

housing

Feeling comfortable, warm, safe and secure in your home is important for both you and the person you care for. Your accommodation may be suitable now, but your requirements could change, for example if the person you care for becomes less mobile or needs more intensive care.

This factsheet looks at **different forms of accommodation**, including council housing and residential and nursing care, and covers a range of issues relating to housing, including keeping a home warm and in good repair and contacting the **utilities and other services**.

Reference is made to a number of factsheets published by Age Concern England (ACE). They are available free from **ACE's information line (0800 00 99 66: 8am-7pm, seven days a week)**, or its website www.ace.org.uk.



Council housing

Anyone aged 16 or over can apply for council accommodation, but not everyone will qualify. Details of those who do are kept on the housing register.

Applicants for council housing are placed in one of **four priority bandings** – A, B, C or D. Priorities within bands are on a date order basis.

Properties are advertised through the lettings agency **Locata**. Locata works with Brent, Harrow, Hillingdon, Ealing and Harrow councils, and housing associations, advertising and matching people to homes. People on the housing register are expected to search and bid for properties from *Locata Home*, a fortnightly freesheet available at One Stop Shops or libraries, local housing area offices, other council offices and on www.brent.gov.uk/hrc.nsf. For further information about the scheme see www.locata.org.uk.

To apply for council accommodation you need to complete a **housing application form**, available from local housing area offices, One Stop Shops, the Housing Resource Contact Centre on 020 8937 2000 or online at www.brent.gov.uk/hrc.nsf. If you are already in council accommodation and would like to transfer, you need to complete a **transfer application form**, available from the same sources. You may get extra priority for a transfer if you want to move to smaller accommodation.

Further information is given in the booklets *A Guide to The Housing Register* and *A Guide to Transfer Applications*, available free from the **Housing Resource Centre**, Mahatma Gandhi House, 34 Wembley Hill Road, Wembley HA9 8AD (020 8937 2000) or www.brent.gov.uk/hrc.nsf. Both booklets are also available on tape, in large print and in community languages.

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) (020 8937 2242, info@bphousing.co.uk, www.brent.gov.uk/bhp.nsf) looks after council properties in the borough. It offers support to residents, looks after communal areas and gardens, carries out repairs, services gas installations, collects rent and manages problems between neighbours.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints should initially be addressed to a senior officer. If you do not receive a satisfactory answer, contact the Standards and Complaints Officer, BHP, Chancel House, Neasden Lane, London NW10 2UF (020 8937 2323) for complaints about BHP, or the Customer Services Manager, 6th floor, Mahatma Gandhi House, Wembley Hill Road, Wembley HA9 8AD



(020 8937 2367) if your complaint is about housing services provided by the council.

Other housing options

The council's Private Housing Information Unit (020 8937 2787, phiu@brent.gov.uk, www.brent.gov.uk/phiu), runs the Deposit Guarantee Scheme, **to help people on welfare benefits that entitle them to full Housing Benefit obtain rented accommodation in the private sector, and Homefinders, which advertises private properties for rent, in One Stop Shops and at** www.brent.gov.uk/homefinders.

The Unit also publishes a range of free **advice leaflets** designed to assist owner occupiers, landlords and tenants (available on the website), advises on landlord/tenant law and gives mortgage arrears counselling.

The Unit's **Housing Advice Team** (020 8937 2787, housingadvice@brent.gov.uk) provides advice on housing rights for those living in the private sector.

Housing advice specifically for **young people** is available on www.brent.gov.uk/homezone.

If you are a council tenant interested in buying your property contact the **Right to Buy Unit** (020 8937 2600, info@bhphousing.co.uk).

Metropolitan Home Ownership (020 8920 7777, www.mho.co.uk) administers a number of schemes in the borough, including the following.

- **Open Market HomeBuy** assists council and housing association tenants and key workers to buy property on the open market. It provides an interest-free loan for up to 25% of the purchase price (12.5% is interest-free for five years).
- **New Build HomeBuy** enables council and housing association tenants and others in housing need to buy new or refurbished homes on a part-rent, part-buy basis.

For further information about these and other affordable housing schemes see www.housingoptions.co.uk

The Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group (020 7624 4327, info@bptrg.org) provides mutual support for tenants and gives specialist housing advice for private and housing association tenants in Brent. It produces a quarterly newsletter and advice leaflets.

Homelessness

The council has a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

However, only 'priority need' groups qualify for temporary accommodation. If you are homeless or may be in danger of losing your home telephone the council's **Housing Contact Centre** on 020 8937 2000 (020 8937 1234 outside normal working hours). For further information see *A Guide to Homelessness*, available from the Housing Contact Centre or www.brent.gov.uk/hrc.nsf. The guide is also available on tape, in large print and in community languages.

The council can no longer assist asylum seekers who are homeless. **Asylum seekers** in need of accommodation and subsistence should approach the National Asylum Support Services (0845 602 1739) or the Refugee Council (020 7346 6770).

The council's **Breaking the Chain** scheme (020 8937 2000) aims to give homeless people who live in a hotel, are in temporary accommodation or homeless at home the opportunity to secure rented accommodation in the private sector. It provides homeless people with a resettlement package and offers an incentive package to landlords to let their properties to homeless households for a minimum of two years.

Cricklewood Homeless Concern (020 3273 0049, admin@chc.org.uk, www.chc.org.uk) offers housing advice and, where appropriate, a referral service to rough sleepers, those in insecure housing and people with support needs. Ring to make an appointment.

Shelterline (0808 800 4444: 8am-midnight) is a free service for people who are homeless or who have housing problems. Advice is also available online at <http://england.shelter.org.uk/advice/housingadvice.cfm>

Brent Citizens Advice Bureau (0845 0505250, brent.cab@brentcab.co.uk) can give advice.

Special needs housing

SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

Sheltered schemes normally have a 24-hour alarm system, a warden and communal facilities such as a laundry and residents' lounge. They are suitable for people who can look after themselves with some assistance. Accommodation can be rented or purchased.

Most sheltered housing in Brent is provided by **Willow Housing**. You can apply for sheltered accommodation if you are a council tenant (contact your area housing office), a housing association tenant, live in a private rented property which is unsuitable for you, or do not have a permanent home (contact the Housing Resource Centre on 020 8937 2000). Applicants normally have to be aged 60 or over.

There are also two **extra care sheltered schemes**, to help older people who are more frail and who need additional support. Applications are made through Older People's Services (020 8937 1200).

SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORTED HOUSING

There are also a number of voluntary and other non-profit-making organisations that run sheltered and registered homes in Brent for people with specialised needs. Some operate a self-referral system, others involve a social services assessment (especially if there is a cost element). Some are listed below. For information on others contact the One Stop Shop (020 8937 1200).

Brent MIND (020 8451 3200, www.brentmind.com) provides supported housing to adults with mental health problems. Provision ranges from low support to 24-hour staffed care, and for a range of cultural groups. Applications must be made via a care manager, social worker or psychiatric nurse. No self-referral. Referees can request an application pack from 020 8451 3224.

Brent Learning Disability Partnership (020 8937 4659, www.brent.gov.uk/socserv2) provides support to people with a learning disability living in unstaffed shared homes, on their own or with an adult placement carer.

Brent Mencap (020 8451 5278, www.brentmencap.org.uk) manages three group homes for people with a learning disability who require shared accommodation but do not need intensive or 24-hour support.

Brent Mencap also manages the **Specialist Housing Advice Service** (020 8451 5278, robert@brentmencap.org.uk), which provides information and advice about housing options for people who have learning disabilities.

For information about supported housing or existing schemes in Brent, contact your care manager.

RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING CARE HOMES

If the needs of the person you care for increase, and you feel they could best be met in a residential setting you should ask the One Stop Shop (020 8937 1200) to arrange an assessment. For further information see *Moving to a care home*, available from One Stop Shops or www.brent.gov.uk/socserv2.nsf ('Community care publications').

Brent Social Services runs some homes; others in the borough are run by charities, housing associations, voluntary organisations and private individuals and companies. A list of local registered residential and nursing homes is available from the **Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)** (0845 015 0120/0191 233 3323, textphone 0845 015 2255/0191 233 3588) or www.csci.org.uk). It is advisable to read the inspection reports of any homes you wish to consider further. Ring CSCI or see www.csci.org.uk (click on 'Find an inspection report').

Paying for residential care

The council will meet all, some or none of the costs of residential or nursing care, depending on a person's financial circumstances. **If the home owned by the person you care for is also your permanent home you may not have to sell it. If you live elsewhere you will not have to sell your home.** Further information is included in *Paying for a care home* and *Will I have to sell my home?*, available from the Finance Department (020 8937 6310) or from www.brent.gov.uk/socserv2.nsf (click on 'Community care publications').

Different rules apply if nursing care is provided. Contact Brent Carers Centre for details.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- **Counsel and Care** (0845 300 7585: 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday, www.counselandcare.org.uk) – information about care homes in Greater London and advice on charges, benefits, community care and charitable grants.
- **The Elderly Accommodation Counsel** (020 7820 1343, enquiries@eac.org.uk, www.housingcare.org) – information and advice on all forms of specialist accommodation for older people, including sheltered accommodation to rent or buy and residential and nursing homes.
- **The Relatives and Residents Association** (020 7359 8136, advice@relres.org, www.relres.org) – advice and help to relatives and friends about care of older people in homes.
- **Age Concern England** factsheets *Local authority charging procedures for care homes*, *How to find*

a care home, Treatment of the former home as capital for people in care homes, Paying for care in a care home if you have a partner, Transfer of assets and paying for care in a care home, Buying retirement housing and Looking for rented housing.

- **Help the Aged** leaflets *Care homes, Paying for your care home*, and *Sheltered housing*, (available from Brent Carers Centre or www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb/AdviceSupport/).
- **Seniorline** (0808 800 65 65) run by Help the Aged, provides advice on a number of welfare rights issues, including housing advice. Available 9am-4pm, Monday-Friday; calls are free.
- **Help the Aged's website** www.helptheaged.org.uk includes information about housing and home care options for older people.
- *Home from Home: your guide to choosing a care home* – a practical guide to help people make informed choices about choosing a care home. Published by the **King's Fund** (020 7307 2591, www.kingsfund.org.uk).
- *Moving into a care home: things you need to know*, published by the **Department of Health** www.dh.gov.uk.
- *A question-and-answer guide for sheltered housing tenants*, published by the **National Housing Federation** (020 7067 1010, info@housing.org.uk, www.housing.org.uk).

Repairs

Owner occupiers, private and housing association tenants on income support or who are disabled may be eligible for a small works grant – for minor adaptations and repairs – up to £5000 in any three-year period.

For details contact the council's **Private Housing Services** on 020 8937 2383/2309, phs@brent.gov.uk, www.brent.gov.uk/hsgprivat.nsf.

Houseproud (0800 783 7569, www.houseproud.org.uk), run by the Home Improvement Trust, helps homeowners aged 60 or over, or households with a disabled person of any age, to repair, improve or adapt their homes by providing advice and risk-free loans. An advisor will discuss what improvements, repairs or adaptations are required, and will check eligibility for the scheme.

Council tenants should contact Brent Housing Partnership (020 8937 2750, repairs.centre@bhp.housing.co.uk) about repairs. It is also possible to report non-emergency housing repairs online on www.bhphousing.co.uk/.

Adaptations

There are many adaptations – ranging from lever operated taps to bath lifts, ramps and door widening – that can make managing at home easier for a disabled person or for someone who is frail because of age or illness.

Contact a One Stop Shop (020 8937 1200) to arrange for a visit from an **occupational therapist** (OT). If the OT recommends adaptations, these could be paid for through a **disabled facilities grant**.

The **Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)** (helpline 0845 130 9177, textphone 020 7432 8009, advice@dlf.org.uk, www.dlf.org.uk) publishes a number of useful information booklets, including the guide to independent living *Making a difference*. It can also advise about equipment to help disabled and frail people manage in their own homes and has lists of suppliers. You can try out equipment and gadgets at the DLF Equipment Centre, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU, open 10am-4pm Monday to Friday, or telephone 0845 130 9177, textphone 020 7432 8009 to make an appointment.

Keeping warm

INSULATION AND DRAUGHTPROOFING GRANTS

The **Warm Front Team** (0800 952 1555, www.powergen-warmfront.co.uk) provides grants (to both tenants and owner occupiers) for loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, heating system control improvements and draughtproofing. To be eligible you must receive one of a number of benefits.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The **Winter Warmth Line** (0800 085 7000, textphone 0800 085 7857), which operates between October and March, gives free advice about staying warm and comfortable.

Age Concern England's factsheet *Help with heating* gives advice and information on help available to assist with heating costs and other fuel problems.

The **Energy Savings Trust** (0800 512 012/020 7527 2121, energysavingstrust.org.uk) provides free energy efficiency advice. The website includes a database that has information on financial assistance for installing energy saving measures.

Energy Solutions (North West London)

(0800 1695693, 020 8904 2444, info@energysolutions.org.uk, www.energysolutions.org.uk) is an independent not-for-profit company funded by a number of organisations, including Brent Council. It provides free, impartial advice on energy efficiency and renewable energy systems and can help people access grant and loan schemes for loft and cavity wall insulation.

Utilities

You can choose which company to use for your supply of gas and/or electricity.

All gas and electricity suppliers have a **priority service register**, for people of pensionable age, disabled people, and people who are chronically sick or have sight or hearing difficulties. Services available include a free gas appliance and installation safety check, special controls or adapters for meters and appliances, and Braille and talking bills.

energywatch (helpline: 08459 06 07 08, Typetalk: 18001 08459 06 07 08, enquiries@energywatch.org.uk, www.energywatch.org.uk), the independent watchdog for gas and electricity consumers, provides free, impartial advice on a range of energy issues. It publishes a number of factsheets, including *How to choose and change your energy supplier*, which compares prices and explains how to change supplier. The factsheets (which are also accessible to consumers with learning difficulties) are available from the helpline or can be downloaded from www.energywatch.org.uk/publications/leaflets.

Suppliers should not cut off the gas or electricity supplies of such households for non-payment of bills during the winter months. Further information is available from **energywatch** (see above).

It is also possible to buy gas and electricity through **Age Concern Energy Services**. For details telephone freephone 0800 015 6784 or see www.ace.org.uk/AgeConcern/energy.asp. The service is available to anyone, whatever age; people aged 60 or over receive extra benefits.

SOLID FUEL

The **Solid Fuel Association** (0845 601 4406, sfa@solidfuel.co.uk, www.solidfuel.co.uk) provides information and advice on all aspects of solid fuel heating.

Telephones

Social services may pay for the installation of a telephone line and telephone, and assist with line rental payment for someone who has a life-threatening condition and requires frequent medical attention.

They can also provide adapted telephones for people with a sensory impairment. Contact a One Stop Shop (020 8937 4300) to arrange an assessment.

BT's **Age & Disability Action team** (0800 800 150, TYPETALK 18001 0800 0800 150, www.btplc.com/age_disability) provides advice and has a range of services and products for older and disabled customers.

Safety and security

ALARMS

There are a number of 24-hour alarm systems that will send a message to a friend, relative or response centre to say the user needs help.

- **Age Concern Aid-Call** (0800 77 22 66, info@aidcall-alarms.co.uk, www.aidcall-alarms.co.uk) provides button alarm units which, when pressed, send a signal to an

emergency response. There is a range of payment options.

- **The Harrow Helpline Alarm Service** (020 8861 3242) hires alarm units. Depending on need, social services may pay for a Helpline system. Contact a One Stop Shop (020 8937 1200) to arrange an assessment.
- **Help the Aged SeniorLink** (0845 603 4576) provides community alarms, and may be able to fund them if cost is a problem.

GAS SAFETY

Brent Council is responsible for carrying out an annual safety check on all council properties. If your property has not been checked contact **Brent Housing Partnership** on 020 8937 2242 or complete an online form on www.brent.gov.uk/bhp.nsf

If you suspect you have a gas leak contact **National Grid** on 0800 111 999, textphone 0800 371 787.

Insurance

Age Concern Insurance Services offers home and contents policies for people aged 50 or over. Details on 0845 606 5075 or contact **Age Concern Brent:** 020 8965 7711.

Remember that other factsheets in this pack may also include information useful to you