



## Help with rent and council tax for pensioners

**We have written this leaflet for pensioners. In this leaflet, a pensioner is anyone who is of state pension credit age. The rules are the same whichever area you live in.**

### What is housing benefit?

Housing benefit is a benefit that helps people with low incomes and low savings to pay their rent. We assess how much housing benefit you are entitled to based on your income, savings and the number of people living in your household .

### What is local council tax support?

Local council tax support is a reduction on your council tax bill that helps people with low incomes and low savings to pay their council tax.

### What is second adult rebate?

Second adult rebate is for people that are of state pension credit age who cannot get help with their council tax but have other people living with them who are on a low income, are aged 18 or over and are not:

- their partner or civil partner;
- paying rent; or
- paying council tax themselves.

To get it, you must be the person responsible for paying the council tax for your home.

## Can you reduce my council tax any other way?

Yes. As well as the local council tax support scheme, we can reduce your council tax with:

- discounts;
- exemptions; and
- reductions for people with disabilities.

## What is a council tax discount?

You can get a discount of 25 per cent if you are the only adult living in a property. We do not count some adults when we look at the number of adults living in a property.

Adults we do not count include:

- full-time students;
- people with severe mental-health problems or learning difficulties;
- carers;
- some 19 and 20 year olds who you receive child benefit for; and
- people in prison.

## What are council tax reductions for people with disabilities?

If a disabled person living in a property has to use a wheelchair indoors, or has an extra room because of their needs, we may reduce their council tax.

## How do I claim a council tax discount or reduction?

Apply online at [www.iwight.com/counciltaxonline](http://www.iwight.com/counciltaxonline) or email [council.tax@iow.gov.uk](mailto:council.tax@iow.gov.uk)

## What is pension credit?

Pension credit is a payment The Pension Service make to people on low incomes, or who have a small amount of savings or a private pension (or both).

There are two types of pension credit – guarantee credit and savings credit. If you are under 65 and are entitled to pension credits you will get guarantee credit. If you are over 65, you may get guarantee credit or savings credit (or both).

## How do I claim housing benefit, local council tax support, or both if I get pension credit?

The Pension Service pays pension credit, but your local authority pays housing benefit and local council tax support.

At the time you claim for pension credit you may receive a housing benefit claim form. You need to fill in this form and send it back to The Pension Service, who will pass it to us. You will need to make a claim for local council tax support directly with us online.

If you have not made a claim through The Pension Service, you will need to fill in an online application form. If you have not heard anything within one month of sending your housing benefit and council tax support claim form, please contact us.

Claims can be made online by visiting [www.iwight.com/housingbenefitonline](http://www.iwight.com/housingbenefitonline)

## How do I claim housing benefit or local council tax support (or both) if I am not getting pension credit?

You must claim housing benefit or local council tax support (or both) directly from us by filling in a claim form online at: [www.iwight.com/revsandbens](http://www.iwight.com/revsandbens). Our contact details are on your council tax bill. If you delay your claim you may lose benefit.

Claims can be made online by visiting [www.iwight.com/housingbenefitonline](http://www.iwight.com/housingbenefitonline)

## Do I claim housing benefit or universal credit if one of us in a couple is working age?

If you or your partner are working age and one of you is pensionable age, you will need to claim for Universal Credit. Housing Benefit can only be claimed where both of you are pensionable age.

## How do I claim second adult rebate?

You can only claim second adult rebate directly from us in the same way as described above.

Once you have filled in the form, send it back to us as soon as possible.

## How much second adult rebate will I get?

The most second adult rebate you can get is normally 25 per cent of the full council tax bill before any discounts are taken off. However, if there is a student in your household you may (in some circumstances) get up to 100 per cent discount. The amount depends on the gross weekly income (your income before tax and national insurance are taken off) of your second adult.

## Could I get local council tax support and second adult rebate?

When you fill in an application form we will assess whether you qualify for local council tax support or second adult rebate and give you whichever is the higher amount.

## What information do you need to work out my benefit?

When you claim housing benefit or local council tax support, we need to know:

- your income and savings, unless you are on pension credit;
- your family circumstances, including details about who lives with you; and
- your rent, but only if you are claiming housing benefit.

## What counts as income?

If you do get pension credit, either guarantee credit or savings credit (or both) we will not need any details about your income. For everything else, we need to know about any income you or your partner get. When you claim you will need to provide proof of all your income.

### Types of income are:

- your state pension;
- any pension from you or your partner's previous employer;

- annuities (income you receive from an amount you have invested with an insurance company);
- other state benefits such as tax credits, attendance allowance, war disablement pension etc;
- any rent you receive from lodgers or subtenants; and
- earnings, wages or salary from your job. We will need to see your last five payslips (if you are paid every week) or last two payslips (if you are paid every month). Don't worry if you haven't got any payslips – you can ask your employer to fill in a form which you can get from us.

The claim form asks you about all the income you get. When we work out your benefit we use your gross earnings less tax, National Insurance and half of any pension contributions you make. For second adult rebate, we need to know the gross weekly income of your second adult or adults - that is, their wages before tax and National Insurance are taken off.

## What counts as savings?

If you do get pension credit, either guarantee credit or savings credit (or both) we will not need any details about your savings. For everything else, we need to know about any savings you or your partner get. When you claim you will need to provide proof of all your savings.

### This includes:

- bank accounts (all types), building-society accounts and post-office savings;
- PEPs, TESSAs and ISAs;
- stocks, shares, and unit trusts;
- National Savings Certificates;
- cash; and
- property, capital assets or land you own (but not the home you live in).

If you or your partner are of state pension age, we will not count the first £10,000 of your savings or investments. If you have more than £10,000 we will add £1 a week to your income for every £500 or part of £500 you have over £10,000.

So, if you have £11,600, we will count that as an extra income of £4 a week. You cannot get benefit if you have savings or investments (or both), which are more than £16,000 less any non-dependant deductions, unless you receive guarantee credit.

If you receive guarantee credit you will automatically get full housing benefit or local council tax support (or both), even if you have savings over £16,000.

If you do not get guarantee credit and you have savings over £16,000, you will normally not be entitled to housing benefit or local council tax support. However, this does not stop you claiming second adult rebate.

If you are claiming second adult rebate, we will only take into account the amount of interest your second adult gets on their savings.

### What about other people who live with you?

To work out your benefit, we need to know who else lives with you.

If you have a child you do not get child benefit for, or other adults living with you, you may get less housing benefit or local council tax support (or both). We will assume they pay towards your rent and council tax, even if they do not. See 'Do I get less benefit if I have people living with me?' For more details.

### If I have a partner, do we both have to fill in the claim form?

No, you only have to fill in one form, but you should both sign it.

### If my partner works and I don't, can I claim for myself?

No, when you claim benefit we need to know about your partner. We work out your benefit using your joint income.

### Can I find out how much rent will be used to work out my housing benefit before I move into new accommodation?

Yes. We will work out your housing benefit based on the rate of local housing allowance (LHA) for the number of rooms you need in the area you live in. The rent service will publish new LHA rates each April.

For tenancies not affected by LHA such as tenancies with significant board, caravans, house boats etc a referral will be sent to the rent service to determine the level of rent housing benefit should be calculated against.

A rent officer referral does not mean you will definitely get housing benefit. You should still complete an application form and supply all the evidence required.

### How much rent will my housing benefit cover?

If your rent includes charges for services, we may need to take the cost of these from your rent before we work out your housing benefit.

We will also check that your rent is not too high. If it is, we will work out your benefit on a lower rent amount. In some cases, we must reduce the rent amount if your home is too large for you and your family.

### How do you decide if my rent is too high?

The Rent Service set a limit on the amount of housing benefit you can receive. It will not depend on the amount of rent you have to pay. The most housing benefit you could receive will be the same throughout the area you live in for each household of the same size as yours, no matter what rent you and the other households have to pay.

The Rent Service is independent from us.

### What charges does housing benefit not cover?

- **Gas and electricity charges**

Housing benefit does not cover charges for heating, lighting, hot water or cooking. If these are included in your rent, the Rent Service will tell us how much to take off your rent for each service before we work out your benefit.

- **Water rates**

Any charges for water rates will be taken off your rent.

- **Services**

Housing benefit does not cover charges for things like meals and laundry. Any charges for these services will be taken off your rent.

## What services can be covered by housing benefit?

Some charges can be included in your rent if you have to pay them under your tenancy agreement.

These include charges for:

- maintaining shared areas; and
- cleaning and lighting shared areas.

Shared areas include areas like staircases and landings.

## What if I pay council tax in my rent?

If your rent includes council tax, we will count this as part of your rent when we work out your housing benefit.

## How much housing benefit and local council tax support will I get?

If you get guarantee credit you will normally get the maximum amount of benefit. That is, all of your maximum rent level and all of your council tax, less any non-dependant charges.

If you do not get guarantee credit the amount of benefit you will get depends on the size of your household (how many people live in your home) and your income. If you, or any of your family, are disabled, you may get more benefit.

The size of your household will affect the 'applicable amount' for your claim, which the Government set. The applicable amount is the lowest amount of money the Government think you need to live on.

To find out how much benefit you may qualify for please use our online calculator at [www.iwight.com/housingbenefitonline](http://www.iwight.com/housingbenefitonline)

## Do I get less benefit if I have people living with me?

We will reduce your housing benefit and local council tax support if you have grown-up children you do not receive benefit for, or any other adult who does not pay rent living with you. We call these people non-dependants.

We will usually reduce your housing benefit or local council tax support by a fixed amount. This amount does not depend on what the non-dependant pays you, even if they pay nothing at all.

However, there are certain circumstances where we will not take an amount from your benefit. These include if you or your partner:

- receive attendance allowance;
- receive disability living allowance (care component); or
- are registered blind.

Also, there may be circumstances where we will not take an amount off your benefit for the first 26 weeks of your claim. For example, you or your partner are aged 65 or over and a non-dependant moves in to the property.

For current rates of non-dependents please visit [www.iwight.com/counciltaxonline](http://www.iwight.com/counciltaxonline)

## How will my benefit be paid?

### Council tax support

We will take your local council tax support from your council tax bill.

### Second adult rebate

We will take your second adult rebate from your council tax bill.

### Housing benefit

Housing benefit will be paid direct to your bank account. Only under exceptional circumstances will we consider paying benefit to your landlord.

However if you are a housing association tenant we will consider paying direct..

## When will my benefit start?

If you claim housing benefit or local council tax support (or both) we may backdate your benefit up to three months before the date you claimed. We can only do this if you have to pay rent and council tax for this period and are entitled to claim. If this is the case, we may write to you to ask for further details.

If you are not sure, send your claim form to us straight away, even if you are waiting for supporting documents (information we need to process your claim, such as bank statements proof of rent or wageslips). If you do not, you may lose benefit. You should also send us your claim form if you are still waiting to hear about your pension credit.

### How long will my benefit last?

We will pay your benefit until you are no longer entitled to benefit, or if your circumstances change. When this happens, we will look at your claim again.

### What do I do if my circumstances change?

If you receive pension credit you will need to tell the Pension Service if your income or savings change. They will then tell us.

If you only get savings credit, you must tell us if your savings and investments go above £16,000.

If you don't get pension credit and your circumstances change at any time, tell us straight away in writing.

Typical examples of changes in circumstances are if.

- you change address;
- your rent changes;
- the number of people living with you changes;
- your income or any member of your household's income changes;
- you stop getting pension credit; or
- your savings change.

If you delay telling us about a change in your circumstances you will have to repay any benefit we overpay you. You must report all changes for you and your partner (if you have one) and anyone else living with you, within 21 days of the change for local council tax support and within one month for housing benefit. Penalties of up to £70 may be imposed.

### What if I do not agree with the amount of benefit I am given?

You should contact us if you would like us to explain how we worked out your benefit. You must do this within one month of the date on the decision letter. We will send you an explanation of our decision as soon as possible.

If you do not agree with the amount of benefit we award you, you should write to us within one month of the date on the decision letter, asking us to look at our decision again. If you receive Pension Credit and disagree with the income amount we have used to assess your claim, you will need to contact The Pension Service in most cases.

If you have already asked us for an explanation, you will have one month from the date on the decision letter plus the time we took to send you the explanation, to ask us to look at our decision again. If you delay longer than this, we will normally only change our decision from the date you wrote to us.

If you still disagree with our decision you can appeal to an independent tribunal. Please visit our website at [www.iwight.com/counciltaxonline](http://www.iwight.com/counciltaxonline) to find out more, or see the leaflet '**What to do if you think the decision about your housing benefit or local council tax support is wrong**'.

Alternatively further information is contained on the back of your benefit award decision notice.

## Where can I get more advice?

If you would like more information on benefits, please refer to our website at [iwight.com](http://iwight.com) and follow resident services, then scroll down to the benefits and council tax tab. Alternatively visit [direct.gov.uk](http://direct.gov.uk)

If you want more help or advice, you can contact us at:

**Tel:** 01983 823950

**Email:** [housing.benefit@iow.gov.uk](mailto:housing.benefit@iow.gov.uk)

### Documents may be provided to:

#### Customer Services Centre

County Hall,  
Newport,  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 1UD

#### Opening times:

8.30am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.  
8.30am to 4.30, Friday.

#### Ryde Help Centre

Ryde Library,  
101 George Street,  
Ryde,  
Isle of Wight  
PO33 2JE

#### Opening times:

9am to 12.15pm and 1.30 to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

## Council tax

**[www.iwight.com/counciltax](http://www.iwight.com/counciltax)**

**Email:** [council.tax@iow.gov.uk](mailto:council.tax@iow.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 01983 823901

## Contacting the Isle of Wight Council

**Web:** [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com)

**Tel:** 01983 821000

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Saturday, 9am to 1pm

You can also get more help from the following websites:  
[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) – Department for Work and Pensions  
[www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk) – The rent service at the Valuation Office  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) – Citizens Advice

## Independent advice

**If you need independent advice, contact your local citizens advice bureau.** You can find their phone number (and the numbers for other local advice agencies) in the phone book and at your local library, or by visiting the council website.

Or you can visit:

[www.iowlawcentre.org](http://www.iowlawcentre.org) – IW Law Centre

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk) – Age UK

[www.islehelp.org.uk](http://www.islehelp.org.uk) – Isle Help

[www.frontlineiow.org](http://www.frontlineiow.org) – Frontline Advice Centre

**This leaflet is a guide and does not cover every circumstance. Some of the information in this leaflet may have been simplified and some information may become out of date because of changes to the law. We recommend that you get independent advice before making financial decisions based on this leaflet.**

Isle of Wight Council, Revenue Services  
PO Box 238, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 9FP

Telephone (01983) 823901  
Email [housing.benefit@iow.gov.uk](mailto:housing.benefit@iow.gov.uk)  
Web [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com)

If you have difficulty understanding this document, please contact us on 01983 821000 and we will do our best to help you.