

North Derbyshire Landlords Forum

The annual meeting of the North Derbyshire Landlords Forum was held on the evening of 10th May 2005 at the Agricultural Centre, Bakewell.

The event was well attended by landlords from all districts.

Presentations were given on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), and current topical issues within housing benefits including overpayments, computer systems, regional centres for DWP and Pension Service, Customer Management Systems and statistics.

A general discussion then took place and the following topics were raised:-

direct payments to tenants, bonds, debt recovery, suspensions, memorandum of understandings, Local Housing Allowance and Court Possession Orders

Direct payments of Housing Benefit

The Local Authority must make direct payments of rent allowance to a landlord where the claimant (your tenant) has rent arrears equivalent to eight weeks or more, except where the authority considers it to be in the overriding interest of the claimant not to make direct payments.

Please contact your local benefits office if you have any tenants with arrears, as we may be able to assist you.

Calculating a Weekly Rent

Housing Benefit is calculated on weekly figures, therefore monthly rents must be converted to a weekly amount. Currently this is achieved by multiplying the monthly rent by 12, dividing the result by 365, then multiplying the figure by 7.

From April 2006 this calculation will change and the monthly rent will be multiplied by 12 and divided by 52 to reach the weekly amount.

Therefore you are likely to see a change in your tenants Housing Benefit. (For example a monthly rent of £400 would currently be £92.05 per week and this will change to £92.31 per week.)

Civil Partnerships

From 5th December 2005 same sex couples will be recognised within the benefit schemes giving them the same standing as opposite sex couples and thus altering their benefit entitlement accordingly. This is the case irrespective of whether they have registered as a civil partnership or not.

However, because same sex couples were not previously recognised within benefits we hold no information on whether a claimant has a same sex partner. If you have a tenant who is part of a same sex couple their entitlement to benefit may not change immediately.

Fraud Hotlines

Do you know someone who is claiming benefit to which they are not entitled?

If so, please call our confidential Fraud Hotlines

Chesterfield BC 0800 393220

High Peak BC 01298 28433

Derbyshire Dales DC 01629 761330

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GIVE YOUR NAME OR ADDRESS!

Please
Turn
Over...



Claims Processing

Speeding up claims processing is important to both us and you. We need to assess and pay the claim as promptly as we can. You need us to achieve this so that you are getting income on your property. So please ensure...

The tenant has a fully and comprehensive tenancy agreement or letter stating the agreed terms which both parties have signed and dated which includes:-

- The amount and frequency of rent;
- The period of notice needed by both parties to end the tenancy;
- The full name and business address of the landlord;
- The full name and business address of any managing agent;
- What is included in the Rent, examples may be fuel, water, meals or other services.

If there is a delay in processing the claim this is usually because the information we have requested hasn't been sent. **If you are considering legal action against the tenant due to rent arrears please contact us**, even if the rent will not be paid direct to you, we may be able to give limited information to you.

Homeless

A Housing Officer has to decide whether a tenant is homeless or threatened with homelessness (this means they are likely to become homeless within 28 days). A person is homeless if they:

- have no accommodation which they are legally entitled to occupy in the UK or elsewhere (even if they think they have to move out of their present home, they may legally be able to stay there), or;
- they are fleeing domestic violence or threats of this, or;
- they are in fear of violence from outside their home, or;
- Their family is forced to live apart.

Local Housing Allowance Update

After Pathfinder trials, the Government is planning to introduce Local Housing Allowance (LHA) nationally in 2008. LHA is currently a flat-rate allowance towards rent calculated on the basis of the circumstances of the tenant (such as household size) and where they live. LHA is paid to the tenant, rather than the landlord, except where tenants are unlikely to be able to manage their financial affairs, or have fallen into arrears.

However the Government has included the reform of Housing Benefit in 'A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work' which was published on 24 January. Publication of this paper signals the start of a 12-week period of consultation on a number of issues which will take account of stakeholder options on reforming housing benefit for tenants in the social rented sector, and the LHA.

The next landlord forum will be held between 6pm and 8.30pm on Tuesday 9th May 2006 at The Agricultural Centre, in Bakewell.

Refreshments will be available from 5.45pm

Do you need to contact us?

Chesterfield Borough Council
Benefits Manager - Fran Rodway
Phone 01246 345483
Fax 01246 345486
Email benefits@chesterfield.gov.uk

Derbyshire Dales District Council
Benefits Manager - Paul Radcliffe
Phone 01629 761271
Fax 01629 761148
Email benefits@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

High Peak Borough Council
Benefits Manager - Rob Jones
Phone 0845 129 7777
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