

# Housing Benefit

## *Housing Benefit*

Income Benefits are available to help anyone. If in doubt – apply anyway. This leaflet gives a summary of Housing Benefit and how to apply for it. For more information about benefits please contact your Housing Officer or Income Recovery Officer.

For further information about other welfare payments that you may be entitled to, please see our leaflet on welfare benefits.

## *Housing Benefit*

*– an outline*

### *Who is it for?*

Tenants on a low income. It is available to help with rent payments. It does not cover water rates, heating or hot water.

### *Who is eligible?*

Any person over 16 years who is a named tenant in rented accommodation and who has less than £16,000 in savings. The amount given depends on your rent, the number and ages of people in your family, your income and any savings.

### *How to apply*

Ask your Housing Officer or Income Recovery Officer for a form or contact the Housing Benefit section of your local council

Please note that although Housing Benefit may be paid directly from your local council to ASRA, it remains your responsibility to ensure that payments are made. You are liable for the rent if payment ceases.



## *Housing Benefit*

*– advice on making a claim*

You will require the following information, if appropriate, when submitting a Housing Benefit claim form:

- ▶ Proof of rent such as your tenancy agreement or rent increase letter
- ▶ Proof of income such as your last four payslips if in employment or a benefit book if unemployed
- ▶ Proof of child benefit
- ▶ Proof of savings, such as a bank or building society statement
- ▶ Personal identification such as a Passport or full Driving Licence
- ▶ A letter from your college stating your course details if you are a student
- ▶ Details of any other people living in your household.

## **Housing Benefit**

### ***Establishing and following up of your claim***

Rather than posting your housing benefit application you should take it in person to the housing benefit office and get a receipt. Always remember to ask for a receipt whenever you take information to the housing benefit office – please also forward a copy to us.

Keep a record of all paperwork relating to your claim.

If you are applying for housing benefit for the first time it is important to telephone or visit the housing benefit office on a regular basis to chase progress with your application. This will reduce the time taken in processing your application and will minimise the risk of rent arrears building up.

Always provide the housing benefit office with all the information that they request. Failure to do so may result in a delayed payment and could mean that you fall behind with your rent. If we are informed that this delay in processing the claim is the result of you not providing the correct information, we will treat this seriously and take action.

Please keep us up to date about progress on chasing your application.

When you receive your notification of entitlement to housing benefit it is important that you check that the start date is the date when you actually applied for benefit.

You should check your weekly entitlement to benefit because if it does not cover the full rent, it is your responsibility to make up the shortfall.

## **Housing Benefit**

### ***Changes to your personal circumstances***

Your housing benefit will continue unless your circumstances change and, as a result of this change, you are no longer entitled to benefits.

The council may write to you, 'phone you or visit you to check that you are receiving the correct benefits or the council may send you a shortened form to complete

You must tell the council in writing about changes in your circumstances that might affect your benefit. Some examples of changes are listed below:

- ▶ Your income, or the income of any member of your household changes
- ▶ You stop receiving income support, job seekers allowance or pension credit
- ▶ Your savings or investments go up or down
- ▶ You change address
- ▶ Your rent goes up or down
- ▶ Anyone moves in or out of your home
- ▶ Your children leave school or start work
- ▶ You are likely to be away from your property for more than four weeks

## **Housing Benefit and overpayments**

If any housing benefit is paid to us, and you are not entitled to the benefit (a housing benefit overpayment), you will be contacted by you local council.

If you receive an overpayment letter you should contact your housing benefit office and ASRA immediately as you only have four weeks to appeal. Once this time has elapsed, we will pay the money back to the council and charge it to your rent account. You will then be liable for this debt.

Housing benefit overpayments are best avoided by informing the housing benefit office immediately of any changes in your circumstances.

## **Housing Benefit and travel abroad**

If you receive housing benefit and are likely to be away from your home, such as abroad, for more than four weeks, you must inform you local housing benefit office and us.

You must make arrangements for your rent to be paid whilst you are away.

## **Further information**

For further information about Housing Benefit, please contact your local housing benefit office or ASRA's Housing Benefit Officer on 020 7940 6600.

Details given are correct at September 2005.