

Renting in Dudley

What are the options?

The great majority of homes within Dudley borough are owner occupied, but there are many people seeking homes who cannot afford to buy or would prefer to rent. This factsheet aims to provide information about renting in Dudley. Dudley Council is the biggest landlord in the borough, but registered social landlords (housing associations) and private landlords also own significant numbers of properties. Like most areas, Dudley has more people wanting a home than there are homes available, so there are always waiting lists for council and housing association properties.

Where to find information on available homes

All available council properties are advertised each week on our website www.dudleyathome.org.uk, which is also linked to the council website www.dudley.gov.uk. We also advertise any housing association properties to which we have nomination rights, and some associations choose to advertise all of their vacant homes with us. Anybody can browse the site and see details of all available homes, but only people who are on the council waiting list can register an interest in a property. The site includes photographs, rental costs, energy performance certificates, and relevant information such as which household types are eligible for each property, whether pets are allowed, the floor level and designated age group if the property is a flat, location maps and local information.

Tenancy types

Council properties are let initially on introductory tenancies which become secure after twelve months if there are no problems with the tenancy. Private properties are usually let on assured shorthold tenancies which do not have long term security, but many private landlords are happy to renew these tenancies indefinitely for good tenants. Housing association tenancies may be assured or assured shorthold, but will not generally be brought to an end unless there are problems with the tenancy or it was only ever intended to be short term.

Useful contact numbers

Housing options advice	0300 555 2345
Private sector housing team	0300 555 2345
Housing benefit enquiries	0300 555 8100
Housing managers	0300 555 2345
CAB general advice	01384 816222

How to apply for housing

To apply for council housing you will generally need to have been living or working in Dudley Borough for at least the last two years. You will need to complete our on line application form through the Council website www.dudley.gov.uk. We will check your details and invite you to an appointment with a Housing Options Advisor to bring in any documentation and register your application. Once you are on the council list, you can also be considered for housing association properties, as we have nomination rights to around 50% of their vacancies. Private rented tenancies are generally advertised in the local press, or through letting agents. If you are interested in renting privately but do not have a deposit, please ask for a leaflet about our Rent Deposit Scheme.

Who has priority for any vacancies

Councils and housing associations are required to let their properties to people with specific housing needs. Private landlords can choose any tenant they think will pay the rent on time and be a good tenant. The council has a banding scheme to work out who is in the most need, although we will also reject anyone we have reason to believe will not be a good tenant. Housing associations have their own lettings policies, but have similar priorities to the council and often accept council nominations.

Moving in

Private rented properties are usually available immediately subject to the payment of a deposit, whilst council and housing association properties tend to be advertised prior to any repairs being completed. If you are offered a council or housing association property, you will be told how soon it is likely to be ready. Whether the property is council, housing association or private rented, you will always be able to view it and ask any questions before you make a decision. You should also make sure that you are given gas and electric safety certificates and an energy performance certificate explaining how energy efficient the property is, and any way that this could be improved.

Paying the rent

If you are on a low income, you may be able to get help with the rent, but you will need to think how you will manage all of the other expenses involved in running your own home. You will probably need a bank account, as most landlords prefer to collect rent by direct debit. Help with council and housing association rents is given in the form of Housing Benefit usually paid direct to the landlord. If it does not cover the full rent, then you will need to pay the difference. Help with private tenancy rents is given in the form of Local Housing Allowance paid direct to the tenant, who must then pay the landlord.

Repairs and maintenance

The responsibilities of the landlord and the tenant will be set out in the conditions of tenancy. Landlords are generally responsible at the very least for the fabric of the building, whilst tenants are usually responsible for decoration, gardening and minor day to day maintenance.

Which to choose

If you are in a high priority band for council and housing association housing, and flexible about areas and property types, you may be happy to bid for properties each week until you are successful. If you are in a lower priority band, or if you want a property type or area that the council or housing associations cannot help you with, then private renting may be a better option for you.

What to do if you have any problems in your new tenancy

First of all, speak directly to your landlord. If you cannot solve the problem, then you could ask to speak to someone more senior if your landlord is the council or a housing association, or contact the council's private sector housing team if it is a private landlord. If this doesn't solve the problem, then good independent advice is always available from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or Shelter, or you could ask for our factsheets for council/housing association tenants or private tenants as appropriate.

If you would like more information on any of these options please contact us on 0300 555 2345