Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/landlords/social-security-benefits/housing-benefit-landlords

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Housing Benefit for landlords

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 may need help to pay their rent. Usually, this means applying for Universal Credit.

Tenants can claim Housing Benefit if they are over State Pension age. If they are a couple, both people need to be over State Pension age.

Applying for Housing Benefit

The Housing Executive deals with Housing Benefit applications.

To apply for Housing Benefit, tenants can:

- apply for Housing Benefit online, or
- return a paper application form to their local Housing Executive office

Tenants can phone the Housing Executive on 03448 920 902 to ask for a paper form.

An advice agency might be able to help tenants with their application.

Landlords must complete a certificate of occupation for the claim to be approved.

Waiting for the first Housing Benefit payment

It can take a couple of weeks before the first Housing Benefit payment is made. It can take longer if the applicant hasn't sent all the information needed.

Tenants may be able to get a grant or loan while they're waiting for their first payment. Your tenants should get advice if they're worried about paying rent.

Your tenant can choose whether Housing Benefit payments will go to them or to you directly.

How often Housing Benefit is paid

Housing Benefit pays every four weeks in arrears. You should keep this in mind, especially if you charge rent on a monthly basis.

How much Housing Benefit pays towards rent

Housing Benefit rarely covers the full amount of rent in a privately rented property. It will pay up to a certain amount depending on the tenant's circumstances.

The Housing Executive will look at the tenant's:

- personal circumstances
- income, savings and assets
- household or family, their income and circumstances

Who Housing Benefit pays

A landlord can be paid Housing Benefit directly. The tenant can arrange for this to happen. Or the tenant can receive the payment, then pay you the rent.

Sometimes the first payment might go to the tenant. This can happen even if the tenant has said it should be paid to you.

Make sure to check your bank account regularly. Speak to your tenant if you haven’t had a payment when you were expecting one.

Often, there can be a shortfall between what Housing Benefit pays and the amount of rent you charge. Your tenant will have to pay this shortfall. They might be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment to help with this.

Our housing mediation service might be able to help with disagreements over rent.

Set up a direct payment if your tenant owes rent

You can ask Housing Benefit to pay you, instead of the tenant. They can only do this against the tenant’s wishes if they owe at least six weeks' rent.

Contact the Housing Executive to ask for payments to go directly to your bank account.

You can also ask for a deduction from your tenant’s other benefits to go towards rent arrears. You can only do this if they are still claiming Housing Benefit for your property.

Find information on applying for a deduction here.

Extra help if Housing Benefit does not cover rent

Tenants can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). They can do this if their Housing Benefit does not cover all their rent.

Housing Rights can help tenants:

- see if they might be eligible, and
- apply for this payment

Help to pay rates

When your tenant applies for Housing Benefit, they will also be assessed to see if they are eligible for help with rates.

For tenants getting Housing Benefit, help with rates is called Rates Relief. Rates Relief can be paid to either:

- a tenant
- a landlord, or
- Land & Property Services

Contact Landlord Advice if you have questions about Housing Benefit.

More advice

- Getting help towards rent
- Issues with social security benefits