

Claiming Housing Benefit

June 2015

Introduction

This summary provides you with information about housing benefit. You may be able to claim this benefit if you're on a low income and need financial help to pay all or part of your rent..

This summary applies to all rented tenants with:

- Southern Housing Group Ltd, and;
- Southern Home Ownership Ltd

Homeowners may also be able to claim financial assistance through housing benefit.

For more information, please contact the Housing Benefit office at your local council.

Who can claim Housing Benefit?

You may be entitled to housing benefit if you pay rent and your income and savings are below a certain level. If you are a shared owner and pay rent on part of your home you may be eligible for housing benefit on the rental element.

If you live with a partner or civil partner only one of you can apply for housing benefit on behalf of you both.

How much do you get?

This depends on your personal and financial circumstances. The maximum housing benefit you can get is the same as your 'eligible' rent. This may not be the same amount as your full rent. We will always clearly state in our charges which part of the rent and service charge is eligible for housing benefit..

What is eligible rent?

- Eligible rent includes
- Some charges for communal services, such as a lifts, communal area lighting or play areas

Housing benefit will not pay for charges included in your rent that are specific to you or your home, for example, charges for the water that you use on a daily basis.

How it's paid

Housing benefit is usually paid straight into your rent account but it may also be paid direct to you if you prefer. If you owe us more than eight weeks rent we can ask for it to be paid direct to us.

Effect on your other benefits

Housing benefit won't affect any of your other benefits.

How you can claim

Please contact your local authority if you would like to claim housing benefit. They will ask you to complete a form in order to make your claim. If you have any problems in making your claim or when filling in your claim form you must contact our Service Centre as we may be able to help you.

It can take several weeks before you hear the result of your claim. In the meantime, we will still be charging you rent. You must start making payments towards your rent as soon as you move in, or you will owe us money and we may start legal action against you.

Your local authority will notify you when your claim has been assessed. They will also tell you how much of your weekly rent will be paid by housing benefit and how much of your rent you have to pay yourself.

Once you have received this information you must contact the Service Centre as soon as possible to confirm your rent payments and to discuss the repayment of any arrears that you may have outstanding.

What if my circumstances change?

You must tell your local authority immediately if your circumstances change as this may affect your housing benefit. Such changes may include a change in your income, taking in a lodger, or a change in circumstance of someone else in your household.

If you don't tell them as soon as a change happens, they can backdate any changes when they do find out. You could end up owing a large sum of money.

If the housing benefit has already been paid to us directly, it will have to be repaid, and this will put you in serious breach of your tenancy which may put your home at risk.

Your Responsibilities

Paying your rent on time is still your responsibility, even if some or all of it comes from housing benefit. It is up to you to:

- Get your claim in on time
- Send the right information to the housing benefit office
- Tell the council about any change in your circumstance
- Pay in full and on time, any part of the rent and other charges that are down to you
- Check your rent position regularly to ensure you are receiving the housing benefit you believe you are entitled to.

Further information

If you would like any more information on this or any of our other policies or services please contact our customer service centre or go to our website www.shgroup.org.uk. Contact details can be found on our webpage, on our Information Card or in Open Door- your residents' newsletter.

Feedback and Complaints

If you have something to say about the Group's policies and procedures or the information we provide on them then let us know. Please address this feedback to Policy Services Team c/o PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ or email to servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk marking the email 'Policy Feedback'.

If you have a complaint then either our Customer Service Centre or local staff will attempt to deal with it and resolve it. If we can't find a solution in this way, or if you prefer to deal with the matter more formally, then our complaints procedure will help you. Ask the Customer Service Centre for a leaflet which tells you how your complaint will be handled.

All complaints are dealt with in strict confidence. Our commitment to fairness means that you will not be treated differently if you make a complaint about our service.

For help with translations, or if a large type, Braille or taped summary would be useful, contact the Service Centre.

Arabic	لتلقي المساعدة في الحصول على نسخ مترجمة أو إذا كان من المفيد بالنسبة لكم تلقي نسخ مطبوعة بطباعة مكبرة، أو بطريقة برايل للمكفوفين، أو مسجلة كملخصات على شريط تسجيل صوتي، فيرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة .Service Centre
Bengali	অনুবাদে সাহায্য পেতে হলে অথবা বড় অক্ষর, ব্রেইল অথবা টেপে রেকর্ডকৃত সারসংক্ষেপ শুনতে চাইলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারকে 0300 303 1682 নাম্বারে ফোন করুন।
French	Contactez le Centre de services pour obtenir de l'aide sur les traductions, ou si un résumé en gros caractères, en Braille ou enregistré s'avère nécessaire.
Somali	Si lagaaga caawiyo turjumista ama haddii aad jeclaan lahayd farta waaweyn, farta indhoolayaasha (Braille) ama warbixin kooban oo cajilad ku duuban, la xiriir Xarunta Adeegga.
Spanish	Si necesita traducciones o resúmenes en letra grande, Braille o casete, póngase en contacto con el Centro de Servicios.
Turkish	Tercüme konusunda yardım için, veya iri puntolu, Braille körler alfabesi ile yazılmış ya da ses kaydı olarak bir özet isterseniz, 0300 303 1683'ten Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.