

Foster Care and Housing Benefit

If you need to claim Housing Benefit (HB) to help you pay your rent there are specific rules concerning foster carers.

- A child or young person is not counted as a member of the claimant's household if they are a foster child placed by a local authority or voluntary organisation or placed for adoption or custodianship (though once adopted they do become a member of the household).
- Fostering allowance, adoption allowance and special guardianship payments paid by local authorities or voluntary organisations are not counted as income when calculating Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction.

Stay up-to-date

Remember to keep the benefits department informed of any changes in your household circumstances, for example: changes in income, changes to balances held in bank/building society/other accounts, anyone moving in or out of your home. The benefits department will contact you by phone and/or email if you prefer and you keep your contact details up-to-date, this speeds up and simplifies the process of contacting us.

What if you struggle to pay your rent?

If you cannot afford to pay your rent even with Housing Benefit or Local Allowance in payment the council may be able to help. Each year every council receives a separate fund of money from the government that can be paid on discretionary grounds, it is called the Discretionary Payment (DP) fund.

Your local council has discretion over who to pay and how much and in what circumstances.

Changes for foster carers

After much debate the government have introduced some changes intended to prevent financial hardship and protect foster families providing this essential service to vulnerable children.

New regulations have now been issued that allows one extra bedroom if you are an approved foster carer.

If you rent from a private landlord

If you need financial help to pay your rent you can apply for Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The maximum amount of LHA you can claim will be based on the number of bedrooms your household needs according to the criteria set out on the right. If you have more bedrooms than you need the amount of LHA you can claim will be significantly less than the rent you have to pay so you will have to pay the shortfall from other income. There are set annual LHA amounts for properties dependant on their size, for example in Brighton and Hove from 1st April 2013 these are:

1. one bedroom £150.00 per week
2. two bedroom £188.68 per week
3. three bedroom £219.23 per week
4. four bedroom £323.08 per week

If you rent from a council or Housing Association

From April 2013 your Housing Benefit (HB) will also be paid based on the number of bedrooms your household needs according to the criteria set out on the right. Broadly speaking, if you have more bedrooms than you need your benefit will be reduced by 14% if you have one spare bedroom or 25% if you have two or more spare bedrooms. You will have to pay the shortfall from other income.

What is the 'size criteria'?

The benefit 'size criteria' allows **one** bedroom for:

- every adult couple (same or opposite sex)
- any other adult aged 16 or over (including live-in carers)
- any child whose disability makes it unreasonable for them to share a bedroom with another child
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16
- any two children under age 10
- any other child
- **New** - the use of a foster child or children
- an occasional overnight carer providing regular to you or your partner care but who lives elsewhere

Contact methods

Phone: 01273 292000

Mini-com: 01273 290333

Fax: 01273 291234

Email: housing.benefits@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Post: Benefit Service, PO BOX 2929, Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton, BN1 1PS