

Benefit Section, Wansbeck Square, Ashington, NE63 9XL

Telephone: 0345 600 6400 Website: www.northumberland.gov.uk

Backdating housing benefit

I am of qualifying age for state pension credit, when will my benefit start?

If you, or your partner, are of qualifying age for state pension credit and qualify for housing benefit, we can usually backdate your benefit for up to three months before the date you made your claim, as long as you were entitled to benefit for that period. If you are of qualifying age for state pension credit and you are entitled to benefit from a date before you claimed, we will give you your benefit automatically. We do not need to know why you did not claim sooner to backdate your benefit.

For us to work out how much benefit you will be entitled to you, you will need to give us proof of your income, savings and rent for the period you want to claim.

When will my benefit start if I am of working age (i.e. between 16 and qualifying age for state pension credit)?

If you qualify for housing benefit we will normally pay your benefit on the Monday after you asked us for an application form (as long as you return the application form within one calendar month of contacting us).

When you make a claim for housing benefit over the phone through Jobcentre Plus, we will treat the date of your claim as the same date you contacted Jobcentre Plus.

If you get income support, jobseeker's allowance, or employment support allowance all the benefits will have the same claim date if we receive a claim for housing benefit within one month of one of those benefits being claimed.

Sometimes we can pay benefit for a period before the date you claimed. This is called backdating. The law says from 1 April 2016 we can backdate your benefit for up to one month. However, you must have a good reason why your claim is late. This is known as 'good cause'.

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What is considered to be 'good cause'?

We will look at each case individually. Good cause is a reason that prevented you from claiming benefit earlier. Good causes may include the following, depending on the circumstances:

- you were ill and no-one else could claim for you
- you were waiting for a decision about another benefit
- you were given the wrong advice by an official organisation
- you did not know that you could claim because of your age
- you have language difficulties
- you have difficulty understanding technical documents
- you did not claim immediately after leaving hospital, prison or long-term care
- you were not able to manage your own affairs and had no-one to help you
- a close relative died

These examples are only a guide to help you. They are not a full list of all possible reasons. If you forgot to claim, or did not know you could claim, this would not be a good reason on its own.

To qualify for backdating, you must be able to prove you had 'good cause' and why you did not claim earlier.

How do I claim backdated benefit?

If you think you have good cause for making a late claim, you should tell us in writing straight away.

You can contact us for a form or just write to us giving us details. You must tell us the period you want to backdate your benefit for and tell us why your claim is late. We will need to see proof of your income, savings and rent payments for the period you want to backdate your benefit for and any proof to support your reasons.

We will decide if we can backdate your benefit based on the information you give us. We will write to you and tell you our decision. If we decide not to backdate your benefit, we will tell you why.

What if I do not agree with your decision?

We may decide that your reasons are not good enough for us to backdate your benefit. If you do not agree with our decision, you should write and ask us to look at the decision again. You must contact us within one month of the decision letter.