

The Housing Crisis this Christmas: 300,000 People Need a Home

At a time when family, community and a roaring fire are the comforts of the season, many urgently need shelter and the basic necessities that can be taken for granted by those of us preparing for the festive period.

The housing crisis remains a serious concern, with Shelter revealing approximately 320,000 people in the UK will be homeless this Christmas.

Many are calling for Amber Rudd to take measures to address housing as a priority as she begins her role as work and pensions secretary. She has already acknowledged the flaws in the Universal Credit system which is failing those relying on it to support them. Where delays arise, many risk rent arrears and even eviction, which can lead to homelessness.

In the meantime, many housing charities have launched their Christmas campaigns for those seeking a roof over their head this winter. Some will be long-term applicants for housing who are still waiting on suitable accommodation to be assigned by their local authority.

Local authorities are required to ensure that anyone requiring housing is put on a list for suitable accommodation, with the most vulnerable placed at the top of the waiting list. Youths, the elderly, people with mental health problems or with a disability and mothers with young children can expect to be made a priority, and yet

- Live somewhere that is so overcrowded or unhygienic that it might be damaging to your health

For more information on the homelessness test, see our website. It is important to understand your rights and where to get help.

We at Duncan Lewis are aligned with a number of Citizens' Advice centres across England and Wales, offering pro bono assistance to those requiring housing advice. Anyone who is seeking social housing can attend for free and speak to one of our specialist legal practitioners who regularly act on behalf of those dealing with homelessness. There can be times when local authorities have offered unsuitable accommodation for yourself, or a loved one. In this case, you are entitled to challenge the offer. We are able to assist with these matters and always act in our client's best interests.



Manjinder Kaur Atwal

Manjinder Kaur Atwal, a director/solicitor of housing based, alongside Amrita Bharj and other team members, works closely with Citizen Advice in Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield, Milton Keynes,

there are times when even they are left waiting as the lists get longer and delays occur.

There are common misconceptions that only those that have been forced to sleep on the streets are considered homeless. Under the homelessness test you are classed as homeless if you:

- Rely on friends/ family for temporary accommodation
- Live out of a hostel or night-shelter

Hillingdon, Hayes, St Mungos and Harlow Law Clinic to help those seeking advice on a range of housing matters, including eviction notices, challenging local authority decisions and homelessness.

For advice on homelessness, or another housing matter, contact **Manjinder** on **02031141269** and **manjindera@duncanlewis.com**, or **Amrita** on **02031141299** and **amritabh@duncanlewis.com**



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