

Housing options

CHANGES TO HOUSING BENEFIT FROM 1 APRIL 2018

From 1 April 2018 the way Housing Benefit is calculated (or the housing element of Universal Credit) will be changing. From that date, council and housing association rents will be made subject to the same rules as Local Housing Allowance. We appreciate this seems a long way off but you need to understand how these changes may affect you.

What does this mean for you

If you sign a new or renewed tenancy agreement with us – or with any housing association or registered social landlord - from **1 April 2016 (1 April 2017 for supported accommodation tenancies)** the amount of Housing Benefit (or the housing element of Universal Credit) you may receive could be restricted or “capped” to the Local Housing Allowance rate for your household size. This already applies to private sector tenants.

Your Local Housing Allowance rate changes from time to time and can be found at: <http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/Search.aspx> or on the Council website

Before signing for a tenancy you will need to make sure that if your benefit is capped to the Local Housing Allowance rate for your household size, you can pay the difference between your rent and the amount of benefit you will receive.

Useful contact numbers

Housing Liaison Team	01384 815100
Housing options advice	0300 555 2345
Private sector housing team	0300 555 2345
Housing benefit enquiries	0300 555 8100
Citizens Advice general advice	01384 816222

How this works for different circumstances

Please note that the detailed benefit regulations have not yet been published, but the information below is based on what government ministers have been saying. Please check the latest information before making a decision

You and your household	If you live in shared accommodation	If you rent somewhere with one bedroom	If you rent somewhere with two bedrooms	If you rent somewhere with three bedrooms
Single person under age 35	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate (currently £60 per week)	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent less 14%, whichever is less	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent less 25%, whichever is less
Single person over 35 but not a pensioner	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate (currently £86.30 per week) or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent less 14%, whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent less 25%, whichever is less
Couple	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent less 14%, whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent less 25%, whichever is less
Single pensioner	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to one bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less
Family with one child or two children who can share	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to two bedroom rate (currently £104.89 per week) or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to two bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to two bedroom rate or actual rent less 14% whichever is less
Family with two children of opposite sex over 10 or same sex over 16	Can only claim up to shared accommodation rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to three bedroom rate (currently £120.29 per week) or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to three bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less	Can claim up to three bedroom rate or actual rent whichever is less

Also note that all these allowances are “up to” a certain level – you can never claim more than the rent. You may also have other deductions eg non dependent deduction for someone living with you, or a deduction for a previous overpayment.

As a tenant, you will be responsible for paying your rent in full, using any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit that you receive directly.

It is important that you make sure that if your benefit is capped to the Local Housing Allowance rate for your household size, you can pay the difference between your rent and the amount of benefit you will receive. This may be difficult if you are on a low income or especially if you rely on Jobseekers Allowance or other benefits.

Please note that this change starts from 1st April 2018, so you will need to be prepared for it.