



# Discretionary Housing Payment

## A Guide to Claiming

If you are struggling to pay your rent or Council tax, this scheme could help you. This booklet can be provided in large print, braille or audio format by calling **0191 433 3661** or download the claim form by visiting our website: **[www.gateshead.gov.uk](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk)** and clicking the 'benefits' link.



## What is a Discretionary Housing Payment?

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are payments, which are made in addition to Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit, if we consider that additional help with housing costs is needed. It is paid from a limited government fund where your current benefit award does not fully cover your Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit liability.

### **Certain conditions apply:**

- You **must** get some Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit
- Your circumstances must be such that you need extra help with your Housing costs
- If you only get Housing Benefit, we can only pay you Discretionary Housing Payments towards the cost of your rent.
- If you only get Council Tax Benefit we can only pay you Discretionary Housing Payments towards the cost of your Council Tax.
- The maximum payment we can make is the difference between your eligible rent or Council Tax and the amount of benefit you receive. (Your eligible rent is your rent after deductions for services such as gas and electricity).

## **We cannot pay Discretionary Housing Payments towards:**

- Charges in your rent for water charges
- Any amount paid in addition to your normal rent to reduce your rent arrears.
- We will not usually pay Discretionary Housing Payments if you can deal with your housing costs in other ways, for example by moving to cheaper accommodation or claiming other benefits. Even so, we may pay Discretionary Housing Payments for a short period to give you time to sort something out.
- Each application will be considered on its own merits. The length of time an individual award of Discretionary Housing Payment that is allowed will vary, depending on your circumstances.
- Discretionary Housing Payments are not part of the normal Housing or Council Tax Benefit Schemes.
- As the name suggests, payments are made at the Council's discretion. There are no rules that give anyone the right to a payment, but we may be able to pay you Discretionary Housing Payments if it appears to us that you need extra financial help.

## How do I Claim?

Please complete the 'Discretionary Housing Payment' claim form found at the back of this leaflet. Please answer all questions fully.

### **Will I need to provide any further evidence or information?**

It is important to remember that the award of DHP depends on a person's individual circumstances and is discretionary. In order for the award to be considered, we may need to ask you for additional information.

Some people may find the information requested intrusive but it is important to remember that we will only ask for information that is necessary for a decision to be made.

### **Period of the Discretionary Payment**

If awarded, we will tell you for how long the payment will be made. Once an award has ended you may submit a further application, however even if you have received payments in the past and your circumstances have not changed this does not guarantee that payments will be made in the future.

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

You must keep us informed of any changes in your circumstances as this may affect the amount of Housing/Council Tax Benefit and DHP that you receive. A form is included at the back of this booklet to report any such changes.

### **What if I disagree with your decision?**

DHP'S do not form part of the Housing & Council Tax scheme and therefore carry no appeal rights. However if you disagree with a decision we have made about your Discretionary Housing Payment you can get in touch with us. We will look at our decision again in the light of any new facts you give us.

### **Help and Advice**

You can get help and advice from the Council at the address below, or if you prefer you can get independent advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau or any Welfare Advice agency.

### **Contact Us**

Gateshead Council  
Benefit Section  
Civic Centre  
Regent Street  
Gateshead  
NE8 1HH

Tel: 0191 433 3661

Email: [benefitenquiries@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:benefitenquiries@gateshead.gov.uk)

Fax: 0191 433 2066

Website: [www.gateshead.gov.uk](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk)



# Discretionary Housing Payment

## Notification of Change in Circumstances

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ NI No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please give details of your change in circumstances:

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Have you attempted to find cheaper alternative accommodation? Yes  No

What was your previous address and why did you leave it?

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If you are a private tenant, did you ask for a Pre-Tenancy Determination Prior to moving into the property? Yes  No

If you are a private tenant, have you tried to negotiate with the landlord to reduce the rent? Yes  No

Are you on a Council or Housing Association waiting list? Yes  No

Have you been offered any properties? Yes  No

If Yes, why did you turn these down? or If you are not on a waiting list why?

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Please state all your **weekly** costs

Rent £ \_\_\_\_\_ Home Insurance £ \_\_\_\_\_ Television License £ \_\_\_\_\_

Rent Arrears £ \_\_\_\_\_ Other Insurance £ \_\_\_\_\_ Clothing £ \_\_\_\_\_

Mortgage £ \_\_\_\_\_ Gas £ \_\_\_\_\_ Catalogue Payments £ \_\_\_\_\_

Travel £ \_\_\_\_\_ Electric £ \_\_\_\_\_ Debt Payments £ \_\_\_\_\_

Petrol/Car Costs £ \_\_\_\_\_ Water Rates £ \_\_\_\_\_ Fines £ \_\_\_\_\_

Entertainment £ \_\_\_\_\_ Council tax £ \_\_\_\_\_ Other £ \_\_\_\_\_

Household Shopping £ \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone £ \_\_\_\_\_ Benefit Deductions £ \_\_\_\_\_

Please state the total of your capital/savings £ \_\_\_\_\_

