

Your benefit changes

Nationally the welfare benefits system is changing

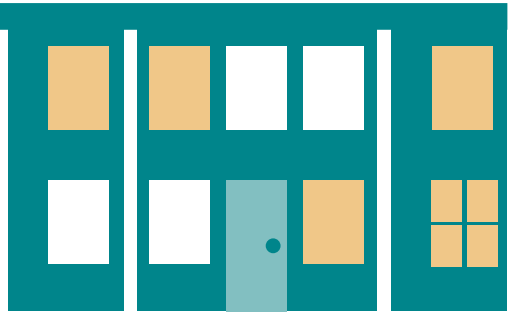
This booklet outlines the Government's welfare benefit changes which could affect you

10/2012

Do you have too many bedrooms?

From April 2013, Government changes mean the amount of Housing Benefit paid to working age tenants who live in Council or Housing Association properties, will be reduced where they have more bedrooms than the family needs. **This is called Under Occupancy.**

(This does not affect tenants in private properties).



Under these new national Housing Benefit rules you will be allowed:

- one bedroom if you are a single customer or part of a couple; plus
 - one bedroom for a child;
 - or, one bedroom for two children under 10;
 - or, one bedroom for two children of the same sex up to the age of 16;
- one bedroom each for children over the age of 10 of the opposite sex
- one bedroom for other single people or couples aged 16 or over.

For example:

- couples with no children would need only one bedroom
- a single parent with one or two children under 10 would need two bedrooms
- couples with three children (two boys and a girl) aged six, eight and 12 would need three bedrooms

- if you are pregnant and have an extra room for the expected child, you are under occupying until the child is born.

Tenants who need an overnight carer will be entitled to an extra bedroom. There are exceptions for people who have too many bedrooms because of a bereavement, or could afford to pay the rent for the last 12 months without claiming Housing Benefit.

The changes will mean:

- if you have **one bedroom too many**, Housing Benefit will be reduced by 14% (around £10.00 a week on an average rent)
- if you have **two or more bedrooms too many**, Housing Benefit will be reduced by 25% (around £18 a week on an average rent).

The exact amount of the reduction will depend on the rent charged.

If you are affected by these changes please speak to your landlord or local housing office.

One monthly payment of benefits from October 2013

From October 2013 Government changes mean the following benefits:

- **Income Support**
- **Income based Jobseekers Allowance**
- **Income related Employment and Support Allowance**
- **Housing Benefit; and**
- **Tax Credits**

will be replaced with a single benefit, called Universal Credit.



Universal Credit will normally:

- be paid monthly in arrears
- be paid to a single person in the household.

If you are a tenant you will need to budget and make arrangements to pay your weekly or monthly rent from your Universal Credit payment.

People who are of working age and claim the stated benefits will move onto Universal Credit in phases:

- between October 2013 and March 2014, new claims for Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance will be treated as claims for Universal Credit
- from April 2014, new claims for Housing Benefit and Tax Credits will be treated as claims for Universal Credit

- from April 2014, Department for Work and Pensions will also start to move people from their existing benefits to Universal Credit. It is expected that it will take until 2017 to move all customers onto Universal Credit.

It is expected that the Department for Work and Pensions will contact people directly to let them know when they are moving to Universal Credit.

Help will be available, if you think you will need support with budgeting or claiming Universal Credit online.

Benefit Cap from April 2013

The Government has stated that from April 2013, there will be a cap on the amount of benefits a single person or family can receive. The cap is £500 a week for a family, and £350 a week for a single person. **This is known as the Benefit Cap.**

If you are already getting more than £500 (family), or £350 (single) a week in benefit, your Housing Benefit will be reduced and you may have to move to cheaper housing.

For more information please visit:

www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser/updates/benefit-cap/

The Benefit Cap does not apply where any household member receives:

- Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments
- Attendance Allowance

- Support part of Employment and Support Allowance
- Working Tax Credit
- War Widows/Widowers Pensions

To discover more talk to your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Council Tax Benefit Scheme from April 2013

From April 2013 the Government will replace Council Tax Benefit with a local scheme of Council Tax Support run by Leeds City Council.

National funding for local schemes is being reduced, this could see working age customers getting less support. We are consulting on Local Council Tax Support proposals before any decision is made. The deadline to take part is 8 November 2012.

To discover more, following the consultation, please visit www.leeds.gov.uk/counciltaxconsultation

NOTE: Pensioners are not affected by this change and will continue to get the same level of support with their Council Tax.

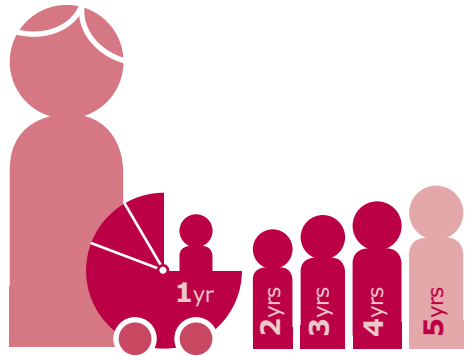
Other benefit changes

The Government is introducing additional benefit changes, the following pages will explain these.



April

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Local Housing Allowance (private tenants)

The way that Local Housing Allowance rates are worked out has changed.

This means that most Local Housing Allowance rates have gone down. Please check: www.leeds.gov.uk/benefits for the most up to date Local Housing Allowance rates.

Local Housing Allowance rates will now only be reviewed once a year. New rates will be published each April.

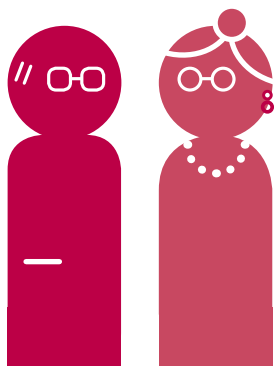
If you are worried or concerned about paying your rent please contact Leeds Benefit service.

Single parents with children over the age of five

From 21 May 2012, if you are a single parent on Income Support whose youngest child is aged five or over, you will normally be moved from Income Support to Jobseeker's Allowance. On Jobseeker's Allowance you will be required to undertake work related activity.

Previously this has been a requirement when a child reached the age of seven.

For more information speak to your local Jobcentre Plus.



Pension Credit

From October 2014, Housing Benefit will be paid as a Housing Credit as part of your Pension Credit.

This will not change the amount of help pensioners get with their rent.

This means older people will need to claim their housing costs from the pension service.

Further information will be provided about this change and how it will work nearer the time.



Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

From April 2013, people aged between 16 and 64 in receipt of Disability Living Allowance will be reassessed for a new benefit called **Personal Independent Payment (PIP)**.

To get PIP you must:

- be age 16 – 64
- satisfy the daily living and/or mobility activities test for three months prior to claiming, and likely to continue to satisfy this test for at least a further nine months after claiming.

The amount of PIP has not yet been set. The rates will consist of:

Daily living part:

- standard rate – if you have a limited ability to carry out daily living activities
- enhanced rate – if you have a severely limited ability to carry out daily living activities.

Mobility part:

- standard rate – if you have a limited ability to carry out mobility activities
- enhanced rate – if you have a severely limited ability to carry out mobility activities.

People who are terminally ill, where life expectancy is less than 6 months, will not have to satisfy the period condition for the mobility part.

Assessments will be made on a points basis. For further information please visit: www.dwp.gov.uk/directgov/

This booklet has covered the major changes to national benefits resulting from the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

Further benefit changes have resulted from the act these include amendments to:

- Tax Credits
- Child Benefit
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for young people

For further details please visit: www.dwp.gov.uk/directgov/

For further advice and guidance on the benefit changes inside this booklet, you may wish to contact:

- **Department for Work and Pensions**; visit: www.dwp.gov.uk
- **Jobcentre Plus**; visit: www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk
- **Your local One Stop Centre**; to find your closest centre visit: www.leeds.gov.uk/onestopcentres
- For any specific enquiries relating to Council Tax or Housing Benefit please visit: www.leeds.gov.uk/benefits or call Leeds City Council Contact Centre on 0113 222 4404

