

A Guide to Discretionary Housing Payments

What are Discretionary Housing Payments?

Discretionary Housing Payments are additional payments awarded by the Authority to assist you in meeting your rental liability.

They are payable to people who already claim some Housing Benefit or receive a housing element as part of their Universal Credit payment and where the amount of rent is not being met by those benefits, for example where you have to make some contribution to your rent to make up the shortfall.

These payments are **not** additional payments of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. They will be paid separately from those benefits and from a fund of money provided to the Authority by the Government.

This fund of money is limited and the Authority **cannot** make payments when the fund has run out, however needy a person may be.

It is for this reason that the Authority must carefully consider each claim made for Discretionary Housing Payments to ensure that the fund is used only for those cases deemed appropriate and to try to ensure monies are available all year round to those who genuinely need it.

Making a Claim

Claims can be made by telephone call, visit to the counter or written letter as a first stage but completion of the official claim form will be required. Please contact the Benefit Team to obtain the DHP application form.

If you wish to speed up the claim process a claim form and budget form can be found in the centre of this leaflet or if you are viewing this leaflet on the website a link to the form can be found on the DHP page.

Following receipt of the completed form, an appointment may be made for an interview or home visit to review your claim and ask any supplementary questions we may have. This will be at a time and place convenient to you and will give you a chance to add anything or expand on your reasons for claiming.

Claiming Discretionary Housing Payments

If your full rental liability is not paid by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element you may be entitled to receive a Discretionary Housing Payment.

The following requirements must be satisfied before a discretionary housing payment can be made:

- you must be entitled to a payment of at least some housing benefit or entitled to the housing element within your Universal Credit: and
- you can demonstrate to us that you require some further financial assistance (in addition to the benefit or benefits to which you are entitled) in order to meet your housing costs.

You will need to show us that you have a genuine need for assistance towards your housing costs, whilst also making your own attempts to alleviate your current financial difficulties. **Any information you give on the application form may be shared with the Home Options Team if it is felt that they may also be able to assist you.**

A claim for Discretionary Housing Payment must be made to the Authority.

Making a Decision About Your Claim.

A decision will be made after the visit or interview has been completed and will be based on the individual merits of your case as shown by the information gathered on your claim.

You will be notified in writing of our decision on your case.

If it is decided to award a payment we will award it for a period believed necessary to alleviate your financial difficulties, but the period shall not exceed 26 weeks or exceed the period your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit has been awarded for.

You can reapply for payments after this period has expired if you still feel you need financial assistance, but a further award cannot be guaranteed.

Paying your Discretionary Housing Payment

If you are awarded Discretionary Housing Payments this is not a payment of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and will not therefore show on any letters issued by the Benefits Section.

Additionally your payment will not be paid to you as part of your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. However we will make every attempt to include your discretionary housing payment on the same payment as your Housing Benefit if applicable. The remittance will show the breakdown between the two payments. There may be some occasions where this may not have been possible and you may receive two payments.

If your Housing Benefit is usually paid to your landlord we will notify your landlord that they will be receiving an additional payment towards your rent and again we will attempt to include your Discretionary Housing Payment on the same payment as your Housing Benefit to your landlord.

Not happy about our Decision?

If you are not happy with the decision we make on your claim for Discretionary Housing Payment, you can ask for your application to be looked at again.

You should put this request in writing to the Authority. On receipt of this request, another senior office of the Authority will review your case; they will assess whether the initial decision was fair and reasonable.

After review and if the initial decision was found to be fair and reasonable a letter will be sent advising you of this.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in large, clear print, audio, braille or in another language, please telephone

01427 676676

Guildhall, Marshall's Yard
Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2NA
Tel: 01427 676676
DX: 27214 Gainsborough

www.west-lindsey.gov.uk

