

Information about Housing Benefit changes

What is changing?

The Government has made changes to the way Housing Benefit is calculated, for tenants renting in the private sector. This came into effect in April 2011.

Will this affect me?

Yes, if you are renting a property from a private landlord and receiving Housing Benefit and you made your claim for your current address on or after 7 April 2008.

What will the changes mean for me?

It is possible that the amount of Housing Benefit you get to pay your rent could be reduced, as the government has reduced the Local Housing Allowance rates.

For people whose rent is lower than the Local Housing Allowance the changes will have a limited effect.

The maximum £15 weekly Housing Benefit excess that some people get will end. There will be maximum rate caps on the Local Housing Allowance but these will probably only affect London properties. There will no longer be a five-bedroom rate.

Where to go for more information

North Somerset Council –

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housingbenefit
Housing Benefit team on 01934 888 144 or
email westoncontactcentre@liberata.com

Directgov –

www.direct.gov.uk has information on the Housing Benefit changes.

Valuation Office Agency –

www.voa.gov.uk gives information on Local Housing Allowance, fair rents and Council Tax.

Citizens Advice Service –

www.citizensadvice.org.uk gives a wide range of advice. Find your local Citizen Citizens Advice Bureau online or in the Yellow Pages.

Shelter –

www.shelter.org.uk offers confidential housing, welfare benefits and debt advice.

Housing Advice Help line on 0808 800 4444
8am–8pm Mon to Fri and 8am–5pm Saturday
and Sunday.



Housing Benefit is changing...

Information on how these changes affect you.



2010 06/11



Who will the changes affect?

These changes could affect you if:

- You are claiming Housing Benefit, or are going to make a new claim, under the Local Housing Allowance scheme (LHA). The LHA is a term used to describe the Housing Benefit that is paid to the claimant of a private landlord.
- You receive more Housing Benefit (up to £15) than you pay for your rent
- Your family receives benefit for more than four bedrooms

When will the changes affect me?

If you are receiving more Housing Benefit (up to £15) than you pay for your rent, this payment will be removed from your Local Housing Allowance review date. If you are making a new claim for Housing Benefit, the new changes will apply immediately.

If you are already claiming Housing Benefit, and your circumstances don't change, you will have nine months from your next Local Housing Allowance review date. For example, if your next review is due in July 2011 the changes to Local Housing Allowance rates will not affect you until April 2012.

The changes affect you sooner if:

- You are getting Housing Benefit and are planning to move home

- Your household is changing such as someone leaving or coming to live with you

If you are claiming or intending to claim Housing Benefit you need to be aware of the changes and when you will be affected before negotiating or entering into a new tenancy agreement with a private landlord.

When is my Local Housing Allowance Review date?

You can work this out from the date you made your original claim for Housing Benefit. For example: If you first made your claim for Housing Benefit on 5 September 2010 your yearly review date will be 5 September 2011.

What can I do if my Housing Benefit is less than my rent – how do I make up the shortfall?

- You could negotiate a lower rate with your landlord
- You could apply for a discretionary housing payment (DHP)
- If you are unable to make up the shortfall you may have to seek cheaper alternative accommodation.

Remember there is a nine month transition protection period – giving you time to see how the changes will affect you and giving you time to speak to you landlord, if you need to.

