

Request

1. Please provide copies of any policy and practice documents currently used or relied upon by your housing officers to manage the initial approach of homeless applicants and how they are required to make their homelessness application. Such documents could include, but not be limited to:
 - (a) guidance notes;
 - (b) briefings;
 - (c) training materials or records;
 - (d) reports;
 - (e) recent reviews of your homelessness service; and/or
 - (f) internal policy/practice documents.
2. Please confirm the different methods by which you currently assist homeless applicants who approach the council to make a homelessness application under the provisions of the Housing Act. In particular, please confirm whether services are provided via:
 - (a) online application form;
 - (b) email;
 - (c) telephone booking;
 - (d) in-person appointments; and/or
 - (e) other (please specify).
3. For each of the methods at 2(a) to (e) above, are they available on an on-demand basis or are they restricted to appointment only?
4. Do you publicly advertise each of the above methods?
 - (a) If so, where and in what format is the information about how to access these services provided?
5. What in-person services do you offer to people who need to make a homelessness application and in what circumstances?
 - (a) Where you are not meeting applicants face-to-face, what methods do you have in place to ensure that you have sufficient information about the applicants to process homelessness applications and prioritise available housing?
6. How do you triage someone who presents in person seeking homelessness assistance? What information do you provide to that person, and in what format?
7. If services are restricted to appointment only (i.e. walk-ins are not accommodated):
 - (a) how can those appointments be booked?
 - (b) what are the current wait times for securing an initial appointment?
 - (c) what criteria are applied in prioritising the order in which appointments are offered?
8. Have the methods for accessing homelessness services in 2(a) to (e) above changed in the last 6 years?
 - (a) If so, please explain the changes and when they were implemented.
 - (b) At the time any of these changes were being contemplated or implemented, did you conduct any impact assessment on those who might be adversely affected by the relevant change? If so, what were the results of those impact assessments?
 - (c) Since the relevant change, have you observed any changes in:
 - (i) the number of homeless applicants;
 - (ii) the profile of homeless applicants; or
 - (iii) the method via which they have accessed homelessness services or made an homeless application?

9. How many homelessness applications have you received each year for the past 6 years?
- (a) In each of those years, how many applications have been received via each of the methods at 2(a) to (d) above?
- (b) Do you track statistics on the profile of applicants and whether they may face difficulties in accessing services via the different methods above, including, but not limited to:
- (i) illiteracy or low literacy;
 - (ii) individuals who are digitally excluded;
 - (iii) people with disabilities;
 - (iv) elderly people; and/or
 - (v) non-English speakers.
- (c) What assistance and/or special provisions do you make for any individuals who may face difficulties in accessing services?
- (i) Are any of these restricted in any way? For example, is an applicant required to demonstrate a specific disability in order to be offered certain types of support?
10. How many in-person appointments do you provide daily?
- (a) On which days of the week, during what hours and at which locations are in-person appointments available?
- (b) Of the total number of daily in-person appointments you offer to constituents generally, how many are available for homelessness applicants?
- (c) On average across the past 6 years, how many people that have presented for in-person appointments each day were offered appointments?
11. How do you receive and deal with urgent homelessness applications?
12. Do you offer emergency walk-in slots daily? If yes:
- (a) How many emergency slots are available each day and on which days of the week?
- (b) Are these slots solely for homelessness appointments or are they for a range of council services?
13. Do you rely on, or direct applicants to, other third party or local authority services for assistance in making a homelessness application? If so:
- (a) Please specify the service providers.
- (b) Do you train those service providers on how to assist?
- (c) For each of these service providers:
- (i) What are their hours of operation?
 - (ii) Are there any access restrictions in place? In particular, are they available on a walk- in basis or do they need to be booked in advance? If booking is required, what is the process?
14. Have you received any complaints:
- (a) in relation to the process for accessing homelessness support;
 - (b) from anyone who has struggled to access homelessness support due to the closure of, or restrictions on, face-to-face homelessness services you provide; or
 - (c) from other service providers as a result of the closure of, or restrictions on, face-to-face homelessness services you provide?

Please share the above information/documents from your authority's housing department, excluding any information which could be considered personal information under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Response

1. There are no written documents in relation to this. All Homeless officers are led by Homeless legislation when completing a Homeless assessment and making decisions on initial approaches. A good tool that we use is the "Homelessness Codes of Guidance" which can be found on the gov website. As new legislation comes into place, we receive a lot of communication on training from charities such as Shelter and will share good practice on cases studies with the team where there is learning. All the questions that are aligned into a Homeless assessment are also built into our case management system, with prompts on questions which surround the assessment.
2. We receive Homeless applications in several ways, customers can complete an online referral via the Wigan council website, which sends a referral directly through to our case management system. Customers can also contact the team via phone, which includes an out of hours service and then can email the service via a duty inbox. We will complete assessments according to the preference of the customer, that could be over the phone or in a public building or at a home address if this is their wishes. We also have a number of community venues that we do drop-in sessions whereby we can complete in person assessments.
3. As above on an on-demand basis.
4. Information on how to contact the Homeless team is detailed on the Wigan council website - [Homelessness](#) we also work closely with the Brick which provide a lot of advice on how to gain Homeless support [Contact Us – The Brick](#)
5. As detailed in Q3, we will assess customers based on their preference, this may also include homeless assessments in Prison, hospital, supported accommodation placements, our Life Centres and Libraries, Community Venues.
6. We triage Homeless customers as detailed in Q1, in instances whereby someone may just want Housing advice, we will signpost them to other services such as the Private Rented Assistance Scheme [Private Renting Assistance Scheme](#) or how to apply for social housing [Apply to join the housing register](#).
7. Not Applicable
8. Digital offers have grown over the years for Homeless support, and something we are looking to invest in further around the use of AI however we have also offered face to face opportunities for Homeless assessments and this has grown over the years in Community venues. There has been a significant increase in Homeless demand as securing accommodation, cost of living has become more of a challenge. There has been no change to existing practice as this is an ongoing process of learning to support customers than an implementation or change position for this work.
9. Financial years
25-26 = 4120
24-25 = 4016
23-24 = 4153
22-24 = 3985
21-22 = 3014
20-21 = 3443.

We do not record the pathway in any form of data reporting as to how the enquiry came through, you would have to manually check all cases. There are some questions built into our case management system such as health needs, gender, ethnicity, age of applicants but not all areas in your request are covered. We will try our best to meet the needs of each individual, whether that may be the use of interpreter services where there may be language barriers, face to face assessments at venues suitable to the customer.

10. We are unable to provide this information as in person assessments are ad hoc and demand is led, not by appointment schedules. Generally, in person assessments will be Mon-Fri between 9-5 however we can offer assessments in person out of those hours also.
11. We have a rota of officers on duty, with two officers on Urgent assessments daily and they are responsible for assessing any cases who are stating they are without accommodation that night, these are also managed by a senior officer offering advice and support when needed. We can also ask for support from the wider team when needed. We have daily cover on the inbox/telephone who will triage those calls and then send them through to the officers on urgent cover.
12. We attend various drop in sessions across the borough with routine sessions but customers can also present to the Life centre and we have staff available across the buildings to speak to the customer in an emergency. We also have support in the form of the Brickworks which is run by The Brick which again offers crisis support.
13. As already outlined in Q12 – there are no set hours of operation with The Brick as this can fluctuate dependent on need. We offer Council training and support as needed to local providers.
14. We do receive complaints as outlined in the following link [Council complaints](#), but do not have a record of the nature of each complaint received.