

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

Housing Benefit Changes for single people aged 25 to 34 who rent from a private landlord

Changes from 1st January 2012


















Equal Opportunities Statement

Dartford Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council are committed to ensuring that no service user or customer is discriminated against on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, disability, sexuality or religion.

Leaflets available:

-  A Guide for Working Age People (Leaflet 1 WRK)
-  A Guide for Pensioners (Leaflet 2 PNS)
-  Can my claim be backdated? (Leaflet 3 BKD)
-  Changes you need to tell us about (Leaflet 4 C/C)
-  A Guide for the Self-Employed (Leaflet 5 S/E)
-  Extra help towards your Rent & Council Tax (Leaflet 6 DHP)
-  What do I do if I disagree with your decision? (Leaflet 7 APP)
-  What happens when I have been paid too much? (Leaflet 8 O/P)
-  A Guide for Landlords (Leaflet 9 L/L)
-  Attending an Interview Under Caution (Leaflet 10 IUC)
-  Obtaining Information (Leaflet 11 O/I)
-  Can I ask someone to act on my behalf? (Leaflet 12 CIA)
-  Housing Benefit changes for single people aged 25 to 34 who rent from a private landlord (Leaflet 13 U35)

**This leaflet is available in large print, please phone:
01732 227414.**

**This leaflet can be explained in other languages please phone:
01322 343705 or 01732 227000.**

Please note that whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the details given in this leaflet are correct, the information should not be treated as an authoritative statement of benefit regulations.

Introduction

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.

Most single people under 25 years old have their Housing Benefit calculated using the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Shared Accommodation Rate (or Single Room Rent if they have been claiming continuously since before April 2008 and haven't moved).

The Shared Accommodation Rate is based upon rent levels for a single room in accommodation that is not self-contained. For example, this may be within a house where a person has sole use of their bedroom and shares the use of the kitchen, bathroom and lounge.

What is changing?

From January 2012 the Shared Accommodation Rate will be extended to single people under 35 years old.

Your Housing Benefit will be calculated at this rate even if you actually live in self-contained accommodation. This will be the maximum Housing Benefit you can receive; your income and savings may mean that you receive less.

If you live in a property that is not self-contained there will be no change, as the Shared Accommodation Rate would already apply regardless of your age.

What does this mean for me?

If you already get Housing Benefit based on the one bedroom rate the amount you receive is likely to go down, if these changes apply to you.

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 does this change affect?

This change will apply to you if you:

- are under 35 years of age
- are single (do not have a partner who normally lives with you)
- rent from a private landlord (not the Council or a Housing Association) and
- live in self-contained accommodation (ie having at least one bedroom with exclusive use of a bathroom and toilet and a kitchen or facilities for cooking)

However, there are exceptions and the changes will **not** apply if you:

- have one or more dependent child living with you
- have someone else living with you as part of your household
- live in certain types of supported accommodation
- are under 22 years of age and were previously in Social Services care
- have a severe disability premium in your benefit assessment because you are entitled to the middle or higher rate care component of the Disability Living Allowance
- have a carer who lives elsewhere normally but stays overnight because you need care, and have a bedroom for the carer to use
- are between 25 and 35 and subject to assistance under an active Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) or
- are between 25 and 35 and have been assisted by support services to be resettled having spent three months or more in hostel accommodation

The Shared Accommodation Rate

You can find out your local Shared Accommodation Rate using the website below. You can also compare the Shared Accommodation Rate with the one bedroom rate: www.direct.gov.uk

When will this change happen?

If you make a new claim on or after 1 January 2012 this change will affect you immediately (this could be if you claim for the first time or because you have a break in an existing claim that means you need to re-claim).

If you are an existing customer and move address on or after 1 January 2012 the change will affect you when you move.

If you are an existing customer and none of the above applies, and your claim is based upon Local Housing Allowance rates, this change will affect you:

- from the end of your 'Transitional Protection' period if you claimed Housing Benefit before April 2011 or
- on the anniversary of your claim (or last 'relevant change'), if you claimed after March 2011, but before January 2012.

If you are an existing customer and do not move nor have a break in your claim, and your claim is based upon a Rent Officer Referral, this change will affect you on the anniversary of the Rent Officer Referral.

What should I do now?

If you currently receive Housing Benefit you need to think about how the changes will affect your finances. You may wish to talk to your landlord to see if they are prepared to reduce the rent on your property so that you can afford to remain there. We are now able to pay Housing Benefit directly to your landlord if this will help you keep your tenancy. If your landlord is not willing to accept a lower rent you could start looking for somewhere cheaper.

If you are considering signing a new tenancy or renewing an existing one, whether you receive Housing Benefit now, or think you may need to claim in the near future, you need to be aware of how the changes will affect you.

You may want to discuss your situation with another agency, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau or Shelter, who can provide independent advice.

Where can I get help?

You can always phone us for help and advice. For details visit our website www.dartford.gov.uk or www.sevenoaks.gov.uk or see the back of this leaflet.

You could also contact or visit the following:

Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau

Trinity Resource Centre, High Street, Dartford DA1 1DE

Call: 01322 224686

Edenbridge & Westerham Citizens Advice Bureau

68 High Street, Edenbridge TN8 5AR

Call: 01732 865131

Email: Edenbridge@cabnet.org.uk

Sevenoaks & Swanley Citizens Advice Bureau

Buckhurst Lane, Sevenoaks TN13 1HW

Call 01732 456100/01732 454443

Email: info@sevenoaksdistrictcab.org.uk

16 High Street, Swanley BR8 8BG

Call: 01322 610000

Email: info@sevenoaksdistrictcab.org.uk

Shelter Kent Housing Aid

Bull Yard, High Street, Ashford TN24 8SN

Call: 0344 515 1444

Email: ashford@shelter.org.uk

Shelter Kent (North) Housing Aid

12-16 Ordnance Street, Chatham ME4 6SL

Call: 0344 515 1740

Email: medway@shelter.org.uk

If you have any questions about your Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit



Phone us on: 01322 343705 (Dartford)

01732 227000 (Sevenoaks)

A service is available for minicom users on: 01732 227496
(for textphone users only)



Write to us at:

Benefit Services, Dartford Borough Council
Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent DA1 1DR

Benefit Services, Sevenoaks District Council
PO Box 102, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1GT



**E-mail us at: benefits@dartford.gov.uk
benefits@sevenoaks.gov.uk**

Visit our main offices at the following times:



Dartford

Monday - Thursday 8:45am to 5:15pm

Friday - 8:45am to 4:45pm

Sevenoaks

Monday - Wednesday 8.45am to 5.00pm

Thursday 9.30am to 5.00pm

Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm

**For appointments at our Edenbridge, Swanley & Hartley surgeries
please call 01732 227000**

What if I want to comment on your service?

Please get in touch with us. We would like to know what you think.
Information on how we deal with comments about our services is
available on our websites: www.dartford.gov.uk or www.sevenoaks.gov.uk