

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Notes for filling in the claim form

Please read these notes carefully before you fill in your form. Failure to read them may result in a delay in your benefit claim or may affect your entitlement

About this form

This form has been designed to be easy to fill in. It may look rather long, but there needs to be enough questions to make sure that everyone who claims gets the right amount of benefit.

You may not have to fill in all parts of this form but you must fill in any part that is relevant to you. Every part starts with a question to help you to decide if you need to fill in that part. If you are unsure please contact the **Help Desk** on **01934 888136/888138**.

This form is also available in other languages or in large print. Please telephone the Help Desk.

About Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

Housing Benefit is money from the Council to help you to pay your rent.

Council Tax Benefit is financial help from the Council if you have to pay Council Tax.

Second Adult Rebate is a benefit you may be entitled to if you pay Council Tax and you do **not** qualify for Council Tax Benefit. For example if your income is too high or you only receive a low level of benefit and share your home with people on a low income who:

- Are over 18
- Are not your partner
- Are not liable to pay Council Tax
- And do not pay rent

You cannot claim both Second Adult Rebate and Council Tax Benefit but we will work out which makes you better off.

Filling in the form

Please use **black ink** to fill in the form and write clearly in CAPITAL LETTERS.

Answer **Yes** or **No** questions by putting a **tick (✓)** in the relevant box.

If someone else fills in the form for you, there is a separate declaration for them to sign on page 32 of the form.

If you need help or advice or are having difficulty completing the form we can be contacted at the offices shown on the back of this form or you can telephone us on **01934 888136/888138**. If you require a home visit please telephone to arrange an appointment on **01934 888099**.

If you need help you can contact us, or you can get in touch with an organisation like the Citizen's Advice Bureau on 01934 836201.

Proof

Part 15 on page 30 of this form details what proof we will need to see before your claim can be considered. If you have a partner, please note that we need evidence for both of you.

We need to see **original documents** as proof. Do not send valuable items such as benefit order books, bank books or passports through the post. Please bring them to our office and we will photocopy the documents and give them back to you.

If you do not have all the proof that we need please return the form to us **straight away** and let us have the rest of the proof as soon as you have it. **If you do not send us the form straight away, you may lose money.**

Changes you must tell the Benefits Service about

If any of the details you have given us change you must **tell North Somerset Council straight away**. It is an **offence** if you do not tell us about a change that may affect your benefit. If you are paid too much benefit then you will have to pay it back and it may lead to a **criminal prosecution**.

We need to know about **all** changes. Tell us in writing if:

- You or anyone living with you starts work
- You move
- Anyone moves into or out of your home
- Your income changes
- Any of your children leave school or home
- The income of anyone living with you changes
- You stop getting Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or any other benefit
- Your capital, savings or investments change
- You or anyone living with you becomes a student, goes into hospital or a nursing home, goes into prison or is on remand, or changes or leaves a job
- You have a child
- Your rent changes
- You, your partner or anyone in your household are going to be away from home for more than a month
- You receive any decision from the Home Office, or
- **Anything else you have told us about changes**

To tell us about a change, use the contact details in the 'what to do next' section. If you are not sure ask us for advice. Do not rely on someone else to pass the information on; it is the responsibility of the person who is making the claim (or **your** appointee if someone is acting on your behalf).

How we pay benefit

Housing Benefit – North Somerset Housing Ltd tenants

We usually pay the Housing Association.

Housing Benefit – Housing Association tenants

We usually pay the Housing Association.

Housing Benefit – Private tenants

If you are awarded Local Housing Allowance, in most circumstances we will pay you directly into your bank, building society, GIRO account or National Savings Bank account.

Council Tax Benefit – All

We will pay any benefit direct to your Council Tax account, so you have less Council Tax to pay.

Local Housing Allowance

Tenants renting from a private landlord and making a new claim for Housing Benefit or who move home on or after 7 April 2008 will get Local Housing Allowance. Your benefit will be calculated using Local Housing Allowances rates. The rates are set each month for different size properties by The Rent Service and the rate you are entitled to is based on the number of people who live with you and their ages. Local Housing Allowance is the maximum amount that you can receive, and this will reduce depending on your income, savings and circumstances. The Local Housing Allowance rates are available in advance from our website.

If you get Local Housing Allowance, you will have your benefit paid to you directly. If you feel this will cause you serious problems, we may be able to pay to your landlord. If you would like us to consider this, please ensure you complete the 'Payment to Landlord Request' on page 27 of the claim form.

We may make the first payment of benefit to your landlord if rent arrears have arisen, after that we will pay your benefit to you directly.

The safest and easiest way to receive benefit is directly into your bank account as it avoids the risk of cheques being stolen or delayed in the post. We cannot pay Housing Benefit into a Post Office Card Account. If you do not provide your bank details we will pay your Housing Benefit by cheque and you will need a bank account in your name so you can cash the cheque. If you need help to open a bank account please contact us.

What to do next

When you have filled in the form, please read and sign the declaration in Part 17 and return it together with the proof we need to see.

If you hand in your form please ask for a receipt and keep it in a safe place.

You can return it to these addresses.

By **North Somerset Council Benefit Office**
Post: **PO Box 83**
Weston super Mare
BS23 1UF

Or **The Town Hall**
Visit: **Walliscote Grove**
Road
Weston super Mare

Or take the form to your **North Somerset Housing Office** at:

South Weston WSM (5/6 St. Andrews Parade)
Tel 01934 428700

Worle WSM (7 The Maltings)
Tel 01934 516896

Portishead (40 Martingale Way, Portishead)
Tel 01275 841600

Clevedon (1-2 Marson Road)

Opening times vary - check with your local office for details

Benefit Fraud is a crime against us all.

Call the North Somerset hotline: ☎ 01934 634578

Email us: fraud@n-somerset.gov.uk