



Benefits Service

Local Housing Allowance: money advice for tenants

Information Leaflet HB(LHA)8

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

January 2008

What is Local Housing Allowance?

Local Housing Allowance is a new way of working out new claims for Housing Benefit for tenants renting accommodation from a private landlord. It also affects tenants already getting Housing Benefit who move into accommodation rented from a private landlord. Local Housing Allowance is being introduced on 7 April 2008. Local Housing Allowance will not affect people living in housing association accommodation or other social housing.

How will my benefit be paid?

With Local Housing Allowance you will usually have your benefit paid directly to you. You cannot choose to have your benefit paid direct to your landlord.

If you are likely to have difficulty paying your rent, you can ask us to pay your benefit to your landlord. Please see our leaflet **HB(LHA)2** *Local Housing Allowance: tenants who are likely to have difficulty paying their rent* for more information about this. You can get this from us at the address below.

What will happen if I don't use my benefit to pay my rent?

As a tenant you are responsible for paying your rent to your landlord. This is the same as for tenants who do not get benefit. If you do not pay your rent your landlord may apply to us to have your benefit paid to them. Or they may take other action to recover their money, including evicting you from your home.

Eviction means that:

- you will lose your home
- your benefit may not be paid to you in the future
- you may have difficulty finding new accommodation, as your landlord is unlikely to give you a reference
- you will still have to pay the landlord the money you owe and possibly extra money to cover any court costs
- an application for re-housing could be affected as you may be considered to have made yourself intentionally homeless.

How can I pay my rent?

The easiest way to pay your rent is if you have your benefit paid into a bank or building society account. That way you can arrange to pay the rent to your landlord automatically. This is called a standing order. As long as you have enough money in your account, you won't have to worry about remembering to pay your rent and your landlord will know the rent will be paid automatically.

If you do not already have a bank or building society account, you may want to set one up.

Opening a bank/building society account

If you don't have a bank or building society account, now may be a good time to think about opening one. You should be able to open an account either at a bank or building society.

You can get advice about opening and running a bank account from any bank or building society. And there are many organisations that can give you advice about money, including if you have already tried to open an account and have not been able to. The West Somerset Advice Bureau, Market House Lane, Minehead have agreed to offer money advice for this situation.

Help with managing your money and debt

If you are concerned about managing your money or you have debts, try not to worry, but do not ignore your problem – it won't go away. If you cannot pay your rent because of money problems you may be evicted from your home. You must ask for help. There are many organisations that can give you advice

about debt and money problems. They are listed below.

West Somerset Advice Bureau, Market House Lane, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 5NW.

Telephone 01643 704624

British Bankers' Association (BBA)

The BBA produce some useful leaflets on proving your identity and a range of banking services. For more information:

- visit www.bba.org.uk
- phone 020 7126 8800

Financial Services Authority (FSA)

The FSA provide a financial health check service.

For more details visit <http://www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk/tools/financial-health-check.html>

This can help you work out your financial priorities and make decisions about your money.

The FSA also have a budget calculator to help you to think about your spending and to work out whether you have enough money coming in to cover your outgoings.

For more details visit <http://www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk/budgetcalc>

Consumer Credit Counselling Service

The Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS) provides free debt advice over the phone. Everything is free and confidential, from budgeting advice to practical Debt Management Plans. This service is available to everyone in the UK

For more details:

- look on their website www.cccs.co.uk
- email contactus@cccs.co.uk
- ring them on 0800 1381111
- or write to them at:
Consumer Credit Counselling Service
Wade House
Merrion Centre
Leeds LS2 8NG

Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) offer advice on debt problems and a very wide range of other money and non-money topics. To find your local Citizens Advice Bureau, look in the phone book or Yellow Pages. Or visit their website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

National Debtline

This is a telephone-based service and is a national helpline for people with debt problems in England, Wales and Scotland. They will discuss debt problems with you and explain the options available to you.

For more details:

- look on their website www.nationaldebtline.co.uk
- ring them on 0808 808 4000
- or write to them at:
National Debtline
Tricorn House
51-53 Hagley Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham B16 8TP

Payplan

Payplan provide free debt advice and management.

For more details:

- look on their website www.payplan.com
- email help@payplan.com
- ring them on 0800 917 7823
- or write to them at:
Payplan Ltd
Kempton House
Dysart Road
Grantham NG31 7LE

Insolvencyhelpline.co.uk

This is a not-for-profit debt advisory service for debt advice and debt management.

For more details:

- look on their website www.insolvencyhelpline.co.uk
- email info@insolvency.co.uk
- ring them on 0800 0746918

Age Concern

Age Concern provides information on income and benefits for older people.

For more details:

- look on their website www.ace.org.uk
- email web@ace.org.uk
- ring them on 0800 00 99 66
- or write to them at:
Age Concern England
Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER

Credit Action

Credit Action provides information and guidance for people with debt or money worries.

For more details:

- look on their website www.creditaction.com
- email office@creditaction.org.uk
- ring them on 0207 436 9937
- or write to them at:
Credit Action
Howard House
The Point
Weaver Road
Lincoln LN6 3QN

Advice UK

Advice UK is a registered charity and is the UK's largest support network for free, independent advice centres.

For more details:

- look on their website www.adviceuk.org.uk
- email general@adviceuk.org.uk
- ring them on 020 74074070
- or write to them at:
Head Office
12th Floor
New London Bridge House
25 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9SG

If you are struggling to live on the money you have or are experiencing problems with debt, you may want to think about whether you are getting all the benefits or tax credits that you are entitled to.

For more information and advice you can visit the central government money advice section on the internet at www.DirectGov.co.uk. This also has a wide range of public service information and links to other organisations which you may find useful if you are looking for help or advice.

If you have any queries about Housing Benefit and how it is worked out using the Local Housing Allowance rates, please get in touch with us at the address overleaf.

Remember that this leaflet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the cover, it is possible that there may be incorrect information or some ideas may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this leaflet is likely to become less accurate over time because of changes to the law.



HOW TO CONTACT THE COUNCIL

FOR ALL ENQUIRIES

Telephone

01643 703704

Telephone hours

8.30 am - 5.15 pm Monday to Friday
(Your call may be recorded for monitoring and training purposes)

Emergency out of hours

Careline 0800 0831404 (5.15 pm - 8.30 am)

Email

customerservices@westsomerset.gov.uk

Website

www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk

Minehead Customer Centre 1-3 Summerland Road, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5BP
Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm

Williton Office

West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, Taunton,
Somerset TA4 4QA
Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5pm; Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

Council Information Points

MINEHEAD The Town Hall, The Parade TA24 5NB
Tel (01643) 707213 Open Mon-Fri 9am-4pm

DULVERTON Police Station, 4 Exmoor Gardens TA22 9HL
Tel (01398) 324117 Open Mon-Fri 10am-1pm

PORLOCK The Old School Centre, West End TA24 8QD
Tel (01643) 863211 Open Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri 10.15am-1pm

***** HELP STOP FRAUD *****

If you know somebody who you think is claiming benefit incorrectly, help us to stop them by calling the Benefits Fraud Hotline **01984 635236**