

WHAT IS LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE?

From April 2008 Peterborough City Council's Benefits Service will be assessing claims made for Housing Benefit for properties owned by Private Landlords under the new Local Housing Allowance Scheme. This has been introduced to simplify the process in claiming Housing Benefit. This will only apply for new claims and changes of addresses.

Local Housing Allowance will be an amount of Housing Benefit that can be claimed based on the size of your housing needs. The amount is calculated on the number of bedrooms you require based on your household. This new scheme will therefore not take into account the rent you are actually charged, unless the rent is more than £15.00 per week below the Local Allowance (LHA) rate. In this case you will receive your rent plus the extra £15.00.

For example:-

Your Gross Rent is £50.00 per week
The LHA for your circumstances is £80.00 per week
The maximum you may receive is £65.00 (£50.00 rent plus an extra £15.00).

Or

Your Gross Rent is £50.00 per week
The LHA for your circumstances is £60.00 per week
The maximum you may receive is £60.00 (£50.00 rent plus an extra £10.00).

In both cases you will get to keep the extra money that is paid.

WHAT TYPE OF PROPERTY WILL BE ASSESSED UNDER THE LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE SCHEME?

If you rent from a Private Landlord your claim for Housing Benefit will be assessed using this new scheme.

If you rent from a Registered Social Landlord such as Minster Housing Association or Cross Keys Homes you will be assessed under the normal Housing Benefit Scheme with the actual rent you are charged being used to calculate your entitlement.

There are also other types of accommodation that are not included.

These are as follows:-

- ◆ Caravans (both caravan and site rental)
- ◆ Houseboats (including mooring fees)
- ◆ Mobile Homes
- ◆ Hostels
- ◆ Privately rented accommodation with tenancies older than January 1989.

There may also be other types of accommodation not listed above so please check with us if you are not sure what type of accommodation you live in.

HOW WILL LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE BE PAID?

Local Housing Allowance will be paid to the tenant in all cases unless there are exceptional circumstances not to do so.

Payment will usually be paid by BACS to your bank or building society account. If you do not have a bank account you can ask for one of our

leaflets called "Opening a bank account" which gives you general advice on how to get one.

WHAT WILL BE THE LOCAL ALLOWANCE RATE FOR MY CIRCUMSTANCES?

The amount that can be used to assess your maximum entitlement is based on the number of bedrooms you require. If you live in one room and share some facilities you will be entitled to the one room shared rate. If you are under 25 and live on your own you will also be entitled to this rate.

If the above does not apply to you, we will work out your number of rooms as follows:-

You need one bedroom for:-

- ◆ every adult couple
- ◆ any other adult aged 16 or over
- ◆ any two children of the same sex
- ◆ any two children regardless of sex under age 10
- ◆ any other child

Each person is only counted once, in the first group they would come in to.

The number of living rooms, kitchens and bathrooms is ignored for the purpose of this calculation, as it is assumed that all tenants are entitled to these.

We do not count everyone in your house when working out how many rooms you need. We count you and your partner, as well as any children or young people you are responsible for. If you have other adults in your house who are not boarders or lodgers, we also count those. However, we do not count foster children or joint tenants.

HOW MUCH WILL IT BE?

The Local Housing Allowance Rates will be set each month and will be published by us at the beginning of each month. You can get this information by contacting us by telephone, visiting our customer services centre, logging on to our website or requesting details by email (please see below for our full contact details).

CAN I HAVE MY LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE PAID DIRECTLY TO MY LANDLORD?

In most cases the answer will be no. Unless there is a good reason for payments not to be paid directly to you all LHA payments are to be paid to you. It will then be your responsibility to pay your Landlord. If you think you will not be able to accept payments you can make a request for us to consider paying someone else (either your landlord or someone else on your behalf). You can request this by completing our Safeguard request form - BF12.

If it is agreed that we can pay LHA to another person we may then review this decision at a later date to check whether this should continue or payments could then be sent to you.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE BENEFITS SERVICE?

If you need to contact us for any reason please use one of the following methods:-

- ◆ Telephone our Customer Service Centre on (01733) 452241

- ◆ Or visit our Customer Service Centre in the city centre at Bayard Place, Broadway (opposite the Central Library)
- ◆ Or email us at benefits@peterborough.gov.uk

Our website also includes answers to a number of questions often asked about benefits.

www.peterborough.gov.uk/housingbenefits/

“Look out for other leaflets in this series”

- BF1 “Claiming help with your rent”
- BF2 “Claiming help with your Council Tax”
- BF3 “The Verification Framework”
- BF4 “Non-Dependants”
- BF5 “The role of the Rent Service”
- BF6 “How to Appeal”
- BF7 “Second Adult Rebate”
- BF8 “Backdated Claims”
- BF9 **Not currently available**
- BF10 “Overpayments”
- BF11 “Opening a basic bank Account”
- BF12 “Safeguard request form”
- BF13 “Local Housing Allowance Scheme”
- BF14 “Support Agencies Information”

BENEFITS SERVICE

LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE SCHEME



HOUSING BENEFIT

