



WELFARE AWARE

UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARING FOR CHANGE

LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Housing benefit for private rented housing is called 'Local Housing Allowance' (LHA). If you live in a private rented property and receive help with your rent because you cannot work, are unemployed or on a low income then you may be eligible for LHA.

There are three main changes to LHA, most have already started.

1. LHA Rate Cap

LHA is capped at rates based on the amount of bedrooms that your household is assessed as needing.

The most that can be claimed for a:

- one bedroom property is £250 per week
- two bedroom property is £290
- three bedroom property is £340
- four bedroom or larger property is £400

This is the national maximum amounts, but in your area there will be limits based on what it costs to rent a property locally. So it is possible that the maximum rates for LHA in your area will be much lower.

The cap has already come into effect and applies to any new claims, or changes in circumstances. For existing claims it will depend on when your original claim was made and if you have had your annual review, or

whether or not you have moved since your claim commenced. Check with your housing benefit team for a more detailed picture of when this applies to you.

For more detailed information on the LHA rate cap see Shelter's web page: <http://bit.ly/SFcAxh>

2. Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) for people 18 – 34 years

There are particular rules for under 35s. Please see our specific factsheet on that issue

3. LHA rate increases will be worked out differently

The way in which LHA rates are increased ('uprated') has changed;

- LHA rates are reviewed each year, rather than each month, so they are not as closely related to local changes in rent levels.
- LHA rate increases (at least until March 2016) are to be less than the rates of inflation. This means in 'real terms' LHA has gone down.
- The Government has set up a Targeted Affordability Fund identifying parts of the country where some accommodation will get higher LHA increases

What support is available if you are affected by any of these changes?

- If you have a rent shortfall because of this change you may be able to get some short term help from a fund the council has called 'Discretionary Housing Payments'. Apply to the local authority/council to be considered for assistance.
- Have a benefits 'check-up' to make sure you are claiming the right benefits.

Need some extra help?

Talk to Citizens Advice
tel 08444 111 444 (England)
www.citizensadvice.org.uk or other
local advice organisations.

The Money Advice Service has lots of
useful tools to help with understanding
benefits and managing money:
www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Getting Help:

Speak to your local authority, Citizen's Advice or Job Centre Plus or support worker to find out what the changes mean for you.

HOMELESSWATCH



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