

Example

Mum and Dad, 2 daughters aged 11 and 15, 1 son aged 12:

Mum and Dad 1 bedroom
2 daughters 1 bedroom
1 son 1 bedroom

This family needs 3 bedrooms and would be awarded an LHA for a 3 bedroom property.

Each month the LHAs are published on our website:
www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk

CONTACT THE COUNCIL



Phone us on 01643 703704
Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm

Emergency:
Careline 0800 0831404
(5pm - 8.30am)



Write to us at: West Somerset Council, West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 4QA



In Person at the Minehead Customer Centre, 1-3 Summerland Road, between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, or the Council Offices at Williton between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Thursday, and 8.30am to 4.30 pm on Friday



Email us at
customerservices@westsomerset.gov.uk



Download forms, leaflets and information from our website at
www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk



A Guide to Local Housing Allowance

This document can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in other languages upon request

Since 7 April 2008 private rents are no longer referred to the Rent Officer. Instead the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) scheme was introduced. All new or change of address claims for Housing Benefit (HB), received, or treated as received, on or after 7 April, will be assessed under this scheme.

There is a category of dwelling (based on the number of bedrooms required) and rate of LHA for a household type. This scheme has replaced the scheme of referring rents to the Rent Officer (RO) and should speed up the assessment of HB claims.

Each month the LHA figures for the area will be set by the Rent Officer and will apply for the month after they are set. If an HB claim is calculated using an LHA, the LHA figure will last on the claim for 52 weeks, regardless of any change to the monthly LHA figures during that 52 week period.

The LHA can be higher than the rent charged. If this applies, then the tenant keeps the excess up to a maximum of £15 per week.

Under this scheme HB must be paid direct to the tenant. It cannot be paid direct to the landlord simply because the tenant asks for this. However, there are very specific circumstances when this can be done:

Where the Council considers the tenant/claimant is likely to have difficulties managing their affairs and is vulnerable because of this.

Where the Council considers that it is improbable that the tenant/claimant will pay their rent.

Where the claim would have mandatory legislative direct payments.

If payment is made direct to a landlord the maximum payment must be no more than the actual rent due, unless there are rent arrears when the maximum can be increased up to the LHA to cover these.

There will no longer be any need for Pre-Tenancy Determinations and landlords and their agents will know the rent levels to be used in calculating HB entitlement as the LHAs will be published each month.

The Categories of Dwelling for which LHAs will be set are:

- Shared room rate
- 1 bedroom rate
- 2 bedroom rate
- 3 bedroom rate
- four bedroom rate
- five bedroom rate
- A figure for accommodation larger than the above would be given on application to the Rent Officer

A tenant will only be awarded an LHA for the number of bedrooms the household needs.

To calculate the number of bedrooms a household needs, the Rent Officer applies the following criteria:

- *Couples* *1 bedroom*
- *2 children under 10 (even of opposite sexes)* *1 bedroom*
- *2 children of the same sex under 16* *1 bedroom*
- *person over 16* *1 bedroom*