

Benefit Section, Wansbeck Square, Ashington, NE63 9XL

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

Discretionary Housing Payments

What are discretionary housing payments or DHPs?

Discretionary housing payments are additional payments for people currently receiving housing benefit or universal credit that includes a housing element towards rental liability, who require further financial assistance with their housing costs. A limited budget is set by central government on the amount that can be spent each year on discretionary housing payments. These payments, and the period for which they last, are set at the discretion of Northumberland County Council.

What can discretionary housing payments cover?

Discretionary housing payments may be used to pay for:

- your rent where it has been restricted by the Rent Officer and your housing benefit award is less than the rent charged
- reductions in your housing benefit or universal credit as a result of local housing allowance restrictions
- increases in essential work related expenditure, such as increased fares to work if you have had to move because you could no longer afford to live near your work following a reduction in your local housing allowance rate
- a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property that you are yet to move into if you are already entitled to housing benefit or universal credit for your present home

New guidance from 01/04/2013 will mean we can consider help if you have a disabled child or are disabled and live in significantly adapted accommodation, or will be affected by the benefit cap.

Please note that these are only examples of when we may pay a discretionary housing payment. If your circumstances are different you should still apply.

Is there anything discretionary housing payments would not be awarded for?

We cannot give discretionary housing payments towards:

- ineligible service charges
- increases in rent due to outstanding arrears
- sanctions and reductions in any benefits
- suspended housing benefit or universal credit
- rent, when you are not getting any housing benefit or help with housing costs in universal credit
- shortfalls caused by housing benefit or universal credit overpayment recovery

Housing Benefit Factsheet

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How do I apply for a discretionary housing payment?

If you would like to claim a discretionary housing payment please telephone **0345 600 6400** or write to us at the address shown on this factsheet.

We will look at the following things when we make a decision:

- your income
- your savings
- if anyone else in your house can help you
- if you have any loans or debts
- if you could manage your money better
- if you or anyone in your family is ill or disabled
- if you have tried to put the situation right yourself

How much can I get and for how long?

How much we give you depends on your circumstances. We look at each case individually. However, we cannot guarantee we will definitely give you a payment even if you meet any of the reasons above.

What should I do if I disagree with your decision?

Decisions on claims for discretionary housing payments are not subject to appeals to the Appeals Service. If you disagree with the decision on your claim for a discretionary housing payment you should write to the council. The decision will be reviewed by a different officer.

What if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change, you must tell us in writing, straight away. The address is at the top of this factsheet.

We will look at your discretionary housing payment again to see if we need to change it.

If the change means we have to reduce your discretionary housing payment, you might have to pay back some or all of the discretionary housing payment we have already paid you.