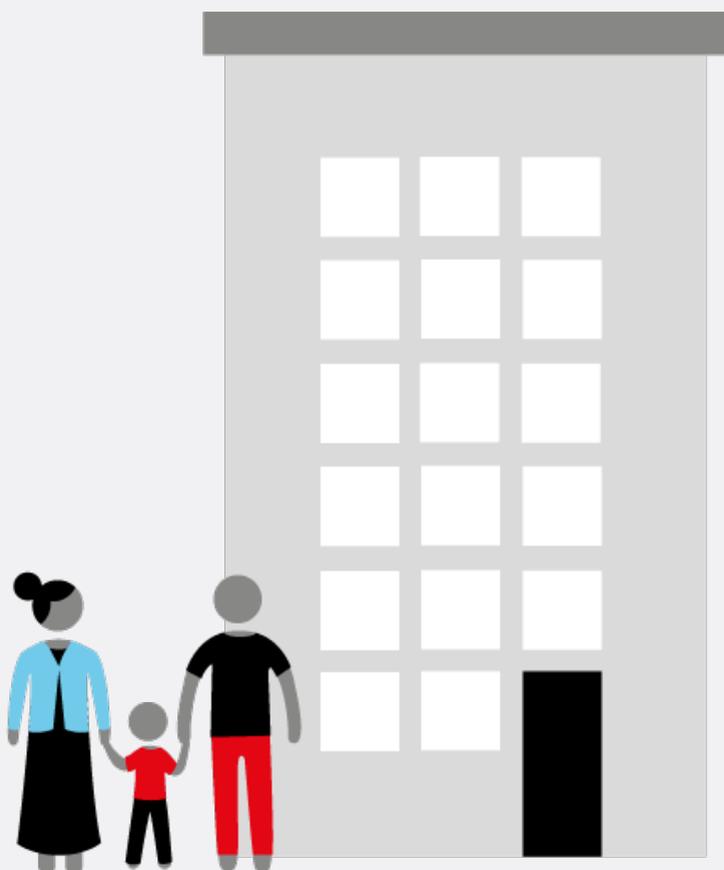


Temporary Accommodation

Survival Guide



www.sheltercymru.org.uk

Registered charity no. 515902

Shelter
Cymru

A few tips...

Being placed in temporary accommodation can leave people feeling isolated and stressed but it doesn't have to be like that.

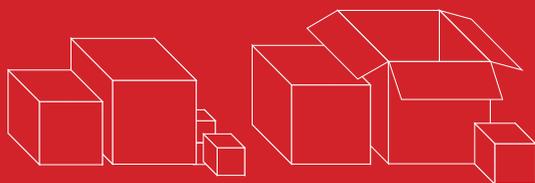
Here are a few tips that can assist you.

This guide has been put together by people who have been through temporary accommodation themselves.

And remember: **Stay positive - you are almost there!**

Keeping it together

- **Keep to your normal routine as much as possible.** Just because you are housed somewhere temporarily doesn't mean that your life has to be put on hold. Maintaining a routine can help you keep a sense of normality.
- **Stay in touch with family and friends.** Tell them what is happening and confide in them. By sharing any worries you can be better supported.
- **Take time out every now and then.** Make sure you are still having fun. Just because you are in temporary accommodation doesn't mean you don't deserve a night out.
- **Put a positive spin on things.** It might be tough at times but you will get there in the end.



Getting by

Make a note of your new address. Put the full postal address in your phone or diary as you are probably going to be asked for it many times.

On arrival: make a note or take a photo of electricity, gas and water meter readings. There are many different types of meter, so make sure you are familiar with the type you have and ask the landlord or agent how to use them. Get them to run through how the heating and hot water works. Make sure the water supply is on and find out where the stop-cock is - you never know when you will need it!

Take pictures. If there is any visible damage or disrepair then get evidence. You do not want to be billed for them at a later date.

Find out about the local area. Find the GP, supermarkets, convenience stores, leisure centres, parks and play areas. Food can be expensive – find out where the food banks are if you need them.

Join the local library. You can use their computers to access the internet and your e-mails.

Storing your things. There is not always room for all your possessions when you move into temporary accommodation. Label all your boxes/bags and pack them so you can easily find the items you use the most.

Make sure you know the rules. Make sure you are given a copy of the house rules, if there are any. People can get caught out, don't be one of them. Whatever you think about them, they are the rules so don't fall foul of them.

Be prepared to cohabit. You may find yourself sharing kitchens, bathrooms and communal areas. This can be a source of tension but stay calm and talk to support workers, staff or others if any situations arise.

Be sensible with your money. Living in temporary accommodation can be more expensive than living somewhere more permanent. If things get financially tough there are sources of help available such as the Discretionary Assistance Fund or Discretionary Housing Payments. Find if you are entitled to any benefits or grants that can help you. Most importantly, if you are falling into debt seek help.

Be prepared to move really quickly. The process of finding permanent accommodation can be slow but when things happen they move fast. Keep a few boxes spare – you always end up with more bits and bobs than you think. Look out for 'white van man' phone numbers and when a house or flat becomes available, you'll be ahead of the game.

Stand up for yourself!

Make sure the accommodation is suitable for your needs. If the accommodation is not suitable, seek independent advice before you turn it down – otherwise there is a risk the local authority might discharge their duty towards you.

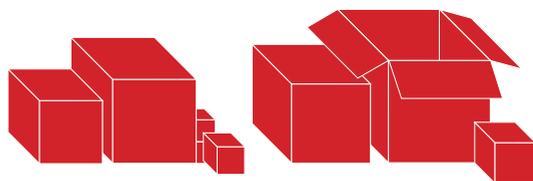
Use your voice. Don't just sit and wait for things to happen. Contact your housing officer regularly, find out what's happening with your case and discuss any problems. However, be respectful. Making a point politely will be better for you in the long run.

Keep on top of your housing benefit. Make sure you let the Housing Benefit department know of any changes of circumstance. Follow up to be certain that changes have been made.

Get evidence. Things get lost so keep as much evidence as you can. Get receipts or photocopies of all forms you hand in. You can use the library to scan documents and save them to your email. Scanning is free, photocopies cost per sheet. Also, keep a note of dates, times and people's names so that you can give exact information about your case.

Keep it safe. Make sure that all your paperwork is in the same place. A few seconds of simple filing can save you a major headache later on.

Pick and chose your battles. But be prepared to compromise with the local authority, support workers and other tenants.



Getting support

You are not alone. If you feel you or your family are suffering, speak to someone. There are organisations out there that can help if you feel you are being treated unfairly. Some useful phone numbers are at the end of this leaflet.

It's better to get things dealt with ASAP.

And finally...

- **Don't be discouraged.**
- **Don't be ashamed of what's happening homelessness can happen to anyone.**
- **Don't cut yourself off from friends and family.**
- **Don't be afraid to speak up if you have a question or complaint.**

Useful numbers

Shelter Cymru is Wales's people and homes charity. They provide independent specialist advice, advocacy and legal representation for anyone with housing problems. They also have Specialist Debt and Money Advisers available by phone, online or face to face.

Helpline: 08000 495 495

Website: sheltercymru.org.uk/get-advice

Citizens Advice provides free, confidential and impartial advice. They can help with a number of issues including money, benefits, housing or employment problems.

Helpline: 03444 77 20 20

Website: citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us

CALL: Community Advice & Listening Line is a mental health helpline for Wales, providing emotional support, referral to agencies and free self-help leaflets.

Helpline: 0800 132 737

Or text "HELP" to 81066

Website: callhelpline.org.uk

Samaritans is a free, confidential telephone service which is available 24/7 to anyone who needs to talk about what is happening, how they're feeling and help them to find their own way forward.

Helpline: 116 123 (24/7)

Cymraeg: 0808 164 0123 (from 7pm to 11pm only, 7 days a week).

Website: samaritans.org/wales/samaritans-cymru

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