

Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Notes

What are Discretionary Housing Payments?

On 2 July 2001 the Government introduced a new scheme called Discretionary Housing Payments, which allows Councils to make additional payments to people who receive Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit who appear to need further help with their rent and/or Council Tax payments. These are not intended to be long term ongoing payments; they are awarded on a short term basis while you take action to improve your circumstances.

How do I get Discretionary Housing Payments?

To be considered for a Discretionary Housing Payment you must complete the attached form and send this to the Benefits Section along with supporting documentary evidence.

What will I need to tell you?

When you complete the form we will need to know why you think you should get an additional payment towards your rent and/or Council Tax payments, what your circumstances are, any action you have taken to help yourself and anything else you think may help us make a decision. You should supply as much detail as possible so that we fully understand your situation.

You will also need to tell us about all the money you have coming into your household (income) and all the money you pay out each week/month (expenditure) and provide your last two months bank statements. **Your application may be held up if you do not supply your bank statements.**

When you have completed and returned your form we will consider all aspects of your circumstances before we decide if we can award you a Discretionary Housing Payment. We may wish to visit you at home or ask you to come into the office to discuss your application further.

How will the Benefits Section make a decision about Discretionary Housing Payments?

We will consider all requests for Discretionary Housing Payments while trying to ensure that payments are made to those most in need.

There is no list of circumstances that will automatically qualify you for an award of Discretionary Housing Payments. Each request will be considered on its own merits, but you will need to demonstrate that you do not have the means to pay the shortfall in your rent or Council Tax yourself and that you have not intentionally taken on a tenancy that you knew you could not afford. Wherever it is possible and reasonable to do so, you will be expected to take steps to improve the circumstances that have led to the need for a discretionary payment, for example - finding more affordable accommodation.

Can I claim Discretionary Housing Payments to cover all my housing costs?

Discretionary Housing Payments cannot be awarded for any of the following:

- Ineligible service or support charges
- Any rent you have to pay if you only qualify for Council Tax Benefit
- Any Council Tax you have to pay if you only qualify for Housing Benefit or Second Adult Rebate
- Increases in your rent to cover rent arrears
- Reductions in any benefit as a result of Child Support
- Amounts of Housing or Council Tax Benefit that have been suspended

How much money can I get?

Discretionary Housing Payments will be paid at the discretion of Dartford Borough Council, but they will not be greater than your weekly rent or Council Tax liability. For example if your eligible rent is £50.00 per week and your entitlement to Housing Benefit is £45.00 the maximum Discretionary Housing Payment you can get is £5.00 per week.

The money we get to pay Discretionary Housing Payments comes directly from central Government and is strictly limited each year. Therefore, if a Discretionary Housing Payment is awarded, it will last for a specified period of time (possibly 3 or 6 months at the most), and then it will end. You can apply for another Discretionary Housing Payment award and this will be considered.

Once the Discretionary Housing Payments fund has been allocated in full, further requests within that year will be turned down.

If you are awarded a Discretionary Housing Payment and we later find out you should not have been entitled to it, we will ask you to return the money.

What if you turn my request down?

If your application for a Discretionary Housing Payment is turned down and there is something you feel we have not considered or were not aware of; we will look at our decision again if you write to us within **one month** of the date that we inform you that your claim has been refused.

I want to apply

If you wish to proceed with an application for Discretionary Housing Payments, please complete all sections of the claim form attached (pages 3 – 7) and return the form to the Benefits Section at the Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent DA1 1DR as soon as possible, remembering to include any documentary evidence. You may keep these notes for your future reference.

**DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS CLAIM FORM
YOUR HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

Name:	Benefit Reference:
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SOURCE	CLAIMANT AMOUNT £	HOW OFTEN IS THIS PAID	OFFICE USE ONLY	PARTNER AMOUNT £	HOW OFTEN IS THIS PAID	OFFICE USE ONLY
Wages/Salary						
JSA (contributions based)						
Income Support or JSA (income based)						
Working Tax Credit						
Child Tax Credit						
Retirement pension						
Private or occupational pension						
Pension Credit						
Incapacity Benefit						
Disability Living Allowance – CARE						
Disability Living Allowance – MOBILITY						
Maintenance						
Housekeeping/money from Non-dependants						
Other income/benefits						
Child Benefit						
OFFICE USE: TOTALS						

**DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS CLAIM FORM
EXPENDITURE**

SOURCE	AMOUNT £	HOW OFTEN ?	OFFIC E USE ONLY	SOURCE	AMOUNT £	HOW OFTEN ?	OFFIC E USE ONLY
Rent you pay (the amount not covered by Benefit)				School dinners			
Council Tax you pay				School expenses			
Household shopping (Food, toiletries etc)				Children's clubs			
Payments to catalogues				Sky/cable/digital TV			
Phone (land line)				Internet access			
Phone (mobile)				Loan repayments			
Personal insurance				Credit card payments			
Home insurance				HP Payments			
Health insurance or Optical/Dental costs				Pension Contributions			
Water rates				Regular Savings			
Gas				Subscriptions			
Electricity				Cigarettes/tobacco			
Other household fuel:				Alcohol			
TV licence				Entertainment/Eating out			
Court fines				Other			
Maintenance/Child Support payments				ARREARS OF:			
Shopping club				Rent			
TV/video hire				Council Tax			
Newspapers/magazines				Water rates			
Car – Petrol				Gas			
Car – Insurance				Electricity			
Car – Tax				Telephone			
Car – maintenance				Any other expenditure:			
Travel expenses (bus, train, taxi etc)							
Clothing							
OFFICE USE: TOTAL				OFFICE USE: TOTAL			

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS CLAIM FORM
Additional information

NAME:	
ADDRESS:	

Benefit ref:	National Insurance No:
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Please answer the questions below:

1. Did you ask for a Pre-Tenancy Determination to see how much benefit you would be likely to receive, prior to accepting the tenancy? (Private tenants only) YES/NO
If No, why not? If Yes, why did you accept this tenancy?

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2. Have you tried to negotiate a lower rent with your landlord? (Private tenants only) YES/NO
If No, why not? If Yes, what was the outcome?

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3. Have you considered/tried moving to cheaper accommodation? (Private tenants only) YES/NO
Please give details or give reasons for not moving.

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4. How much notice do you have to give your landlord if you want to move?

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5. Could you live with relatives/friends? YES/NO

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6. Has there been a death in the household in the past 12 months? YES/NO
If yes, please give details.

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7. What disabilities, health problems or special needs do you or any member of your family have?

8. Please list all of the bank accounts (including Post Office accounts) and other savings and/or invested money that you and your partner (if you have one) have. Please list all single name and joint accounts/savings/investments, even if the accounts are overdrawn or not used very often. Please provide the latest 2 statements for each account.

State the name of the bank(s) etc. and the type of account(s), do not list the account number(s).

9. Are family or friends able to financially assist you or help with your children's expenses? YES/NO
Please give details.

10. Do you have rent arrears? YES/NO
If yes, how much (please provide proof).

11. Has your landlord taken any action against you to recover the arrears? YES/NO
If yes, please tell us what action they have taken?

12. If you have a Sky/Cable TV package, please give the date your contract started and details of how long you are tied in to your current agreement.

13. If you own a car, please detail the make, model and age.

Please use this space to explain why you need extra help with your rent and/or council tax and to tell us anything else about your circumstances, which might be relevant to this application even if you think it is not very important. Tell us about any action you are taking to improve your future finances.

DECLARATION

I have completed this application form and declare that the information given is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I know that I must notify the Benefits Section of any changes in my circumstances within **one month** from the change. I understand that the information I have given in this application may be checked against other records held by the Council.

Signature:

Date:

Print full name:

*Daytime telephone number:

*It would be helpful if you could provide a daytime telephone number so that we can contact you if there is any query with the information you have supplied.