Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/professionals/advice-and-information/homelessness-advice-professionals/additional-duties-homeless-persons

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Additional duties to homeless persons

This information is for professionals working in housing and homelessness in Northern Ireland.

If you are a member of the public looking for help, please visit our housing advice pages.

Duty to protect homeless applicant's property

The Housing Executive has a duty to protect the property of a person if:1

- The person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- There is a risk that the person's belongings may be lost or damaged because the applicant is unable to protect them and
- No other suitable arrangements have been or are being made to secure them
- The Housing Executive is not under a duty to protect the person's property if it is immediately clear that they are ineligible.

Furniture storage

The Housing Executive can take any steps they consider reasonable to protect a homeless applicant's belongings.2 When deciding if a duty exists, the housing officer should consider:

- If personal items were left in a secure property
- If the person has any other place, they can store items
- If the person's financial circumstances mean they would struggle to make their own arrangements
- Whether the person's vulnerabilities mean they would struggle to make their own arrangements
- What support the person has from family or friends

Transporting items to storage

The Housing Executive will contact an approved storage company to arrange for collection and storage of items. They cannot store:

- Perishable items
- Illegal items
- Medication
- Items affected by damp
- Wet garden furniture

Items will be stored in a specialist facility.

The person will not usually be able to access items until they move to a permanent address. The person should not store any important documents or items they may need to use in the immediate future.3

Taxi and transport costs

The Housing Executive can pay to transport a homeless applicant and their household from their offices to a temporary accommodation placement by taxi.4

The Housing Executive will do this if it is reasonable bearing in mind:

- The circumstances of the person and the household
- What access the person has to their own transport

The Housing Executive must use a pre-approved taxi company and they will provide a voucher to pay the taxi fare.

Footnotes

- [1] The Housing Order (Northern Ireland) 1988, Article 13(1).
- [2] The Housing Order (Northern Ireland) 1988, Article 13(2).
- [3] Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Homeless Guidance, Chapter 9.3.
- [4] Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Homeless Guidance, Chapter 10.