

Important Change to Housing Benefit for single people under 35 from 1 January 2012

The government have now laid regulations which will limit the amount of Housing Benefit that can be paid to single people under the age of 35.

The new regulations take effect from 1st January 2012, and the change will apply to all new Local Housing Allowance claims from 1 January 2012.

The limit already applies to single people under the age of 25.

What does the change mean to me?

The change means that if you live in the private rented sector and are single and under the age of 35 you will have your Housing Benefit worked out based on the Shared Accommodation Rate of Local Housing Allowance which is currently £61.50 per week.

This is the maximum that you will get.

If your rent is less than the Shared Accommodation Rate, your Housing Benefit will be worked out using the rent that you pay.

If you don't currently get maximum Housing Benefit, because your income exceeds the income limit that you can have and still get the maximum amount of Housing Benefit, then you will also get less than the Shared Accommodation Rate.

If you are single and aged 25 to 34 and live in self contained accommodation at the moment, your benefit is based on the 1 bedroom self contained rate of Local Housing Allowance, which is currently £99.92. If you get the maximum amount of benefit of £99.92 per week, you could lose up to £38.42 a week of your benefit.

If your rent is lower than £99.92, if it is £80.00 per week for example, you would be getting £80.00 per week now, so you will lose around £18.50 a week.

If you live in shared accommodation already you will already have your benefit worked out using the Shared Accommodation Rate and so will not be affected by the change.

When will the change happen?

If you are single and aged between 25 and 35 and are already receiving Housing Benefit on 1 January 2012 you will have your benefit recalculated during 2012.

If you:

- Make a new claim or
- Have a break in your current claim or
- Change address

after 1 January 2012 the change will affect you straight away.

If you claim before 1 January 2012 and don't change address or break your claim your benefit will be reviewed the next time your Local Housing allowance is reviewed.

We will write to you to tell you when the change is likely to happen to you, or you can contact us and we will be able to tell you.

Does the change apply to everyone under 35?

Not all 25 to 34 year olds will be affected by the change.

The change does not affect you if you have:

- A partner who lives with you or
- A child (or children) who lives with you or
- A non resident carer who regularly stays with you overnight to provide care or
- Another adult living with you as part of your household (for example an adult son or daughter, or someone who pays you board or rent to live in your home).

The change may also not affect you:

- If you get the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the middle or higher rate and no one receives carers allowance for you or
- If you are a care leavers under the age of 22 or
- If you over 25 and are an subject to active multi-agency management under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements or
- If you are over 25 and a former rough sleeper or have spent more than 3 months in a homeless hostel

Please let us know if you think that any of these apply to you