

Discretionary housing payments (DHP)

Discretionary housing payments (DHP) may be claimed if you receive housing benefit or council tax benefit, but are having difficulty paying the rest of your rent yourself. Find out more about DHP and how to claim.

What is a discretionary housing payment (DHP)?

Each housing/council tax benefit department is given a pot of money each year to help people who qualify for housing or council tax benefit, but are having trouble paying their rent or council tax. The council decides who should be given the payments. When the money for the year runs out, no more payments can be made.

Discretionary housing payments (DHP) may be paid weekly, or can be a lump sum. They may also be backdated.

What can a discretionary housing payment (DHP) cover?

A discretionary housing payment (DHP) may be used to pay for:

- rent deposits
- rent in advance
- rent arrears (but not if you were receiving enough housing benefit to pay all of your rent at the time the arrears built up)
- a shortfall between housing benefit and rent
- reductions in local housing allowance resulting from changes from April 2011.

A discretionary housing payment (DHP) cannot be paid if the reason for shortfall is that your housing benefit has been reduced to recover an overpayment or because your other benefits have been reduced, for example, because you left your last job voluntarily.

What do the council consider?

The council will usually take into account any special circumstances that contribute to your financial difficulties, for example, if:

- you have to pay child maintenance
- you have to pay legal costs
- your heating costs are high as you spend a lot of time at home because of sickness or disability
- you have additional travel costs because you travel to a doctor or hospital or you care for a relative or friend
- your work-related travel costs have increased because you had to move as a result of cuts to local housing allowance from April 2011
- you are likely to become homeless if a payment is not made.

If I don't get it, can I appeal?

There is no right of appeal to a tribunal, but you can ask the council to have another look at the decision. If that fails, the only way to challenge the decision is in the courts using [judicial review](#), but this is often not possible.