



# Housing and Council Tax Benefit

## **Your guide to Housing and Council Tax Benefit if you are in a care home or hospital for any period**

This leaflet can be provided in large print, Braille or audio format by calling 0191 4334646.



## What to do if you are, or someone you know is, going into hospital or care

If you are already receiving housing and/or council tax benefit, please tell us straight away so we can give you advice and take any necessary action. We will need details in writing and the address to send them to is: Benefits Section, Finance and ICT Services, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH. If you are not on benefit, or simply want advice, contact details are given on the back page of this leaflet.

### Moving into a care home permanently

Housing benefit can be paid for a maximum of 4 weeks after you move into a care home permanently, as long as you remain liable for rent and could not have avoided the liability. This would apply, for example, if you had to give four weeks notice to your landlord, they refused to shorten the notice period and you handed your notice in straight away.

You will be exempt from payment of council tax from the date you move permanently into a home.

**Example:** Mary moves into a care home and gives a months notice at her old address. She does so as soon as she knows she is moving. Housing benefit can be paid for a maximum of 4 weeks after she moves into the care home.

**Example:** Mary moves into a care home but does not give notice for her old address until she has been in the home for four weeks. Housing benefit can be paid until she moves. She is not entitled to benefit during the notice period because she delayed handing in her notice.

### Going into a care home on a trial basis

If you intend to return to your old address if the home is unsuitable, housing benefit is paid for up to 13 weeks from the date you go into the home on a trial basis.

As soon as the decision is made that you will stay there, housing benefit ends. A further 4 weeks housing benefit could be paid if you are still liable for rent after this date and could not have avoided this.

You will be exempt from council tax from the date you went into the home. However, this can only be backdated to the date you entered the home once your stay is made permanent.

If you do not intend to return to your old address even if the home is unsuitable, housing and council tax benefit end when the decision is made that you do not intend to return. Housing benefit may be paid for a further 4 weeks if you are still liable for rent and could not have avoided this.

**Example:** Mary goes into a home but says she will go back to her old address if she does not like it. After five weeks she decides she will stay in the home. Her family end the tenancy at her old address and are told they must give one month's notice.

She gets housing benefit for her old address for the first five weeks. Benefit stops when she decides to stay in the home, but she could ask for housing benefit for 4 weeks more after she has made the decision, because she still had to pay rent and could not avoid this. She is exempt from council tax from the date she has gone into the home.

### Being in care or hospital for other reasons and intending to return home

If you are in hospital or a home for respite care, medically approved care or convalescence, you can get housing and council tax benefit for up to 52 weeks, as long as you intend to return home.

Benefit stops from the date of any decision that you will not return home. Housing benefit could be paid for 4 weeks more if liability for rent was unavoidable. You would be exempt from council tax from the date of the decision.

**Example:** Mary goes into hospital but intends to return home. After 2 weeks in hospital she goes into a care home to convalesce for a week then returns home. Housing and council tax benefit continue to be paid while she is in hospital and the care home.

**Example:** Mary is taken into hospital. It is assumed she will return home. After 3 months an assessment is made that she is not capable of caring for herself and once a place is available she moves permanently into a home.

Housing and council tax benefit end on the date of the assessment. Housing benefit could be paid for a 4 more weeks if liability for rent is unavoidable. She will be exempt from council tax from the date of the decision.

## Taking a tenancy while in hospital or a care home

If a person takes a tenancy after being in a hospital or a home for some time, council tax benefit is payable from the date they move in.

Housing benefit is payable from the date they move in, unless the move is delayed because of ill health. If so, housing benefit can be paid for up to four weeks before the date of the move. It is paid once they are in the property and they may need to ask for it to be backdated. This does not usually apply if they are still receiving benefit for a former address.

## Changing tenancies while temporarily in hospital or care

If you end one tenancy and take up a new one while in hospital or care, please seek advice on how this may affect liability to pay rent or council tax.

Housing and council tax benefit may not be payable for an old address if there is a delay in ending a tenancy.

Housing and council tax benefit may also not be payable if there is a delay in moving to a new address because, for example, it is being decorated or it simply took a while to arrange the move.

It is not often possible to pay housing and council tax benefit for two properties at the same time.

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## How to get help and advice on benefits and council tax

**Benefits:** Phone: 0191 4334646  
Email: [benefitenquiries@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:benefitenquiries@gateshead.gov.uk)

We have a home visiting team who can come out to help you make a claim, or talk to you about an enquiry. E-mail us or contact us on 0191 4334823 to ask for a visit.

**Council Tax** Phone: 0191 4333600  
Email: [counciltax@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:counciltax@gateshead.gov.uk)

Visit our website at [www.gateshead.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/benefits)

Visit us at Gateshead Civic Centre 8.45am –5pm  
Monday to Thursday and 8.45am – 4.30pm Friday.  
We also provide local services at some of our area offices.  
Phone or visit our website for details.

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