

# Housing Benefit

## A guide to Discretionary Housing Payments

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## What are Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)?

The Government gives the council a limited amount of money each year to provide DHPs.

DHPs are used to provide further financial help with rent costs for Housing Benefit claimants who are suffering hardship because of unusual or difficult circumstances.

The payments are designed to help with the shortfall between rent costs and Housing Benefit. The aim is to prevent homelessness, so DHPs can also be used to cover rent arrears, rent deposits and rent in advance.

Each case will be considered on its own merits.

## How does the council decide if I can have a DHP?

Each application will be considered on your individual circumstances but there are a number of things that will be taken into account when making a decision.

- The threat of eviction
- Whether it is reasonable to expect you to move to a more affordable property
- Health problems or disability of anyone in your household
- Attempts to renegotiate the rent with your landlord or to downsize to a more suitable property
- Whether anyone else in the household can help financially
- Your total income and outgoings and whether you could manage your finances differently
- Whether you are getting all the financial help you are entitled to. For example are there any tax credits or benefits you could claim.
- Your household's savings.

## What happens when I apply for a DHP?

You will need to complete an application form, giving as much detail as possible about your circumstances and why you need a DHP.

You may be asked to provide your last two months statements for all your bank, building society and Post Office accounts to accompany your application. In some cases you may also be asked for additional evidence such as a letter from your doctor or medical specialist.

You will then speak to a member of the Benefits Team to discuss your application and circumstances, this could be face-to-face or over the phone.

Finally you will receive a letter telling you the decision and the reasons for that decision. If a DHP has been awarded, the letter will tell you the amount and the period of the award.

## How much can I get and for how long?

Each case is looked at individually so how much you get, and for how long, depends on your circumstances.

A DHP payment may not cover the full shortfall between Housing Benefit and your rent and the length of each award will vary.

The amount awarded cannot be more than your total rent, less amounts for services such as electricity or water, as these cannot be paid for by Housing Benefit or a DHP.

## How will the DHP be paid if my application is successful?

If your application is successful, your DHP is usually paid with the Housing Benefit that you already get. In some circumstances, such as for a deposit, the DHP would usually be paid direct to your landlord.

## What should I do if I disagree with the decision about my DHP application?

If you disagree with the decision, either not to award a DHP, the amount awarded or the period of the award, you can ask for the decision to be looked at again.

Write to us within four weeks of the date of the decision letter, telling us why you do not agree with the decision, and your request will be looked at by an officer who was not involved in making the original decision.

## What if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change, you must tell us straight away so we can look at your DHP again to see if there needs to be any change to the award.

If the change means your DHP award is reduced, you might have to pay back some, or all, of the DHP already paid to you.

## Where can I get more advice or apply for it?

You can only apply for a DHP if you are currently entitled to Housing Benefit.

For more information or to make an application:

- Come and see a member of the Benefits Team at the Town Hall between 8.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Please bring with you, your last two months statements for your bank, building society and Post Office accounts.
- Call 01293 438611
- Email [benefits@crowley.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@crowley.gov.uk)

Home visits can be arranged if you are unable to get to the Town Hall due to disability or infirmity. We also have staff that can help if English is not your first language.