

Carers Information Sheet 13

Housing Information for Carers

CARERS LEWISHAM will help carers with any housing problem.

Phone our Helpline - see bottom of p.2.

MOVING IN WITH THE CARE FOR PERSON

If you are a tenant, as long as you continue to pay the rent for your own property, you should not have a problem. Whether you are a tenant or owner occupier, you may be entitled to help with housing costs for an absence of up to a year. While caring elsewhere, you are exempt from Council Tax on your own home for as long as it is unoccupied. You should get proper advice before you give up your home. You could have problems when/if your caring responsibilities end, as you may have no automatic right to the home of the person you have been looking after.

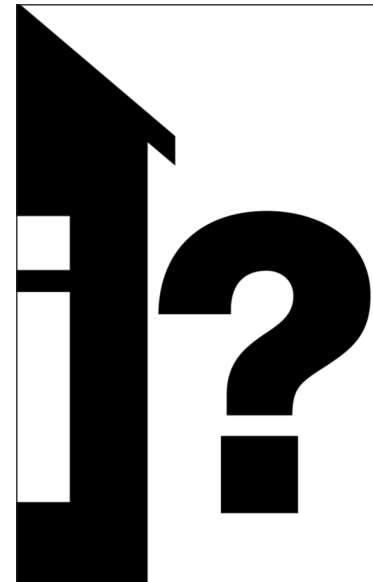
STAYING PUT IF CARING ENDS

COUNCIL TENANTS: To take over a tenancy you must either be married / in a civil partnership, or have lived together for more than one year in that home, or be a close relative living at the property as your only home for 12 months. **AND**, the tenancy must not have been 'passed on' before. In Lewisham the council may undertake to rehouse you if you have been a substantial carer for one year but do not meet the criteria above. **GET ADVICE!** It may be possible for the property to be put in both your names now.

OTHER TENANTS: The law is complicated in this area, some tenants may have similar rights to Council Tenants, others no rights at all. Speak to your or your cared for person's Housing Manager.

THE CARE FOR PERSON OWNS THEIR HOME?

If you move into a home owned by your cared for person, and are not disabled yourself, or their



husband, wife or long term partner, you may have no rights over the property if they eventually have to go into care and the property sold to pay their fees. Lewisham does look favourably on people who can prove they have been caring for at least a year and may then only make a charge if and when the property is sold.

WHAT IF THEY COME TO LIVE WITH ME?

You may be able to obtain suitable equipment (e.g. grab rails) or adaptations (e.g. a level access shower). Phone the Occupational Therapy Team on **8314 7777**. Keep a note of how long the procedures take, as overlong delays can be challenged. Alternatively, if a tenant, you could apply to your "social" landlord for an accommodation transfer.

JOINT OWNERSHIP?

If you do this, it is important to think of what might happen if one of you dies. You must get legal advice to make a fair legal agreement on the property, as well as making wills. NB If the person you care for has to go into permanent residential care, a charge for fees may be made on their share of the property.

OTHER OPTIONS:

1. The disabled person may be able to go into **very sheltered accommodation**, where care workers are regularly available - run by the Council ("Lewisham Homes") or a Housing Association.

2. There are also **community alarm** schemes available that people can have in their own homes so they can call for help in an emergency:

Linkline **020 8690 8675**

3. It may also be possible for your cared for **person to have a package of care** in their own home which meets their needs for support. Contact Social Services via **8314 6000** and ask for a 'Community Care Assessment', and a 'Carers Assessment.' See also our Info Sheet no.3.

HOMELESSNESS

Possible or immediate homelessness can happen for various reasons. Any advice organization (see below) or solicitor can help if contacted as soon as eviction is threatened. If all else fails & someone is faced with imminent homelessness, contact the Council's "**Housing Options**" Centre: 3 Rosenthal Road, Rushey Green, SE6 2BX **8314 7007**

Out of office hours **8778 0877** or **8314 6000**

If the person has priority need / dependants, a "local connection", & is not seen as "intentionally" homeless, where no other arrangement is possible it is the council's responsibility to arrange emergency or temporary accommodation.

OVERCROWDED / UNSUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

The Council and Housing Associations have points assessment schemes for existing tenants who need rehousing. Medical / professionals' reports may be needed to clarify priority. Eligible **council** tenants then have to bid for the few available properties in their priority band via "Homesearch". Insist on help from your housing officer if you have difficulty using this. An advice organization like Carers Lewisham may be able to help with problems, e.g. challenging too low a priority, poor accommodation, lengthy delays, etc.

WHAT HELP CAN I GET WITH HOUSING COSTS?

COUNCIL or HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANTS:

You may be able to claim Housing Benefit (HB) to help with your rent if you are on a low income. Non-dependants living with you will be expected to contribute in certain circumstances.

PRIVATE TENANTS claim Local Housing Allowance.

This is worked out slightly differently, with a standard rate for the area & depends on the age / needs / number of people in the household. It is normally paid to the tenant, who is responsible for paying the landlord.

OWNER OCCUPIERS: If you are eligible for income support or pension credit, you may be able to get help with the interest repayments on your mortgage.

COUNCIL TAX (CT)

In addition to your unoccupied property you may be able to get a reduction if:

- you are on a low income (CT Benefit, similar to HB);
- rooms have been modified for the disabled person;
- the person you care for is severely mentally impaired, or
- you are caring for someone other than a child or spouse who receives **high** DLA (care) or Attendance Allowance.

WATER RATES there are no reductions for water rates

OTHER USEFUL ORGANISATIONS:

EVELYN ADVICE CENTRE

190 Evelyn St., Deptford: **8691 7180**

GRANTS for REPAIRS for older & disabled owners & private tenants on low incomes: **8314 6622**

HANDYPERSON SCHEME small repairs & household jobs for disabled & older residents: **8314 6309**

SHELTER (London) housing advice line: **7014 1540**

STAYING PUT helps elderly and / or disabled owner occupiers on low incomes to get help with essential maintenance and repairs: **8314 6344**

ENERGY SAVING GRANTS grants for heating or insulation for disabled / older people on low incomes: **020 8314 6339**

