

Application for direct payments of Local Housing Allowance to your Landlord

Guidance Notes

Introduction

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) payments will be made directly to tenants. However, you can have payments made to your Landlord in special circumstances
- If you feel that you could have problems keeping up your rent payments and it would be easier for you if your Landlord was paid directly, please complete this form. You can fill it in yourself or if you can't manage, someone else can help you. See the front of the form for details of who can help
- The Benefits Service will use this information to make a decision. Tell us as much information as possible and provide relevant evidence so that we can make a quick decision. In some cases it may be necessary to gather further evidence or interview you and/or your representative
- We will write to you and anyone else affected of our decision and of the right to appeal
- Where we decide to pay your Landlord, the landlord will only receive LHA up to the amount of the contractual rent. If there is any excess, this will be paid to you
- It is important that you give as much information as possible to the questions so we can make a sensible decision. Wherever possible, please provide written evidence to support the information when you return the form
- Please use extra paper if there is not enough space

Questions

- 1-6 Make sure your name and the address where you are claiming benefit and applying for direct payment of LHA to your Landlord is completed clearly
- The name of anyone completing the form on your behalf or helping you complete it should be clearly stated. We need to know their address and whether they are from a statutory or voluntary agency, as we may need to contact them directly
 - Please also tell us about the relationship you have with the person completing the form and the reasons they are filling in the form for you

Tell us about any learning disabilities that may cause you problems in paying your rent

This is likely to be for people with slight learning difficulties; those with severe disabilities should have appointees. The way learning disabilities affects people's lives varies greatly. You may find it harder to learn and understand how information fits into a bigger picture. You may experience difficulties with everyday practical skills like cooking or using public transport, or social skills like holding a conversation. In some cases like these, it may be appropriate to pay benefit directly to your landlord so that you don't get into rent arrears

7 Tell us about any physical disabilities or medical condition that may cause you problems in paying your rent

Physical disabilities vary enormously, and it may only be in a few cases that it affects how a person manages their affairs. For example, a severe impairment in both your sight and hearing may mean you have additional problems with communication, mobility and access to information. You may need to remain close to medical equipment. Similarly, some disabilities may be encountered when you go out or try to access public buildings. You may also have physical problems because of your age

8 Tell us about any mental health problems that may hinder your ability to pay your rent

Some people coping with mental illness may be less able to manage their financial affairs and may feel that organising rent payments are too much to cope with. You may only require additional help from the Benefits Service for a short time whilst receiving assistance from other support networks and/or medication. The most common forms of mental illness include:

.Anxiety. Dementia. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Depression. Phobias. Eating Disorders. Personality Disorders. Postnatal Depression. Alzheimer's. Schizophrenia. Manic Depression (Bipolar Disorder)

9 Are you coping with an addiction?

Someone who is experiencing (or has a history of) addiction, for example, to alcohol, drugs or gambling, may find it difficult to prioritise their outgoings. Therefore, it may be more helpful to pay your benefit directly to your Landlord.

10 Have you encountered difficulties in managing your affairs because you need assistance with understanding English?

The barriers faced by people who are not fluent in English can inhibit their ability to deal with agencies and organizations. This can extend to banks and/or Landlords or letting agents when trying to organise rent payments and the receipt of benefits. In some cases it may be in your best interest to have your benefit paid directly to the landlord whilst you receive support and assistance to help you manage your affairs.

11 Please tell us about any recent changes that mean you need additional support, or if you anticipate any in the near future

There may be times where you have experienced, or are about to experience, a change in your life, which means you, need additional help over a short period of time. This could be in terms of bereavement, a relationship breakdown (possibly violent), coming out of hospital after an operation, going into hospital or a terminal illness of a close relative.

12 Have you had any previous problems in maintaining rent payments?

You may have fallen into rent arrears in the past, which has led to eviction and possibly homelessness. If you feel there is a risk of this happening again and are receiving support to sustain your current tenancy, please give us details. We may be able to offer additional support and help keep your rent payments up to date by paying your LHA to your landlord. If possible, please provide evidence of the previous eviction, homelessness or rough sleeping.

13 Do you have rent arrears?

Please give us details of any rent arrears that you currently owe. Provide evidence of any action taken by the Landlord to recover these debts, e.g. eviction notice or a rent arrears letter.

14 Do you have other debts that you need help to resolve?

This can be severe debts such as undischarged Bankruptcy and County Court Judgments, or simply mounting bills such as electricity, gas, water, etc. Please give us the details by completing the Financial Assessment Form.

15 Do you currently receive ongoing support from an agency, organisation, friend or family member to help you to make rent payments?

Support from various organisations is available to many people to help with basic skills. Please advise us whether you receive any support or care packages.

16 How long might you need payments to be made to the Landlord?

Please indicate where you would expect the payments to the Landlord to be a temporary or permanent arrangement. For example, it could only be while you are in hospital or until other priority debts have been repaid.

17 Are you having deductions made from your other income, such as DWP benefits to help repay debts?

The Department for Work and Pensions can make deductions from your benefit for rent arrears, council tax or utility debts. You may also have deductions from your earnings to pay the Child Support Agency or to repay your council tax arrears. Please provide evidence if this is happening to you.

18. Have Housing and Family Support Team assisted you financially to secure or retain your tenancy at an affordable level?

Please indicate whether the Isle of Wight Council's Housing and Family Team have assisted you financially to secure or retain your tenancy. Such assistance could include the payment, or a guarantee in lieu of payment, of a rent deposit, Qualifying Offer, rent in advance, rent arrears, damages to a property or other financial assistance.

19. Have Housing Services provided other assistance to secure or retain your tenancy at an affordable level?

Please provide details of any other assistance provided by the Housing and Family Support Team that has assisted you to secure or retain your tenancy. This may include such activities as negotiating with your landlord to reduce the rent to an affordable level, working with you to maximise your income or finding the property for you.

20. What general negotiations with your Landlord have taken place to reduce the rent charged to an affordable level? Please provide information.

Please provide details of any discussions that you or someone acting on your behalf has had with your Landlord that has resulted in a reduction to the rent charged. If possible, please provide evidence to support this.

21. Tenant's Declaration

Make sure you sign and date the form, if you have a partner please make sure they sign it too. By signing the form you are accepting that the information you have provided may lead to your benefit being paid to your landlord. We may share some of this information with other sections of the council, or the Department of Work and Pensions and the CAB.

22. Declaration from Person completing the Form

If someone has completed the form on your behalf, they must also sign the form.

Useful Contacts for Support and Advice:

For People over 50 years:

Age Concern
Telephone Number: 01983 525282

For Women and Young People:

CAB
Telephone Number: 0845 1202959

Isle of Wight Law Centre 01983 524715

Please return the form together with documentary proof to support the information provided to:

**Revenues & Benefits
Isle of Wight Council Offices
Broadway
Sandown
Isle of Wight
PO36 9EA**