

Local Housing Allowance

If you live in privately rented accommodation and need help paying your rent, you may be able to claim Housing Benefit. From April 7th 2008 new rules were introduced in the way that Housing Benefit is calculated and paid. These new rules are called **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**. If you need more information you can contact Exeter Housing Benefit office on 01392 265440, or East Devon Housing Benefit Office on 01395 517446, or Exeter Homeless Action Group on 01392 430228, or you can visit www.exeter.gov.uk or www.eastdevon.gov.uk and follow the A to Z.



What is Local Housing Allowance (LHA)?

LHA is the new way for working out and paying Housing Benefit.

Why is LHA being introduced?

The Government hope that LHA will make claiming Housing Benefit more straightforward and more fair.

Who does LHA not effect?

You are not yet affected if you live in supported accommodation, a hostel, council accommodation or rent from a housing association.

Who does it effect?

- Anyone living in privately rented accommodation
- Anyone moving to privately rented accommodation from supported, council, housing association or hostel accommodation
- Anyone who has a change of address from one privately rented accommodation to another
- Anyone who has a gap in their Housing Benefit entitlement

What are the main changes I will notice?

Generally speaking the main changes you will notice are:

- Under LHA, Housing Benefit will be paid direct to you rather than to your landlord,
- You will be able to check your LHA rate before you decide to move into accommodation,
- If your rent is lower than the maximum amount of your LHA entitlement, you may be able to keep up to £15 per week.

How do I know what my LHA rate will be?

STEP ONE

First you need to look at your family and all the people who will be living with you. This is because you need to know how many bedrooms you will need. The rules for how many bedrooms you need can be complicated and so it's best to contact the Housing Benefit office or Exeter Homeless Action Group for advice. You can contact the Housing Benefit office at Exeter City Council on 01392 265440. You can contact Exeter Homeless Action Group on 01392 430228.

You can also check your bedroom entitlement online at: www.lhadirect.therentservice.gov.uk

STEP TWO

Once you know how many bedrooms you are entitled to you can look at the LHA rate that is applicable to you in your circumstances. The LHA rates are published every month by Exeter City Council (if you are in Exeter) and also by other local councils. If you move in June, then June's LHA rates apply to you. If you move in September, then September's LHA rates will apply to you. These rates will apply to you for 12 months.

Generally, speaking, if you are in receipt of JSA or Income Support then you will be entitled to the maximum LHA rate for your circumstances. If you have other income then this may reduce the maximum amount of LHA that you receive. If other people live with you this may also affect the amount of benefit you receive. You can find the monthly LHA rates by going to the Rent Service website above, or by visiting your local council's website.

- www.exeter.gov.uk
- www.eastdevon.gov.uk
- www.lha-direct.therentservice.gov.uk

STEP THREE

Once you know your bedroom entitlement and your LHA rate, you can calculate how much Housing Benefit you may be entitled to receive under LHA rules. Most local councils have a Housing Benefit calculator. Follow the website addresses above to find the Housing Benefit calculators on the Exeter and East Devon council websites.

For help and advice on any of the information here, please do not hesitate to contact your local Housing Benefit office or Exeter Homeless Action Group, or Exeter SmartMove if you are working with Exeter SmartMove.

Useful phone numbers:

01392 655440 Exeter Housing Benefit Office

01395 517446 East Devon District Council Housing Benefit Office

01392 430228 Exeter Homeless Action Group and Exeter SmartMove switchboard

01392 429298 Exeter SmartMove direct line



Exeter Local Housing Allowance rates applicable for: 1st May to 31st May 2008

Room Need	LHA Rate applicable
Shared room rate	weekly: £ 69.23 monthly: £300.00
1 Bedroom	weekly: £114.23 monthly: £495.00
2 Bedroom	weekly: £144.23 monthly: £625.00
3 Bedroom	weekly: £163.85 monthly: £710.02
4 Bedroom	weekly: £207.69 monthly: £899.99
5 Bedroom	weekly: £276.92 monthly: £1199.99