

Benefit Section, Wansbeck Square, Ashington, NE63 9XL

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

Housing benefit overpayments

What is a housing benefit overpayment?

An overpayment is when we pay you or your landlord an amount of housing benefit, but you were not entitled to receive it. If we have paid you too much benefit, we will usually ask you to pay back the amount we have overpaid. This is called a 'recoverable overpayment'.

We can recover all overpayments, except if they are caused by an 'official error' and which you could not reasonably have known about when you were paid or told about your benefit. An official error is a mistake we, or a person acting for us make.

How will I know if I have an overpayment?

We will send you an invoice giving you the full details of the overpayment. The invoice will tell you how the overpayment happened, the amount you were overpaid and the period of the overpayment.

How do you recover the overpayment?

If you are still getting housing benefit, we may reduce your benefit each week to recover the overpayment.

If we are not paying you housing benefit we may send you an invoice which will detail the ways in which you can pay your invoice. You may telephone us on 0345 600 6400 or call into your local information centre or visit our website for further details.

If we paid your landlord your benefit, we may ask the landlord to repay the overpayment in certain circumstances.

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What can I do if I disagree with the overpayment?

If you disagree with the overpayment after reading our explanation you must write to us and ask for a more detailed explanation, or ask us to look at our decision again.

Any such request should be made within one month of the date of the decision notice.

Examples of things you can challenge are:

- if we can recover the overpayment or not
- who we can recover it from
- how we have worked it out
- if you were actually entitled to receive some of the overpayment

The things that you cannot challenge are:

- if we 'should' recover the overpayment or not
- how we choose to recover the overpayment