



Housing Benefit is changing from 1 April 2013 for people who rent from a social sector landlord.

➤ Find out how the changes could affect you.

What will the changes mean?

The spare room subsidy is being removed in Housing Benefit for working age people renting from a local authority, a registered housing association or other registered social landlord. By working age we mean anyone under state pension credit age.

The new rules will restrict the size of accommodation you can receive Housing Benefit for, based on the number of people in your household.

The new rules allow 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 aged under 10
- any other child, (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)
- a carer (or team of carers) who do not live with you but provide you or your partner with overnight care

It was announced on 12 March 2013, that the removal of the spare room subsidy rules will also be clarified for two other specific groups of housing benefit recipients – foster carers and armed forces personnel:

- If you or your partner is caring for a foster child or have been accepted as a foster carer but have no child living with you an additional bedroom will be allowed as long as the period without a child does not exceed 52 weeks.
- Adult children who are in the armed forces and continue to live with their parents will be treated as continuing to live at home even when they are deployed on operations. This means that the size criteria rules will not apply to the room normally occupied by the member of the armed forces.

Disabled children – If you have a child who you consider cannot share a bedroom because of a disability or medical condition you may be entitled to an extra room. You will need to contact your local authority and you will be asked for medical evidence to support your claim.

When will the changes affect me?

The removal of the spare room subsidy rules will start on 1 April 2013.

If you might be affected by these new rules your local authority will write to you to confirm the information they hold. They will then write again to confirm what the changes will be to your Housing Benefit.

It is important that you start to consider what your options might be now and where necessary talk to your landlord or local authority.

How might the changes affect me?

It is possible that the amount of Housing Benefit you get to pay your rent and any service charges could go down.

If, under these new rules, it is decided that you have more bedrooms than are necessary for your household, the eligible rent for your Housing Benefit will be reduced by:

- 14% if you have 1 extra bedroom
- 25% if you have 2 or more extra bedrooms

If you are getting, or thinking of claiming Housing Benefit, or thinking of moving home, you need to consider this change before you renew or make a new tenancy agreement.

What should I do now?

- Speak to your local authority Housing Benefit/ Housing Service as soon as possible. They can help you to find out exactly how these changes will affect you and talk to you about what your options may be.
- The Citizens Advice service provides a wide range of confidential advice. To find your local Citizens Advice Bureau, look in the phone book or Yellow Pages, or visit their website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk or www.cas.org.uk for Scotland.
- Shelter offers confidential housing, welfare benefits and debt advice through a network of advice services; freephone Housing Advice Helpline on 0808 800 4444 8am-8pm Monday-Friday and 8am-5pm Saturday-Sunday and online at:
 - england.shelter.org.uk/getadvice
 - scotland.shelter.org.uk/getadvice
 - www.sheltercymru.org.uk
- There may be other advice centres in your area, or your local authority may have a welfare rights service. Check the phone book or your local authority website.
- You can get more information about Housing Benefit at www.gov.uk/housing-benefit.

More information

For more information, please contact your local authority's Housing Benefit/Housing Service.

This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure the leaflet is correct as of the date below. Some of the information may be oversimplified or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law. We recommend that you get independent advice before making financial decisions based on this leaflet.

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ISBN 978-1-78153-440-3
HB SSSC1 (March 2013)