authority whose duty it is to secure that accommodation becomes available for his occupation, and
 - (b) of the reasons why the authority subject to that duty are subject to it.
- (4) The notice required to be given to a person under subsection (3) shall be given in writing and shall, if not received by him, be treated as having been given to him only if it is made available at the authority's office for a reasonable period for collection by him or on his behalf.

35 Supplementary provisions

- (1) A local authority may perform any duty under section 31 or 34 (duties to persons found to be homeless to secure that accommodation becomes available for the occupation of a person)—
 - (a) by making available accommodation held by them under Part I (provision of housing) or under any other enactment,
 - (b) by securing that he obtains accommodation from some other person, or
 - (c) by giving him such advice and assistance as will secure that he obtains accommodation from some other person.
- (2) Without prejudice to section 210(1), a local authority may require a person to whom they were subject to a duty under section 29, 31 or 34 (interim duty to accommodate pending inquiries and duties to persons found to be homeless)—

- (a) to pay such reasonable charges as they may determine in respect of accommodation which they secure for his occupation (either by making it available themselves or otherwise), or
- (b) to pay such reasonable amount as they may determine in respect of sums payable by them for accommodation made available by another person.

36 Protection of property of homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness

- (1) This section applies where a local authority have reason to believe that an applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness (or, in the case of an applicant to whom they owe a duty under section 29 (interim duty to accommodate pending inquiries), that he may be homeless) and that—
 - (a) there is a danger of loss of, or damage to, any moveable property of his by reason of his inability to protect it or deal with it, and
 - (b) no other suitable arrangements have been or are being made.
- (2) If the authority have become subject to a duty towards the applicant under section 29, 31(2) or (3)(a), 32(2) or 34 (duty to accommodate during inquiries and duties to persons found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness), then, whether or not they are still subject to such a duty, they shall take reasonable steps to prevent the loss of the moveable property or prevent or mitigate damage to it; and if they have not become subject to such a duty, they may take any steps they consider reasonable for that purpose.
- (3) The authority may for the purposes of this section—
 - (a) enter, at all reasonable times, any premises which are the usual place of residence of the applicant or which were his last usual place of residence, and
 - (b) deal with any moveable property of his in any way which is reasonably necessary, in particular by storing it or arranging for its storage.
- (4) The authority may decline to take action under this section except upon such conditions as they consider appropriate in the particular case, which may include conditions as to—
 - (a) the making and recovery by the authority of reasonable charges for the action taken, or
 - (b) the disposal by the authority, in such circumstances as may be specified, of moveable property in relation to which they have taken action.
- (5) When in the authority's opinion there is no longer any reason to believe that there is a danger of loss of or damage to a person's moveable property by reason of his inability to protect it or deal with it, the authority shall cease to have any duty or power to take action under this section; but property stored by virtue of their having taken such action may be kept in store and any conditions upon which it was taken into store shall continue to have effect, with any necessary modifications.
- (6) Where the authority—
 - (a) cease to be subject to a duty to take action under this section in respect of an applicant's moveable property, or
 - (b) cease to have power to take such action, having previously taken such action,

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they shall notify the applicant of that fact and of the reason why they are of opinion that there is no longer any reason to believe that there is a danger of loss of or damage to his moveable property by reason of his inability to protect it or deal with it.

- (7) The notification shall be given to the applicant—
- (a) by delivering it to him, or
 - (b) by leaving it, or sending it to him, at his last known address.
- (8) References in this section to moveable property of the applicant include moveable property of any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him.

Administrative provisions

37 Guidance to authorities by the Secretary of State

- (1) In relation to homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness, a relevant authority shall have regard in the exercise of their functions to such guidance as may from time to time be given by the Secretary of State.
- (2) The Secretary of State may give guidance either generally or to specified descriptions of authorities.

38 Co-operation between authorities

Where a local authority—

- (a) request another local authority in Scotland or England or Wales, a development corporation, a registered housing association or the Scottish Special Housing Association to assist them in the discharge of their functions under sections 28, 29, 31 to 33 and 34(1) and (2) (which relate to the duties of local authorities with respect to homelessness and threatened homelessness as such),
- (b) request a social work authority in Scotland or a social services authority in England or Wales to exercise any of their functions in relation to a case which the local authority are dealing with under those provisions, or
- (c) request another local authority in Scotland or England or Wales to assist them in the discharge of their functions under section 36 (protection of property of homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness),

the authority to whom the request is made shall co-operate in rendering such assistance in the discharge of the functions to which the request relates as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Assistance for voluntary organisations

39 Financial and other assistance for voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness

- (1) The Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury, may, upon such terms and subject to such conditions as he may determine, give to a voluntary organisation concerned with homelessness, or with matters relating to homelessness, assistance by way of grant or loan or partly in the one way and partly in the other.

- (2) A local authority may, upon such terms and subject to such conditions as they may determine, give to such a voluntary organisation such assistance as is mentioned in subsection (1), and may also assist such an organisation by—
 - (a) permitting them to use premises belonging to the authority upon such terms and subject to such conditions as may be agreed,
 - (b) making available furniture or other goods, whether by way of gift, loan or otherwise, and
 - (c) making available the services of staff employed by the authority.
- (3) No assistance shall be given under subsection (1) or (2) unless the voluntary organisation first give an undertaking—
 - (a) that they will use the money, furniture or other goods or premises made available to them for a specified purpose, and
 - (b) that they will, if the person giving the assistance serves notice on them requiring them to do so, furnish, within the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which the notice is served, a certificate giving such information as may reasonably be required by the notice with respect to the manner in which the assistance given to them is being used.
- (4) The conditions subject to which assistance is given under this section shall in all cases include, in addition to any conditions determined or agreed under subsection (1) or (2), conditions requiring the voluntary organisation to—
 - (a) keep proper books of account and have them audited in such manner as may be specified,
 - (b) keep records indicating how they have used the money, furniture or other goods or premises made available to them, and
 - (c) submit the books of account and records for inspection by the person giving the assistance.
- (5) If it appears to the person giving the assistance that the voluntary organisation have failed to carry out their undertaking as to the purpose for which the assistance was to be used, he shall take all reasonable steps to recover from the organisation an amount equal to the amount of the assistance; but no sum is so recoverable unless he has first served on the voluntary organisation a notice specifying the amount which in his opinion is recoverable and the basis on which that amount has been calculated.

Supplementary provisions

40 False statements, withholding information and failure to disclose change of circumstances

- (1) If a person, with intent to induce a local authority to believe, in connection with the exercise of their functions under this Part, that he or another person—
 - (a) is homeless or threatened with homelessness, or
 - (b) has a priority need, or
 - (c) did not become homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally,knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular, or knowingly withholds information which the authority have reasonably required him to give in connection with the exercise of those functions, he shall be guilty of an offence.

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- (2) If before an applicant receives notification of the local authority's decision on his application there is any change of facts material to his case, he shall notify the authority as soon as possible; and the authority shall explain to every applicant, in ordinary language, the duty imposed on him by this subsection and the effect of subsection (3).
- (3) A person who fails to comply with subsection (2) commits an offence unless he shows that he was not given the explanation required by that subsection or that he had some other reasonable excuse for noncompliance.
- (4) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

41 Meaning of accommodation available for occupation

For the purposes of this Part accommodation shall be regarded as available for a person's occupation only if it is available for occupation both by him and by any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him; and references to securing accommodation for a person's occupation shall be construed accordingly.

42 Application of this Part to cases arising in England or Wales

- (1) Sections 33 and 34 (referral of application to another local authority and duties to persons whose applications are referred) apply—
 - (a) to applications referred by a local authority in England or Wales in pursuance of section 67(1) of the Housing Act 1985, and
 - (b) to persons whose applications are so transferred,
 as they apply to cases arising under this Part.
- (2) Section 38 (duty of other authorities to co-operate with local authority) applies to a request by a local authority in England or Wales under section 72 of the Housing Act 1985 as it applies to a request by a local authority in Scotland.
- (3) In this Part, in relation to England and Wales—
 - (a) "local authority" means a local housing authority within the meaning of section 1(1) of the said Act of 1985 and references to the district of such an authority are to the area of the council concerned,
 - (b) "social work authority" means a social services authority for the purposes of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, as defined in section 1 of that Act;

and in section 38(a) (requests for co-operation) "development corporation" means a development corporation established by an order made or having effect as if made under the New Towns Act 1981 or the Commission for the New Towns.

43 Minor definitions

In this Part—

"accommodation available for occupation" has the meaning assigned to it by section 41;

"applicant (for housing accommodation)" has the meaning assigned to it by section 28(1);

"homeless" has the meaning assigned to it by section 24(1) to (3);

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"homeless intentionally or threatened with homelessness intentionally" has the meaning assigned to it by section 26;

"local connection (in relation to the district of a local authority)" has the meaning assigned to it by section 27;

"priority need (for accommodation)" has the meaning assigned to it by section 25;

"relevant authority" means a local authority or social work authority;

"securing accommodation for a person's occupation" has the meaning assigned to it by section 41;

"social work authority" means a local authority for the purposes of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, that is to say, a regional or islands council;

"threatened with homelessness" has the meaning assigned to it by section 24(4);

"voluntary organisation" means a body, not being a public or local authority, whose activities are carried on otherwise than for profit.