

Local Housing Allowance: an introduction



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

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. If you live in Council accommodation or rent from the Orkney Housing Association, Local Housing Allowance will not affect you.

With Local Housing Allowance, your benefit is not usually based on the property you live in. It is usually based on:

- who lives with you;
- which area you live in;
- how much money you have coming in;
- what savings you have.

In some cases the amount of benefit you are entitled to will be affected by other things. These can include:

- how much your rent is
- whether anyone living with you is expected to contribute to your rent

See our leaflet, **HB(LHA)2** *Working out your Local Housing Allowance*, for more details about this. You can get this from us at the address below.

How will I get my benefit if Local Housing Allowance applies to me?

Usually you will have your benefit paid directly to you. It will be paid directly into your Bank or Building Society account, if you have one, or by cheque.

If you do not already have a Bank or Building Society account, you may want to set one up. That way you can arrange to pay the rent to your landlord automatically, using a standing order.

You can get advice about opening and running a Bank Account from any Bank or Building Society. You can also get advice from a welfare organisation such as Orkney Citizens Advice.

It is up to you to pay the rent to your landlord. If you don't pay your rent, you may be taken to court and evicted from the property.

Can I have my benefit paid direct to my landlord?

Your benefit is paid to you unless you are likely to have difficulty paying your rent, or it must be paid to your landlord. For more details about this, please see **HB(LHA)3** *Local Housing Allowance: tenants who are likely to have difficulty paying their rent*. You can get this from us at the address below.

If you are worried about managing your money, ask us if we can help. In some cases we may be able to pay your rent to your landlord.

What will happen if I use my benefit for something else?

Your benefit is for you to pay your rent with. If you do not use your benefit to pay your rent, your landlord may take you to court or try to evict you and you may lose your home.

Changes of circumstance

If you are getting Housing Benefit and you move to a new address or other circumstances change, you should tell us straightaway. You may need to make a new claim for Housing Benefit

Why are we introducing Local Housing Allowance?

Local Housing Allowance gives tenants more choice in where they live and it's fairer too. This is because with Local Housing Allowance:

- you will be entitled to the same amount of benefit as people in the same circumstances as you;
- you can find out how much benefit you can get before you rent a property;
- you can decide how much of your benefit you want to spend on renting a property;
- you will usually get your benefit paid to you. It is up to you to pay the rent to your landlord;
- you will find out about your benefit more quickly than before.

Where to get more information

If you want to know more about the changes and how they affect you:

- phone the Council's Housing Benefit Section on (01856) 873535 Ext 2116, or Direct Dial (01856) 886312
- visit, or write to, the Council's Housing Benefit Section at Orkney Islands Council, Council Offices, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY
- look on our website on www.orkney.gov.uk
- email us at benefits@orkney.gov.uk

- visit www.direct.gov.uk

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 below, 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.

January 2008