

Introduction

From 7 April 2008, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was introduced as a new way of calculating Housing Benefit. It is paid to people who privately rent a property or a room and who have a low income.

An Applicant who is already in receipt of Housing Benefit will not be affected unless they change address and move into accommodation rented from a private landlord in which case they will need to claim LHA.

Criteria

The amount of LHA the Applicant will receive will depend on the following:

- The number of bedrooms;
- The area they wish to live in;
- Their income and savings.

The Applicant's Local Housing Authority will work out how many rooms the Applicant is allowed. The rules allow one bedroom for the following:

- Adult couple;
- Adult over 16;
- Any two children under 10 regardless of sex;
- Any two children of the same;
- Any other child;
- If the Applicant or his/her partner are 'a person who requires overnight care', one additional bedroom for a non-resident carer - even if both the Applicant and his/her partner require overnight care, only one additional bedroom is allowed.

Amount

LHA rates are calculated for individual areas known as 'Broad Market Rental Areas' each month. The LHA rates are published at the end of each month. They are published on the Local Council and Rent Services websites (see 'Further Information'). A 'Broad Market Rental Area' is an area where you could reasonably be expected to live, taking into account services and facilities such as health, education, recreation, banking and shopping.

LHA will be paid to the Applicant. It is no longer paid to the Applicant's landlord or agent.

From April 2011, a limit was introduced so that LHA will not exceed:

- £250 per week for a one bedroom property (including shared accommodation);
- £290 per week for a two bedroom property;

- £340 per week for a three bedroom property;
- £400 per week for a four bedroom property.

The maximum rate of housing benefit will be limited to the rate for a four bedroom property.

Further, from April 2012 LHA rates will be updated yearly instead of monthly, therefore, they will remain the same between April 2012 and March 2013.

Further Information

To claim:

Local Council (see Director www.direct.gov.uk
Gov A-Z list of Local Councils)

For help:

The Rent Service 0845 026 4696
www.therentservice.gov.uk

Benefits Enquiry Line 0800 88 22 00
www.direct.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau www.citizensadvice.org.uk
www.adviceguide.org.uk

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