Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/landlords/social-security-benefits/getting-help-towards-rent

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Getting help towards rent

This information is for private landlords of properties in Northern Ireland.

If you are a tenant, you can find advice here.

If you are a landlord or letting agent in Northern Ireland seeking advice, you can:

- send a message to Landlord Advice, or
- call 028 90 245 640 (Option 1)

Your tenants have a right to apply for benefits to help pay their rent. If you do not allow tenants to claim benefits, they may take legal action against you.

Most tenants will claim Universal Credit.

A tenant can now only claim Housing Benefit if they:

- are over State Pension age, or
- are in a couple where both people are over State Pension age, or
- live in temporary, sheltered or supported housing

Universal Credit and Housing Benefit work differently. But they both use local housing allowance (LHA) rules to decide how much a tenant gets towards their rent.

Local housing allowance

The amount your tenant gets in benefits will usually be less than the rent you charge.

Local housing allowance (LHA) is the maximum amount of benefit that a tenant can get.

The Housing Executive sets LHA rates based on:

- the tenant’s age
- the postcode of the property
- how many people are in the tenant’s household

Postcodes for local housing allowance

LHA rates reflect the cost of renting in different areas of Northern Ireland. The first part of the rental property’s postcode helps determine LHA rates.

There is a different LHA rate in each area for a:

- room in a shared property (shared accommodation rate)
- 1-bedroom property
- 2-bedroom property
- 3-bedroom property
- 4-bedroom property

You can find current LHA rates on the Housing Executive’s website.

Local housing allowance for young people

There are different rules for people under 35 who:

- are single, and
- do not have children or other dependents

They will only get a 'shared accommodation rate' unless they qualify for an exemption.

Bedroom limits under LHA

The LHA rate depends on the number of bedrooms your tenant needs for their household.

Your tenant gets one bedroom for:

- them and their partner
- any other adult aged 16 or over

- two children of the same gender up to age 16
- two children of opposite genders up to age 10

Your tenant may be entitled to extra help for an additional bedroom if:

- someone in the household gets disability benefits, and
- they cannot share a bedroom due to their disability, or
- someone outside the household regularly stays overnight to provide care

Getting extra help to pay rent and rates

The amount of benefits your tenant receives toward rent usually won't cover what you charge.

Tenants can apply for a discretionary housing payment to help with this.

Tenants who pay rates can get help:

- as part of their claim if they get Housing Benefit
- by applying for a rates rebate if they get Universal Credit

Contact Landlord Advice if you have questions about benefits or rent payments.

More advice

- Dealing with rent arrears
- Universal Credit for landlords
- Housing Benefit for landlords