

Will you need to claim Housing Benefit?

If you intend to claim Housing Benefit for your new accommodation once you have found it, it is *vital* that you start making arrangements *now*. You should be aware that attending to your Housing Benefit claim is a priority before, during and after you have moved into your accommodation. Sometimes it can involve a lot of hard work to make sure that the claim is up and running properly. We appreciate that there will be other things happening in your life once you have moved into your new home, however, this is one thing that will require attention.

Changes to the way Housing Benefit is paid:

There are recent changes to the way that Housing Benefit is calculated and paid. These changes came into force with Local Housing Allowance. If you are making a new claim for Housing Benefit these changes may well affect you. One of the main changes is that Housing Benefit will be paid directly to you rather than to your landlord. It will be paid into your bank account.

Opening a bank account:

If you do not have a bank account, you will need to open one. You can find information about basic bank accounts by picking up a leaflet from Exeter City Council Housing Benefit office or by speaking to a bank or by downloading a leaflet from www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk.

Before you look for accommodation:



Look into opening a bank account. Get together all the ID needed to make a claim. Evidence of identity will be: birth certificate, marriage certificate, passport, NI number card. The HB office may need to see several of these documents. If you do not already have ID you should start to get it together **before** you look for property.

Get hold of three months bank statements and three months proof of benefit/s; income and earnings.

Once you are about to move into accommodation:

You will need to make a claim for Housing Benefit by completing the claim form.

Once you have moved into your accommodation:

Attend an appointment at the Housing Benefit office to register your claim – you must attend in person not just send the form by mail
Supply all the information the Housing Benefit office that they ask for – such as bank statements; wage slips; evidence of benefits and other income; rent proof as signed by your landlord; tenancy agreement etc.

The timing of appointments and submitting the required information to the Housing Benefit office is often critical to making your claim for Housing Benefit work. **Delays often result in lost benefit.** If you lose benefit because you delay in attending appointments or submitting documents then you will start your new tenancy in rent arrears. This is not good for you as a new tenant.

