

Housing Benefit

Discretionary Housing Payments

If the Housing Benefit awarded does not fully cover your rent and you have a shortfall, you may wish to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).

The Government has given us a limited amount of money to assist those that need extra help with housing costs. Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of benefit; they are separate payments, to be made at our discretion, if we believe you need extra financial support.

Who can apply for a DHP?

You can only apply for a DHP if you are currently entitled to Housing Benefit.

A DHP can cover shortfalls between the rent and amount of Housing Benefit award including:

- a Valuation Office Agency rent restriction or where the Local Housing Allowance rate does not meet the rent
- where the rent used in a claim for a person renting from a social landlord has been restricted due to the household under-occupying the property, with particular regard to disabled people living in significantly adapted accommodation
- where Housing Benefit has been reduced due to a household's income exceeding the Welfare Benefit cap levels
- where non dependants deductions are applied
- where income tapers and reduce entitlement

We cannot give DHP's for the following:

- service charges not covered by Housing Benefit
- any rent arrears you owe
- if we take any amount from your Housing Benefit because your Jobseeker's Allowance has been sanctioned (i.e. not been paid because you have broken the terms of your claim)
- when your Housing Benefit is suspended
- shortfalls in Council Tax Support entitlement

How we will make a decision on your DHP claim

In order to decide whether or not we can award a Discretionary Housing Payment, we need to know as much as possible about your situation. This includes why you have difficulty meeting your housing costs, what you have done to improve the situation, what stops you finding a solution yourself and how the problem is affecting you and your family.

To enable us to do this, please answer the questions on the Discretionary Housing Payment form in as much detail as you can, as well as completing the income and expenditure information. Tell us about any exceptional or unusual circumstances you have, such as medical conditions. Be realistic with your expenditure, don't leave anything out. We don't wish to be intrusive, but we need to know the true picture to be able to make the right decision for you.

Discretionary Housing Payments are usually only awarded for a limited period and so should not be regarded as a long-term solution. They are awarded to give you time to revise your income and expenditure or to get cheaper accommodation.

If your application is successful, you will be notified of how much you have been awarded and how long your award lasts. We aim to notify you of our decision within 21 days of your application being received. The amount awarded will depend on your circumstances and the reason it has been awarded.

When the award ends, you can re-apply, but we will look at what efforts you have made, since your previous application, to ensure you can meet your housing costs yourself. Also, as we have only a limited amount of money, we may agree that DHP's are needed, but we will not be able to pay, as by that time, the budget has been spent.

If your application is not successful we will write and tell you and explain why. As DHP's are not payments of benefit, there is no right of appeal; however you can ask us to look at our decision again.

If you are awarded a DHP you are required to notify us of any changes in circumstance which may be relevant to you continuing to get DHP.

We can stop making further DHP payments, and recover DHP payments already made, if we decide that payment has been made because information you gave was incorrect or incomplete or an error was made when the claim was decided.