

# 4

# Finding somewhere to rent privately



Mid Sussex District Council Housing Options series book:

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## Why rent privately?

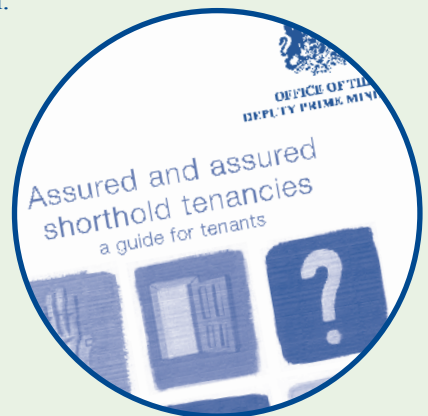
Waiting to be housed through the Council can take a long time as there aren't enough homes to go around. You may, therefore, need to consider other options to meet your housing needs. For many people, renting a property from a private landlord is the most realistic option, at least in the short-term.

### Looking for private rented accommodation

When looking for somewhere to rent privately, it is important to be realistic. Consider what you can afford and what is available in the area you want to live – you may not be able to find exactly what you want. If you are on benefits, some landlords may not be willing to rent to you. Do not restrict yourself to one area – those outside Mid Sussex can be cheaper and have a greater supply of private rented accommodation.

### Tenancy Agreements

It's a good idea to get a written tenancy agreement from the landlord or letting agent. You should read the agreement carefully before you sign it. Ideally, it should provide all the information you need about the home you are renting, your responsibilities and those of your landlord. If in any doubt, seek independent advice before you sign.



## How do I find private rented accommodation?

- **Use your personal contacts** – ask your family, friends and work colleagues if they know of anyone who has accommodation to rent or someone who is just about to give up a room or a flat
- **West Sussex Homefinder** – [www.westsussexhomefinder.co.uk](http://www.westsussexhomefinder.co.uk) – private landlords advertise for free on this website that is sponsored by seven councils in West Sussex
- **Look in local newspapers** – private landlords and letting agents advertise accommodation to rent in the local papers:
  - **The Evening Argus** (daily with property pages on Wednesday)
  - **The Mid Sussex Times** (Thursday)
  - **Mid Sussex Leader and Mid Sussex Citizen** (delivered weekly to most addresses in the Mid Sussex area)
  - **Friday Ad** – free weekly magazine available from newsagents, garages, Burgess Hill Help Point etc on Thursday or Friday morning. Also available online at [www.friday-ad.co.uk](http://www.friday-ad.co.uk)
- **Letting Agencies** – advertise properties on behalf of landlords. Some estate agents have a lettings department and details on their websites. Check out **Yellow Pages**, **Thomson Local** and local papers referred to above. Contact the **Housing Needs Team** ([Housingadvice@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Housingadvice@midsussex.gov.uk) or **01444 477574**) for details of letting agents in the district.
- **Shop windows/notice boards** – in libraries, newsagents and supermarkets.

### Properties on the web

[www.westsussexhomefinder.co.uk](http://www.westsussexhomefinder.co.uk)

[www.friday-ad.co.uk](http://www.friday-ad.co.uk)

[www.findaproperty.com](http://www.findaproperty.com)

[www.fish4homes.co.uk](http://www.fish4homes.co.uk)

[www.primelocation.com](http://www.primelocation.com)

[www.sussexlife.co.uk](http://www.sussexlife.co.uk)

[www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk)

- **Colleges** – if you are at college, check if your college has details of private accommodation to rent. Talk to your student welfare officer or an accommodation officer.
- **Employers** – check with your employer if there is any accommodation available to rent to staff.
- **Advertise yourself** – you can put an advert in a paper or shop stating the type of accommodation you want and how much you can afford to pay.



**You should always follow up advertisements as quickly as possible as advertised accommodation tends to be let very quickly.**

### **Will I have to pay any money up front?**

If you are considering renting through a lettings agency, be aware that they may charge you for certain services, such as setting up a tenancy agreement. Make sure that you know exactly what they will be charging you for and how much.

Most landlords will require a deposit equivalent to one month's rent and may also ask for a month's rent in advance. If you are unable to raise this yourself, contact the Council's **Housing Needs Team (01444 477574)** to see if the Council may be able to assist you, and pick up our leaflet: **No 5 A guide to the Council's Rent in Advance & Deposit Guarantee Scheme.**

Before signing a tenancy agreement get in writing exactly what the deposit is to cover. It is worth having an agreed inventory of the items your deposit covers which notes any damage or disrepair at the start of the tenancy so as to avoid later disagreement.

## Deposit protection legislation

All deposits taken by landlords and letting agents must be protected by a government-authorised tenancy deposit protection scheme. If your landlord has not protected your deposit s/he may be ordered to repay three times the amount of the deposit to you and will lose the automatic right to regain possession at the end of your tenancy.

For more information see [www.direct.gov.uk/tenancydeposit](http://www.direct.gov.uk/tenancydeposit)

## Can I get any help with the rent?

Yes. If you are already in receipt of benefits, or are working but cannot afford your rent, you may be entitled to receive some help towards your rent in the form of Housing Benefit from the Council. Housing Benefit is calculated using **Local Housing Allowance** – see below for what this will mean for you. You can get an application form for Housing Benefit from the **Housing Benefits Team** at the Council offices at Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath or telephone **01444 477264**. You can also download a form from our website at [www.midsussex.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/benefits)

Once you have found a place to rent, it is important that you apply for Housing Benefit immediately, as if you delay it is unlikely that your claim will be backdated.

## Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a way of working out Housing Benefit for people who rent from a private landlord and is based on the number of bedrooms you need, rather than how much the rent is. Housing Benefit is normally paid direct to you, the tenant, and it is your responsibility to then pay your landlord the full rent.

To make sure that you can afford the rent on a property you're thinking of renting, contact the Housing Needs Team, the Housing Benefit Team or look on our website to find out what the Local Housing Allowance rates are for your needs in the area where you want to rent. The Local Housing Allowance rates set out the "maximum" Housing Benefit that would be paid to you. How much Housing Benefit you are actually entitled to will depend on your individual circumstances, such as your income, and will be assessed by the Housing Benefit Team when you make a claim. If the Housing Benefit you receive will not meet the full rent, you will have to make up the shortfall yourself.



More information on **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** is available in a booklet available from the Council or from the Council's website [www.midsussex.gov.uk](http://www.midsussex.gov.uk) (search for "Local Housing Allowance").

### **Single people under 35 years of age and Housing Benefit**

If you are a single person under 25 (or under 35 from April 2012) renting privately, your Housing Benefit will be restricted to the Local Housing Allowance rate set for those living in shared accommodation, i.e. renting a room in a shared house. So if you decide to rent a whole flat on your own, or share a place with others and your share of the rent is above this level, then you will have to make up any shortfall from your own money. This rule does not apply to couples or to single parents under 25.

### **More help if you need it**

Contact Signpost on **01403 751062** who may work with you help point you in the right direction.

## Where can I find out more about my rights and responsibilities as a private tenant?

If you have a particular problem you should seek advice from one of the following organisations or a solicitor.

### Housing Needs Team

Housing Services,  
Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands  
Haywards Heath, RH16 1SS  
01444 477574  
HousingAdvice@midsussex.gov.uk  
www.midsussex.gov.uk  
The Council provides a general advice service for anyone in housing need.

### Shelter

1st Floor, Barton House, Broadfield  
Barton,  
Crawley, RH11 9BA  
0344 515750  
www.shelternet.org.uk  
Independent confidential housing advice.

### Mid Sussex & Horsham Signpost

Provided by Southdown  
01403 751062  
signpost.north@southdownhousing.org  
Helps vulnerable people avoid homelessness.

### Mid Sussex Citizens Advice Bureaux

**Burgess Hill**  
38 Church Road, Burgess Hill,  
RH15 9AE  
0844 4771171

### East Grinstead

Cantelupe House, Cantelupe Rd,  
East Grinstead, RH19 3BZ  
0844 4771171

### Haywards Heath

Oaklands, Paddockhall Rd,  
Haywards Heath, RH16 1HG  
0844 4771171

www.citizensadvice.org.uk  
www.advice.org.uk  
The CAB gives independent confidential advice to the public.

## Where do I apply for Housing Benefit?

### Housing Benefits

Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands,  
Haywards Heath, RH16 1SS  
benefit@centralsussex.gov.uk  
www.midsussex.gov.uk/benefits  
01444 477264

The Council is responsible for the Housing Benefit Service which provides assistance with rent payments for people on low incomes or other benefits. Please contact for times and venues of advice surgeries.



## Useful booklets on renting privately

Free booklets about renting privately, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, include:-

- Assured Shorthold Tenancies – a guide for tenants
- Renting rooms in someone’s home
- My landlord wants me out – protection against harassment and illegal eviction
- Notice that you must leave – a brief guide for landlords and tenants.

These booklets (and others) are available from the Council’s **Housing Needs Team (HousingAdvice@midsussex.gov.uk or 01444 477574)**. They can also be viewed and downloaded from the Council’s website at [www.midsussex.co.uk/housingadvice](http://www.midsussex.co.uk/housingadvice).

Also see [www.shelternet.org.uk](http://www.shelternet.org.uk) for a range of useful leaflets.

### Leaflets in our Housing Options series

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|---|--|
| 1 What are your housing options?  | 7 Direct access hostels for single people or couples     |
| 2 Where to get Housing Advice in Mid Sussex                             | 8 Low cost home ownership in Mid Sussex                  |
| 3 How to apply for social housing in Mid Sussex                         | 9 Housing options for older people                       |
| 4 Finding somewhere to rent privately                                   | 10 Housing options for people with learning disabilities |
| 5 A guide to the Council’s Rent in Advance and Deposit Guarantee Scheme | 11 Housing options for people with mental health needs   |
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## Need help accessing this service?

For information on translation services and obtaining publications in a different format call us on 01444 458166