Local Housing Allowance: an introduction
What is Local Housing Allowance?

Local Housing Allowance is a new way of working out new claims for Housing Benefit for tenants renting accommodation from a private landlord. It also affects tenants already getting Housing Benefit who move into accommodation rented from a private landlord.

Local Housing Allowance is being introduced on 7 April, 2008.

If you live in a property owned by a Housing Society or Association, Local Housing Allowance will not affect you.

Local Housing Allowance

With Local Housing Allowance, your benefit is not usually based on the property you live in. It is usually based on:

- who lives with you
- which area you live in
- how much money you have coming in
- what savings you have
- how many bedrooms your family needs

In some cases the amount of benefit you are entitled to will be affected by other things. These can include:

- how much your rent is
- whether anyone living with you is expected to contribute to your rent

See our leaflet, HB(LHA)2 - Working out your Local Housing Allowance, for more details about this. You can get this from us at the address overleaf.

How will I get my benefit if Local Housing Allowance applies to me?

Usually you will have your benefit paid directly to you. It will be paid directly into your bank or building society account, if you have one, or by cheque.

If you do not already have a bank or building society account, you may want to set one up. That way you can arrange to pay the rent to your landlord automatically, using a standing order.

You can get advice about opening and running a bank account from any bank or building society. You can also get advice from a welfare organisation such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. See HB(LHA)8 for more information.

It is up to you to pay the rent to your landlord. If you don't pay your rent, you may be taken to court and evicted from the property.
Can I have my benefit paid direct to my landlord?

Your benefit is paid to you unless you are likely to have difficulty paying your rent, then it may be paid to your landlord.

For more details about this, please see HB(LHA)3 - Local Housing Allowance: Tenants who are likely to have difficulty paying their rent. You can get this from us at the address overleaf.

If you are worried about managing your money, ask us if we can help. In some cases we may be able to pay your rent to your landlord even for a short time.

What will happen if I use my benefit for something else?

Your benefit is for you to pay your rent with. If you do not use your benefit to pay your rent, your landlord may take you to court or try to evict you and you may lose your home.

Changes of circumstance

If you are getting Housing Benefit and you move to a new address or other circumstances change, you should tell us straightaway. You may need to make a new claim for help with your rent and Council Tax.

Why is Local Housing Allowance being introduced?

Local Housing Allowance gives tenants more choice in where they live and it’s fairer too. This is because with Local Housing Allowance:

- your entitlement will be based on where you live and how many bedrooms your family unit needs
- you can find out the maximum benefit you can get before you find somewhere to live
- you can decide how much of your benefit you want to spend on renting a property
- you will usually get your benefit paid to you. It is up to you to pay the rent to your landlord
- you will find out the maximum rent you may be entitled to more quickly

Remember that this leaflet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the back cover, it is possible that there may be incorrect information or some ideas may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this leaflet is likely to become less accurate over time because of changes to the law.
Where to get more information

If you would like more information or if you wish to discuss your claim you can:

phone the Benefits team
01225 776655

visit our offices
West Wiltshire District Council

look on our website
www.westwiltshire.gov.uk

email us
revenuesandbenefits@westwiltshire.gov.uk

You can also find more information at
www.direct.gov.uk
www.dwp.gov.uk