



COVENTRY LAW CENTRE

HOUSING LAW LEAFLETS

HOUSING BENEFIT

This leaflet is intended to assist tenants who wish to claim housing benefit.

Seeking Advice & Assistance

This leaflet is intended to give general guidance only and is not to be treated as giving specific advice in respect of particular cases.

If you would like advice from Coventry Law Centre we offer a telephone advice service on Wednesday and Friday mornings between 10:00am and 12noon. Please call 76253167 and your call will be answered by a specialist housing advisor.

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Although every effort is made to ensure the information in this leaflet is accurate and up to date, it should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law and does not constitute legal advice - we cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies and their consequences. The information in this leaflet is written for people resident in, or affected by, the laws of England and Wales only.

HOUSING BENEFIT

A Warning

Housing benefit is a complex issue and this leaflet cannot possibly act as a guide to all housing benefit issues. It serves merely as the most basic introduction. You can however, obtain advice from a Law Centre or a Citizens Advice Bureau or certain solicitors in private practice regarding housing benefit. There are also various different types of advice agency who may offer such advice.

What is housing benefit?

This is a benefit which assists persons with rental payments. Usually, people will be eligible for this type of benefit if they are already in receipt of other means tested benefits such as income support or income based job seekers allowance or if they are otherwise on a low income.

How much housing benefit can I expect to receive?

This depends on a number of inter-related factors. However, the amount of rent you have to pay and the amount of income support and capital that you have will be very relevant factors.

How do I make my claim?

You have to complete an application form which can normally be obtained from the Housing Benefit Department of the local authority. The forms can be quite detailed but it is important for you to fill them in as quickly and as thoroughly as you can and for you to give the Housing Benefit Department any documentation that they request. In various housing benefit departments there appears to be some risk of forms going astray. You would be advised therefore to take your form in personally rather than by sending it by post and asking for some form of receipt.

Housing benefit renewal forms

You will sometimes during the life of your claim for housing benefit be sent further forms by the Housing Benefit Department. This will enable them to check that your eligibility for housing benefit has not changed. It is crucial that you complete these forms promptly and return them to the Housing Benefit Department. Again, it is wise to take the forms in personally and obtain a receipt. Delay in completing these forms can lead to your housing benefit being stopped.

Backdating

It is sometimes possible to obtain backdated housing benefit to cover a period prior to your claim or prior to your renewal form being submitted. The rules regarding this are complicated and beyond the scope of this leaflet. However, if you think you may be entitled for an earlier period, you should always ensure that your application form or renewal form contains a claim for backdating. If, for example, you did not claim earlier because of any health problems, which impaired your ability to conduct your own affairs you should obtain medical evidence, perhaps from your GP, regarding this. If backdating is refused then you would normally have a right of appeal against this decision.