

Housing and Homelessness: How to find a home

Local Housing Allowance

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the name for Housing Benefit for tenants in private rented accommodation. It is the way that Housing Benefit is calculated and paid to private tenants. Different rates are paid depending on your age and household size.

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit your housing costs will be included in your Universal Credit payment and will go straight into the bank account or other account nominated by each household.

Current LHA rate for single people aged over 35 years and couples without children		
Per week	£ 90.90	
Per calendar month	£393.90	
Current LHA rate for single parents and families (dependent on room allowance)		
Property size	Per week	Per calendar month
2 bedrooms	£103.56	£448.76
3 bedrooms	£115.07	£498.63
4 bedrooms (or more)	£149.59	£648.22
Current LHA rate for single people aged under 35 years		
Per week	£ 60.00	
Per calendar month	£260.00	

Claiming Local Housing Allowance

Claims for Local Housing Allowance are made in the same way as claims for Housing Benefit, with a modified claim form. You can contact the Benefits helpline at the Council by phoning 0191 278 7878 and asking for 'Housing Benefit'

Payment direct to the landlord

Local Housing Allowance can only be paid direct to the landlord in limited circumstances. For example, where the tenant has built up eight weeks of rent arrears. The local authority **must** make payments direct to the landlord in these circumstances unless it would not be in the "overriding interest" of the tenant, or the landlord is not a "fit and proper person".

The local authority has **discretion** to pay direct to the landlord if they have evidence that:

- The tenant would be unlikely to pay their rent; or
- The tenant is 'vulnerable'

and in either case it would be in the tenant's interests.

The tenant may be considered vulnerable for a number of reasons, including:

- having language or literacy difficulties
- being unable to open a bank account
- having debt problems
- having a health condition which makes it difficult for them to manage their own affairs.

If you receive your housing costs as part of your Universal Credit payment The Department for Work and Pensions will have the ability to pay your housing costs element straight to your landlord in certain circumstances.

You can find out more information by visiting the Newcastle City Council website (www.newcastle.gov.uk) and searching for 'Housing Benefit' or 'Universal Credit'