

# Housing Benefit is changing from 1 January 2012 for single people aged 25 to 34 who rent from a private landlord.

Find out how the changes will affect you.

The Government is making changes to the way Housing Benefit is calculated for those who are single and aged 25 to 34 and rent from a private landlord.

July 2011

# What will the changes mean?

From 1 January 2012 single people aged from 25 to 34 will only be entitled to the Housing Benefit shared accommodation rate. By single people we mean someone who is **not** living:

- as a couple
- with dependent children.

The shared accommodation rate is based on the level of local rents for properties that are not self contained. This usually means that there is a shared

- kitchen,
- bathroom,
- toilet or
- living room

If you already get Housing Benefit at the one bedroom rate your Housing Benefit may go down if you move to the shared accommodation rate.

If your Housing Benefit is paid directly to your landlord, the amount your landlord gets for your rent could go down.

If you are getting, or thinking of claiming Housing Benefit, you need to consider this change before you renew or make a new tenancy agreement with a private landlord.

# Who will the changes affect?

These changes will affect you if you:

- rent accommodation from a private landlord
- already get Housing Benefit, or are going to make a new claim
- are single
- do not normally have children living with you
- are under 35 years old
- live in a self contained property

These changes will not affect you if you:

- rent from a local authority or housing association.
- are aged under 22 and have been in care.
- live in supported housing provided by a housing association, registered charity, voluntary organisation or a county council (in England).

- get the severe disability premium in your benefit because you are entitled to the middle or higher rate care component of the Disability Living Allowance.
- need an extra bedroom for a carer who provides you with the overnight care you need but who doesn't normally live with you.
- have spent at least three months in a
  - homeless hostel or
  - hostel specialising in rehabilitating and resettling within the community. To benefit from this exemption you need to have been offered and accepted support services to enable you to be rehabilitated or resettled in the community.
- are managed under active multi-agency management under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

## When will the changes affect me?

If you are already getting Housing Benefit you will have been told of the changes to the Local Housing Allowance rates from April 2011. You will have been given nine months protection from these changes. You will not be affected by the change to the shared accommodation rate until the nine months has ended.

The nine months start from when your local authority carries out your first Housing Benefit yearly assessment after 1 April 2011. For example, if your yearly review was in June 2011 the change to the shared accommodation rate will not affect you until March 2012 (nine months later).

If you make a new claim for Housing Benefit before 1 January 2012, the change will affect you from your next yearly review. This will also happen if your Housing Benefit is not worked out using the Local Housing Allowance arrangements because you have been claiming Housing Benefit from before April 2008.

If you live in a privately rented home and make a new claim for Housing Benefit from 1 January 2012, the change will affect you straightaway.

## Shared accommodation rates

You can find out your local shared accommodation rate using the websites below. You can also compare the shared accommodation rate with the one bedroom rate:

**England:** [Local Housing Allowance : Directgov - Money, tax and benefits](#)

**Scotland:** [Local Housing Allowance - Figures](#)

**Wales:** [Welsh Government | Local Housing Allowance Rates 2011](#)

# What should I do now?

You can get more information at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Directgov provides information on public services in one place including up to date information on the Housing Benefit changes.

Speak to your local authority Housing Benefit/Housing Service as soon as possible. They can help you to find out exactly how these changes will affect you and talk to you about what your options may be if you are looking for accommodation.

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is an executive agency of HM Revenue & Customs and holds information on Local Housing Allowance, fair rents and Council Tax. Visit their website at [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)

Citizens Advice provides a wide range of advice. To find your local Citizens Advice Bureau, look in the phone book or Yellow Pages, or visit their website at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk) for Scotland.

Shelter offers confidential housing, welfare benefits and debt advice through a network of advice services; freephone Housing Advice Helpline on 0808 800 4444 8am-8pm Monday-Friday and 8am-5pm Saturday-Sunday. Or visit [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

## More information

For more information, please contact your council's Housing Benefit/Housing Service

This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure the leaflet is correct as of the date below. Some of the information may be oversimplified or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law. We recommend that you get independent advice before making financial decisions based on this leaflet.

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