

New Claims for Private Tenants – Local Housing Allowance

From 6 April 2009, we are changing the way we calculate Housing Benefit and this may affect the Local Housing Allowance rate which applies to you. From this date no new customers will be entitled to housing benefit for six or more bedrooms.

This change will only affect a small number of families, as only people with an entitlement to six or more bedrooms will be affected. The way bedroom entitlement is worked out is as follows:

How many bedrooms am I entitled to?

The number of people who live with you is used to work out how many bedrooms you are entitled to. We do not count other rooms such as a living room, kitchen or bathroom.

The number of bedrooms you are entitled to is then used to work out which Local Housing Allowance rate usually applies to you. In some cases, there are some more rules – these are looked at below.

You can use the following information as a guide to work out how many bedrooms you are entitled to, however the most number of bedrooms you can receive Local Housing Allowance for is five.

You are entitled to one bedroom for:

- every adult couple (married or unmarried)
- any other adult aged 16 or over
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16
- any two children who are less than ten years old
- any other child.

Reena and Suki

Reena and Suki are a couple who have one nine-year-old child, Ben. They are entitled to one bedroom for themselves and one for

Ben. This means any benefit they are entitled to will be based on the Local Housing Allowance rate for two bedrooms.

Lisa and Matt

Lisa and Matt are a couple who have six children, Shaun, who is 18, Richard, who is 17, Graham, who is 15, Laura, who is 12, Millie, who is nine and Jessica, who is six.

They are entitled to one bedroom for themselves, one bedroom for Shaun, one bedroom for Richard, one bedroom for Laura and Millie to share, one bedroom for Graham and one bedroom for Jessica. This means although they are entitled to six bedrooms any benefit they are entitled to will be based on the Local Housing Allowance rate for five bedrooms only.

Summary of changes

From 6 April 2009, the maximum Housing Benefit payable will be at the five bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate. If you make a new claim for Housing Benefit or move address in to privately rented accommodation after 6 April 2009, your claim will be assessed according to the five bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate for the area in which you live.

If you are already in receipt of Housing Benefit with an LHA rate for six or more bedrooms you will continue to receive that rate until your case is reviewed by your local authority. If there are no changes in your circumstances, your review will normally take place one year after you have made your Housing Benefit claim or one year after your previous review. Following the review, you may be able to continue to receive Housing Benefit for up to 26 weeks at your existing Local Housing Allowance rate. Your claim will then be assessed according to the five bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate in your area.