

HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

A guide to Discretionary Housing Payments



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This leaflet explains Discretionary Housing Payments. The rules are the same whichever area you live in. If you don't know which council covers the area you live in, you can find this information on your Council Tax bill.

- When your Housing or Council Tax Benefit payments are suspended
- Rent, if you are only entitled to Council Tax Benefit
- Council Tax, if you only get Housing Benefit
- If the only benefit you get is Second Adult Rebate

How do I apply for a DHP?

You can only apply for a DHP if you are currently entitled to Housing or Council Tax Benefit. Contact our benefit section for an application form.

What are Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)?

DHPs are extra payments to help pay rent, Council Tax or both. We give DHPs to people claiming benefit who need more help with their housing costs, if these are more than the amount of benefit they get.

The Government give us an amount of money to pay out each year as DHPs and we cannot spend more than this.

We cannot give DHPs for the following:

- Service charges not covered by Housing Benefit
- Any rent you owe
- If we take any amount from your Housing Benefit because your Jobseeker's Allowance has been sanctioned (not been paid because you have broken the terms of your claim)

How do you decide if I can have a DHP?

We look at the following things when we make a decision.

- Your income
- Your savings
- If anyone else in your house can help you
- If you have any loans or debts
- If you could manage your money better
- If you or anyone in your family is ill or disabled
- If you have tried to put the situation right yourself

We will ask you for a lot of information and may ask you to come and see us to discuss your claim in more detail.

We will send you a letter telling you our decision and our reasons for that decision.

If we award you a DHP we will tell you in the letter, the amount and how long we will pay it for.

How much can I get and for how long?

How much we give you depends on your circumstances. We look at each case individually. However, we cannot guarantee we will definitely give you a payment.

For Housing Benefit, we cannot give you more than your total rent (less amounts for services such as electricity or water). And, for Council Tax Benefit, we cannot give you more than the amount of your Council Tax.

How will you pay the DHP if my application is successful?

We will usually pay it with any Housing or Council Tax Benefit that you get, although a DHP is **not** a benefit payment.

What should I do if I disagree with your decision?

If you disagree with our decision not to give you a DHP, the amount we have decided to give you or how long we will give you a DHP for, you can ask us to look at the decision again.

You should write to us within one calendar month of the date on the decision letter, telling us why you do not agree with our decision.

You cannot appeal to the Tribunals Service if you disagree with our decision not to pay you a Discretionary Housing Payment.

What if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change, you must tell us in writing, straight away.

We will look at your DHP again to see if we need to change it.

If the change means we have to reduce your DHP, you might have to pay back some or all of the DHP we have already paid you.

Where can I get more advice?

Contact us if you want more help or advice.

(You can find our contact details on your Council Tax bill.)

Or, you could contact your local citizens advice bureau or Welfare Rights Service.

Their details are in your local phone book.

Other formats

You can get the information in this booklet in large print, in Braille and in other languages.

There is also an audio version on-line.

Visit our website

www.benefit-leaflets.org

for more information.

