

## **Barnet Homes**

Barnet House, 1255 High Road, Whetstone, London N20 0EJ

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRAct), brought into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018, introduces a new duty to refer for specified public bodies. The new duty requires public authorities to notify local authorities of service users who may be homeless or at threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Before making a referral a public authority must:

- have the individual's consent that the referral is made; and,
- allow the individual to identify the local authority to which they would like the referral to be made.

The duty to refer will come into force on **1<sup>st</sup> October 2018.**

### **What it means for you**

If a public authority believes that a service user may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, or if the service user discloses this information, the public authority will be required to ask the individual if they would like to be referred to the local authority of their choice on these grounds.

If the individual consents to a referral, the public authority will be required to make it. This will notify the identified local authority of the reason for the referral and how the individual can be contacted. A referral from a public authority does **not** trigger a homeless application. Local authorities will be expected to respond to referrals by contacting the individual.

### **What the duty seeks to achieve**

The HRAct recognises that many individuals access a range of public services before approaching a local authority for assistance or reaching the crisis point of homelessness. The duty to refer is intended to help individuals access housing advice and assistance as early as possible, in line with the legislation's increased focus on preventing homelessness wherever possible.

### **Which public authorities have the duty to refer?**

The following services will be required to refer service users they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness:

- Prisons;

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- Youth offender institutions;
- Secure training centres;
- Secure colleges;
- Youth offending teams;
- Probation services (including community rehabilitation companies);
- Jobcentre Plus;
- Accident and emergency departments;
- Urgent treatment centres;
- Hospitals in their function of providing in-patient care; and,
- Social service authorities.

## **How to make a referral**

With the service user's consent that a referral is sent to Barnet Homes, the referral should be sent via email to: [dutytorefer@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer@barnet.gov.uk).

The referring authority will automatically receive a hyperlink to complete the referral form through ALERT, our online portal. This link can also be found on the 'Help with Housing Problems' page of our website: <https://thebarnetgroup.org/bh/applying-for-housing/help-with-housing-problems/>.

When the referring authority has completed the online referral form, Barnet Homes will contact the individual with the details provided. Referring public authorities are reminded that in some cases it will be more appropriate to assist the service user to approach a local authority directly for advice and assistance. For example, individuals with high support needs.

## **National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) webinars**

If your service requires further information, there are free webinars run by NHAS for public bodies subject to the duty to refer. Delegates only need a computer with internet access and a landline. Course objectives include:

- Why the legislation was introduced and what it means;
- Who the legislation applies to and when;
- The definition of the terms 'homelessness' and 'threatened with homelessness'
- The procedures for referral including good practice;
- Considerations to prepare for implementing the duty; and,
- Useful resources.

To book, email [nhaswebinars@shelter.org.uk](mailto:nhaswebinars@shelter.org.uk) with your chosen date and time. Courses are available on the following dates:

[www.barnethomes.org](http://www.barnethomes.org)

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- 18 September 2018: 10:30 AM
- 18 September 2018: 2:30 PM

**We want your support**

We look forward to developing closer joint working arrangements with the introduction of this new duty. It is vital that you engage with this referral pathway and provide a notification for all consenting service users who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Kind regards,



Kate Laffan  
Assistant Director - Operations