



Selby District Council

**Advice for all – Prisoners
and those being released
from prison**

People with offending history generally face additional barriers in accessing housing.

We will work with anybody who is either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

If you are likely to be homeless upon release from prison, you should speak with the prison's supporting service and ask them to contact the Local Authority on your behalf. From here, a referral for housing advice and assistance can be made to the Housing Options team, but please make clear any restrictions that may be in place upon your release.

What service can I expect?

The team is flexible and may be able to offer you an initial telephone appointment under the circumstances. Where possible, it is best to contact the team before leaving prison so we can gather as much information as possible regarding your circumstances to provide you with the most appropriate advice available.

If you are deemed eligible for housing advice and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days, you are likely entitled to make a homeless application with the Local Authority. Additional information regarding homeless applications can be found under the 'Homeless Application' section of our website.

The help you will get from the Council will likely be by way of a Personal Housing Plan and will involve quite a lengthy process. You will have your part to play in this process and completing your 'actions' in your PHP.

To qualify for housing as a homeless person, you will usually have to meet all of the following criteria:

- be eligible for assistance (for instance, to come from the UK and not be an asylum seeker or have limited rights to remain)
- be in a priority group
- be unintentionally homeless
- have a local connection.
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Other things to consider prior to release

My licence conditions mean that I cannot return home. What are my options?

You should speak to your offender manager before you are released if your licence conditions mean that you cannot return home. In some cases, you might be referred to approved premises (i.e. a probation hostel), but places are very limited and are generally reserved for those who are considered high risk and are under multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).

Can I get any help with money on release?

You can apply for a discharge grant of £46 before you are released. If you have found accommodation for your first night on release, you can also apply for an extra grant of about £50 which will be paid directly to the accommodation provider.

Crisis loans and community care grants no longer exist, but if you need money urgently you might be able to apply to your local council for welfare support. You can do this before you are released, particularly if you need help with essential items (e.g. clothes) or general costs associated with moving into new accommodation.

If you would like to apply for welfare support, you could arrange an appointment with an adviser in your prison to help you on preparation for your release.

Can I apply for social housing?

If possible, prior to release, complete a housing application for social housing via North Yorkshire Home Choice (www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk) Paper applications are also available if online completion is not an option.

Please note that your application may be accessed under the 'Unacceptable behaviour' test and you may not qualify for the housing register depending on your housing and offending history.

I will be homeless on release. What are my options?

Family and friends

Most people leaving prison return to family or friends, at least in the short term. If your relationships with family and friends have broken down, it is possible to rebuild bridges, perhaps with the help of prison staff. If your family and friends can see that you have made progress in prison, perhaps in terms of addressing past issues, then they might be more prepared to help you on release. It is very difficult to secure housing on release as waiting lists are long, so it is very important not to dismiss this as an option.

Local Authority

If you are applying for housing as a single, homeless person, the council will provide very limited support unless you are assessed as being in a priority group. This is because there is a shortage of housing association places, which means that the council can only provide housing to the most vulnerable people.

It is still worth writing to your local council up to 56 days before your release, in case you are one of the few who will qualify for housing. If you do not qualify, the council will still provide information about other local housing options which might help you to find accommodation.

Selby District Council's Housing Options team – 01757 705101 and can be found at Access Selby in the Town Centre.

Priority groups

You will not be considered a priority just because you have been in prison. You will need to provide evidence of vulnerability. Prison and probation staff may be able to support your application. Even if the council decides that you are vulnerable due to time spent in prison, it may decide that you became intentionally homeless by committing a serious crime in the first place.

In England, priority groups include:

- Pregnant women
- Those who are responsible for dependent children
- Young people aged 16 or 17
- Care leavers
- Others who may be considered vulnerable:
 - Older applicants
 - Those with disabilities or mental health problems
 - Those who have left the armed forces, a young offender institution or prison
 - People under the age of 25 who are vulnerable due to sleeping on the streets in the past or problems with drugs or alcohol.

If the council accepts that you are eligible for assistance, in priority need and homeless, the council must provide temporary accommodation whilst it investigates how you became homeless and whether you have a local connection.

Local connection

If you are eligible for assistance from the council, in a priority group and have been made unintentionally homeless, the council will need to decide if you have a local connection to the council area to which you have applied. You are likely to be considered to have a local connection to an area if:

- You have lived in the area for six out of the last 12 months, or three out of the last five years. Time spent in prison in an area does not count towards this.
- You have a close family member living in the area and this member has lived there for a minimum of five years, and is still resident (a close family member is defined as a mum, dad, sister, brother, or adult child).
- You have secured work in the area and have an employment contract.
- If you do not have a local connection to the council area to which you have applied, the council may refer you to another area where you do have a local connection. The council for that area will then have to help you.

If the council decides that it is not your fault that you are homeless, that you are in a priority group and you have a local connection, they will then have to help you secure permanent housing. However, due to the shortage of housing available and the numbers of people who are eligible for assistance, you may have to stay in temporary accommodation for a while before you are offered anywhere permanent.

Supported housing providers

Supported housing can offer you specialist support to address specific issues that may have led to your imprisonment or to help you with living independently and adjusting back into the community. Varying levels of support can be provided, depending on the type of accommodation service and your needs.

Private renting

The main advantage of private rented accommodation is that you will have a greater degree of choice in terms of location and type of property. Private rented accommodation is an obvious choice if you have some savings. It is also something that your family and friends can help you to look for and, where possible and necessary, lend money for in order to secure a property.

Your local council might also be able to give you advice about what is available in your local area and how you can get help with paying the rent bonds and rent in advance.

Can I get financial assistance towards housing?

If you are receiving a state benefit or on a low income once released from prison, you are likely entitled to financial assistance towards your rent. The Housing benefit online calculator can be used to check your entitlement to housing benefit and can be found at www.selby.gov.uk/benefits-calculator. You can also apply for Housing Benefit on this same website.

If you are looking to rent a private rented property, you may instead be entitled to Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The amount available to you will depend on where you live and who else lives with you. LHA rates are set for different types of accommodation in each area. The rates range from a single room in a shared house up to properties with four bedrooms. Below shows the maximum housing benefit you may be entitled, depending on what category you fall into.

Rates (April 2017 - March 2018)

Weekly Rates

	York	Doncaster	Wakefield	Leeds
Shared room	£67.09	£55.12	£55.00	£62.48
1 Bed	£98.96	£78.08	£86.30	£100.05
2 Bed	£123.58	£93.23	£103.56	£122.36
3 Bed	£141.24	£103.56	£113.92	£149.59
4 Bed	£200.09	£143.84	£149.59	£195.62

Calendar Monthly Rates

	York	Doncaster	Wakefield	Leeds
Shared room	£291.52	£239.51	£238.99	£271.49
1 Bed	£430.00	£339.28	£374.99	£434.74
2 Bed	£536.98	£405.11	£449.99	£531.68
3 Bed	£613.72	£449.99	£495.01	£650.00
4 Bed	£869.44	£625.02	£650.00	£850.02

You may also wish to start looking at suitable private renting options on websites such as 'Right Move' or 'Spare Room.' We may be able to offer help towards upfront fees for private rent options to help you secure suitable accommodation. This is our Frontline Prevention Fund and is subject to an affordability assessment.

Help available from other agencies:

Probation

As part of your probation requirements, you may have to:

- do unpaid work
- complete an education or training course
- get treatment for addictions, like drugs or alcohol
- have regular meetings with an 'offender manager'

You might be given accommodation in a probation hostel if you are released on licence, for example if:

- your sentence is for 12 months or more
- you are considered a high risk and have multi-agency involvement (MAPPA) in your case

If your licence agreement has restrictions on where you can live, the probation service should arrange your probation hostel in time for your release. Remember - ask your probation officer or a housing adviser about accommodation after your stay in a probation hostel.

The probation service may also offer support across a range of areas such as claiming benefits and health and wellbeing issues. They may also attend housing appointments with you.

P3

Are a charity that supports offenders to unlock their potential and confidence. They offer support for people with any form of housing need to become independent, including help with finding somewhere to live or with maintaining existing accommodation. They can also offer help with claiming benefits and helping to integrate back into society and build confidence.

For more information regarding how they can help with housing needs, please visit their website www.p3charity.org/get-help/housing

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is a worldwide Christian church and registered charity extending a helping hand to those who are homeless, friendless and in need. They can offer general housing and homelessness support and aim to get people back into their local community. In many of their centers, they work closely with statutory authorities to help people who come out of prison to be rehabilitated back into society. More information can be found on their website www.salvationarmy.org.uk/rebuilding-lives

Nacro

Nacro work with people who may be at risk of re-offending and support them in the community. They can also offer low-level supported accommodation, aiming to reduce crime and prevent offending behaviour. Nacro assess people's needs and work with them to develop an individually-tailored resettlement action plan. They can work with both young and adult offenders in prisons and in the community, offering a wide range of services to support them to change their lives. Their goal is to reduce reoffending and help people to positively reintegrate into society.

Nacro can also work with people in the run-up to their prison release to ensure they are practically and emotionally prepared for life on the outside. As part of this, they may signpost and support service users to find stable and affordable accommodation and give advice regarding access to employment, housing and education to people with criminal records and professionals working with them.

For more information regarding how Nacro can support you during custody and on your release, please visit their website www.nacro.org.uk

Action Towards Inclusion (Foundation)

Foundation's core mission is to create 'inclusive communities where everyone matters'. They seek to engage customers in opportunities for building a sense of social inclusion. Often this work is around mental and physical health,

changing behaviours, taking responsibility and learning practical skills for keeping home and employment.

ATI provides keyworker support for individuals (over 18) who are unemployed or economically inactive. Foundation will offer direct support to help participants to progress into job-search, education, training and employment. For further information regarding the ATI programme please visit their website www.foundationuk.org/blog/2017/07/13/action-towards-inclusion-support-to-succeed/

Horton Housing Association

Horton Housing is a not-for-profit organisation which provides housing, training and support services to the most vulnerable people in society. They work with a wide range of clients including people who are homeless, have mental health, drug or alcohol issues, refugees, Gypsies and Travellers, people with disabilities and ex-offenders.

Selby District Council often makes referrals to Horton Housing for additional housing support. Horton Housing offers a range of services to provide housing advice and assistance. They work flexibly to engage with people who are homeless, securing short-term accommodation and helping them to move into longer-term settled accommodation. They provide housing-related support for people with multiple or complex needs who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Support available is around tenancies, budgeting, claiming benefits, helping to secure appliances for a home and much more.

Horton Housing also manages an intensive housing management (IHM) scheme in Selby where they have some limited properties available. Tenants are allocated a floating support worker and support can be provided for up to two years as part of a plan to make the most excluded and vulnerable potentially tenancy ready.

Horton Housing also offers drop-in services at Selby, Tadcaster and Sherburn-In-Elmet. To make a referral or contact them, Tel: 01757 241051 or website www.hortonhousing.co.uk

Shelter

For homeless information across a range of topics and for legal housing advice, please visit Shelter's website:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/your_situation/ex-prisoners_get_help_if_youre_homeless