

## Housing Benefit

### Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

### Help for those who need extra help with their rent

#### Introduction

If we think you need extra help to pay your rent we can provide financial support by making a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).

#### What is a DHP?

DHPs provide financial help to those who are in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or the housing element of Universal Credit (UC) who need additional help to pay the shortfall in their rent.

The Council will usually take into account any special circumstances that contribute to your financial difficulties.

DHPs can not help with the cost of your Council Tax bill.

#### Can I apply for a DHP?

You may qualify for a DHP if:

- You are entitled to HB or receiving UC which includes an amount for housing costs.
- there is a shortfall between the amount of HB or the housing costs element included in your UC and the rent you must pay; and
- You need extra help with your housing costs. There are no set circumstances but you will need to prove to us that you are in need of extra help.

#### What housing costs are covered by a DHP?

A DHP can only cover differences between the benefit you receive and rent you have to pay. It may be used to pay for

- rent deposits
- rent in advance
- removal costs
- a shortfall between HB or the housing costs element included in your UC and rent
- reductions in HB or UC where the benefit cap has been applied;
- reductions in HB or UC following the removal of spare room subsidy in the social rented sector (the bedroom tax);
- reductions in HB or UC as a result of local housing allowance restrictions;
- non-dependant deductions in HB, or housing cost contributions in UC ;
- rent shortfalls to prevent a household becoming homeless

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

A DHP cannot be paid if the reason for shortfall is that your HB or UC entitlement has been reduced to recover an overpayment or because your benefits have been reduced or sanctioned e.g. because you left your last job voluntarily.

In addition it cannot cover charges, such as water rates, meals or heating costs, that may be included in your rent.

### **What is the maximum payment I can receive?**

We can make a payment up to the amount of your eligible rent (that is, the rent you pay less charges or services which benefit cannot cover).

### **How do I apply for a DHP?**

You need to fill in a DHP form which you can

- get from one of our Customer Centres, Community Hubs or One Stop Shops(see page 3 for our contact details) or
- download from our website.

The form asks you to tell us about your circumstances including details about your household and finances e.g. your income and weekly expenditure.

### **What do you need to know?**

You need to tell us why you need extra financial help to pay your housing costs.

You should give us any other details or supporting evidence which could help your application (e.g., a letter from your landlord if you have been threatened with eviction, receipts for removal costs or a letter from your doctor if you or a family member has been ill).

You will also need to show the steps you have taken to help you meet the shortfall in your rent. Suggestions include:

- Start work or work more hours.
- Cut spending on things that you would consider non-essential.
- Move to a smaller property with your current landlord. Or a different landlord
- Ask your landlord if it is possible to reduce your rent
- Rent out a room.
- Seek budgeting/debt Advice e.g. you could contact the [Money Advice Service](#) or the Citizens Advice Bureau

There may be other things you can do, which are not on this list,

**Please note** that the Council can also refer you for further advice. The Skills and Employability Team may be able to assist with budgeting advice and help you find employment or increase the number of hours you work.

### **What happens next?**

We will look at your application and consider the circumstances that contribute to your financial difficulties, e.g., if:

- you have to pay child maintenance
- 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
- you are likely to become homeless if a payment is not made.

By law we do not have to make extra payments, but we aim to give careful consideration to your individual circumstances.

We will then write to you to confirm whether or not we have agreed to make a DHP. (If we have decided not to make a DHP, we will tell you why).

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

The amount of the DHP and how long you receive it for is decided by us. We usually grant it for a limited period e.g. 3 months. At the end of this period you will need to reapply for a DHP if you think you still need extra help to pay your rent and we will reconsider the circumstances of your case. There is no guarantee however that a further award will be made even if your circumstances remain the same.

In some cases we may award a DHP for a longer period, this would depend on your individual circumstances.

**Please note**-each year we are given a limited amount of money by the Government to award DHPs. The council has to make sure that it is shared between applicants and it reaches those who are in most need. This means that even though you might be facing difficulties there may be others applying who need support more. Once this money has been used up we will no longer be able to award these payments however good your reasons are.

### **How are payments made?**

If we agree to your application, and you are in receipt of HB the payments may be:

- taken off your rent if you are a council tenant or Housing Association tenant and we pay your landlord direct; if you are a Housing Association tenant and we pay you it will be paid direct into your bank account.
- paid direct into your or your landlord's bank or building society account (if you are a private tenant).

If you are in receipt of the housing element of UC we will normally pay the DHP award direct into your bank account. In some cases we may pay your landlord direct.

### **What if I disagree with the decision not to make a DHP?**

If you disagree with our decision you should write to the Head of the Shared Benefits Service giving your reasons. We will then look at your case again.

### **What if my circumstances change?**

You must tell about any change in your circumstances which could affect your entitlement to a DHP e.g. a change in your income.

### **What do I do when my DHP stop?**

When the payments cease if you still feel that you need extra help to pay your rent you will need to reapply by completing a DHP form.

### **Our Contact details**

If you need more help, please contact us.

<b>TORFAEN RESIDENTS</b> should contact <b>TELEPHONE:01495 766430 or 01495 766570</b> <b>E-MAIL: <a href="mailto:benefits@torfaen.gov.uk">benefits@torfaen.gov.uk</a></b>  <b>Minicom</b> for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The number is <b>01495 767871</b>		<b>MONMOUTHSHIRE RESIDENTS</b> should contact <b>TELEPHONE:01633 644650 or 01633 644655</b> <b>E-MAIL: <a href="mailto:benefits@monmouthshire.gov.uk">benefits@monmouthshire.gov.uk</a></b>	
<b>OUR ADDRESS-</b> Shared Benefit Service Level 3, Civic Centre Pontypool Torfaen NP4 6YB			
<b>IN PERSON at any of our One Stop shops, Community Hubs in Monmouthshire or Customer Centres in Torfaen.</b>			
<b>ABERGAVENNY</b> Abergavenny market -Cross St, Abergavenny NP7 5HD		<b>CHEPSTOW</b> Chepstow Library- Manor Way, Chepstow, NP16 5HZ	
<b>MONMOUTH</b> Monmouth Library, Rolls Hall, Monmouth, NP25 3BY		<b>USK</b> Usk Library - 35 Maryport St, NP15 1AE	
<b>PONTYPOOL</b> Level One Civic Centre, Pontypool NP4 6YB		<b>CWMBRAN</b> Cwmbran Library, Gwent House, Gwent Square, Cwmbran, NP44 1XQ	
		<b>BLAENAVON</b> Blaenavon World Heritage Centre Church Road Blaenavon NP4 9AS	

**WELSH TRANSLATION** - If you require a copy of this document in Welsh please contact us on the telephone numbers above.

**Online services** (This service is currently only available for Torfaen residents)

You are now able to access a full range of online services via the Council's website [www.torfaen.gov.uk](http://www.torfaen.gov.uk) under online services. Using a secure registration process you can now access the following services:

- Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction claim data for your claim
- Council Tax or Business Rate information for your account including the account balance, payment and instalment details.

The service also allows you to claim a discount or exemption or make a payment towards your account. Sign up securely and quickly at [www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/CouncilTaxandBenefits](http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/CouncilTaxandBenefits)

**Download app**

You are now able to report a change in circumstances on the council's website or smartphone app. You can download the app for free from your phone's app store or visit [www.torfaen.gov.uk](http://www.torfaen.gov.uk). You'll also get access to a range of other useful services and information.

**Monmouthshire residents** can also use this service to report a change in their circumstances.