



City of Westminster

Discretionary Housing Payment Claim Form

Title (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms)
Surname/family name
First names
Address
Postcode
Telephone number

Benefit reference number (this is a seven-digit number)

About discretionary housing payments (DHP)

The council can award a discretionary housing payment (DHP) to top up your housing benefit if your benefit entitlement is less than the full rent. 'Discretionary' means that we decide whether to award the top-up payment. It's discretionary because we don't have enough money to help everyone who applies. We use the information you give us on this form to decide whether to award you a DHP.

When may we award a discretionary housing payment?

We may award a DHP if:

- your benefit is less than your rent because your income is too high to qualify for the maximum benefit
- your housing benefit is less than the rent you have to pay your landlord because of a rent restriction*
- your benefit has been reduced because other adults are living with you
- your benefit has been reduced because you are affected by welfare reform.

*A rent restriction is when the rent amount we use to decide your benefit is less than the rent you have to pay your landlord. A restriction can occur either because the rent charged is above local housing allowance (LHA) or because of a rent officer decision.

When can't we award a discretionary housing payment?

We can't award a DHP:

- to cover service charges for fuel and water rates that are included in your rent
- to help with council tax.
- if you don't qualify for benefit, or your benefit already pays for all your rent

How long we may pay you

If your claim is successful, we will make an award for a fixed period. So when completing this form you must tell us how long you think you will need extra financial help and what you will do to avoid needing the money in the long term.

Part 1: Your income and expenses

You must complete Part 1. Complete the following tables to tell us about the income you are getting and how much you spend.

Income

Type of income	Amount	Frequency (Delete as appropriate)
Net pay (after deductions for tax and National Insurance)	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Income support, jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Pensions	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Child benefit	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Child tax credit	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Working tax credit	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Child maintenance	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Money from family or friends	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Other state benefits	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Other income	£	Weekly / 4-weekly / monthly
Savings	£	Not applicable

Spending

Type of expense	Amount	Frequency (Delete as appropriate)
Rent (the amount left to pay after receiving housing benefit)	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly*
Rent arrears (regular extra payments you must make under a court order or as agreed with the landlord)	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Council tax	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Council tax arrears (regular extra payments you are making to repay money owing from previous years)	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Gas	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Electricity	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Water rates	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Home telephone	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Mobile phone	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
TV licence	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Family food shopping	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Meals at work	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Child care or play scheme	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly

School dinners	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Children's clothes	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Nappies and baby products	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Travel to work	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Other travel	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Home contents insurance	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Life insurance	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Personal loan repayments	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
Hire-purchase agreements	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly

*Every three months

Any other expenses (please tell us what the expense is for):

	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly*
	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly
	£	Weekly / monthly / quarterly

*Every three months

Based on your budget, what is the most you can afford to pay towards your rent?

£	a week
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If there are non-dependant adults living with you, how much can they afford to pay towards your rent?

£	a week
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When we look at your spending, we normally disregard household expenses for food, fuel, clothes, telephone and toiletries. This is because the benefit calculation includes an allowance for essential day-to-day living expenses. But if some of these expenses are especially high at the moment, please tell us why here.

Part 2: Rent restrictions including local housing allowance caps

A rent restriction is when the rent amount we use to decide your benefit is less than the rent you have to pay your landlord. This could be because the rent is above the local housing allowance (LHA) or because of a rent officer decision. From April 2011, Central Government has limited LHA amounts in areas where market rents are high.

Are you claiming a DHP because you rent from a private landlord and the rent is restricted?

Yes

Answer the questions in Part 2 then go to Part 4

No

Go to Part 3

2.1 How long have you lived in Westminster?

2.2 Why do you need to live in Westminster?

2.3 Tell us about any support you receive from the council's Children's Services or Adult Social Care.

- 2.4 **Do you have any children living with you aged under 19 attending school or college?** Yes Complete the table below then go to 2.5
 No Go to 2.7

Use the table below to tell us about the school or college your children attend

Child's name	Name and address of school or college

- 2.5 **Tell us if any of the children above are due to take GCSE, A-level or BTec exams in the next year.**
 Please provide the date(s) of the final exam.

- 2.6 **Tell us about any other special circumstances relating to your children's education that would make it difficult to move home at this time.**
 Please give details and confirmation from the school

2.7 Tell us about any medical services you currently rely on. Explain if there are any special circumstances that mean the service is not available elsewhere.

2.8 Tell us about any disability adaptations that have been made to your home.

2.9 Are you or your partner working?

Yes

Answer 2.10

No

Go to 2.11

2.10 Tell us if moving home will make it difficult to keep your job. Tell us why this is.

2.11 | **Tell us about any other circumstances that would make it difficult for you to move home.**

2.12 | **How much deposit did you pay for your current home?**

2.13 | **Have you moved home since 1 April 2011?**

Yes

Answer 2.14 and 2.15 before going to Part 4

No

Go to Part 4

2.14 | **How much rent were you being charged for your previous address?**

2.15 | **Why did you move to your current home?**

Part 3: Housing benefit reduction because of a spare room

From April 2013, Central Government reformed housing benefit so that benefit entitlement is less for social sector tenants who have spare bedrooms under criteria set out in the benefit regulations. The rent used to decide housing benefit is reduced by 14% for one spare room and 25% for two or more spare rooms.

3.1 **Are you claiming a DHP because you rent from a social landlord and benefit has reduced because you have at least one spare room?** Yes Answer the questions in Part 3 then go to Part 4

No Go to Part 4

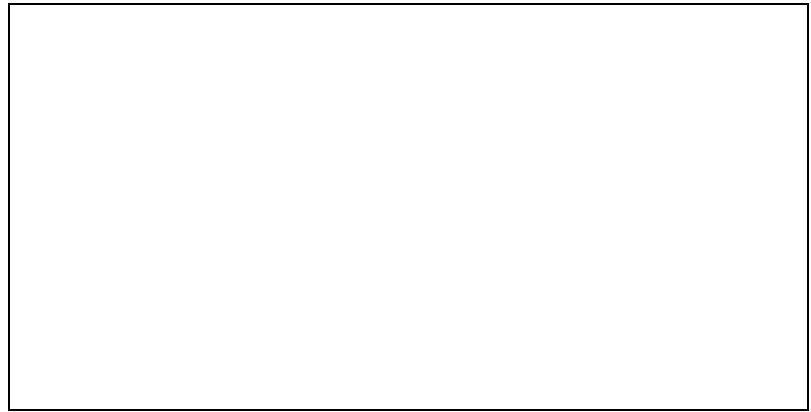
3.2 **Are you prepared to move to new accommodation with fewer rooms?** Yes Answer 3.3 then go to Part 4

No Answer the questions from 3.4 onwards then go to Part 4

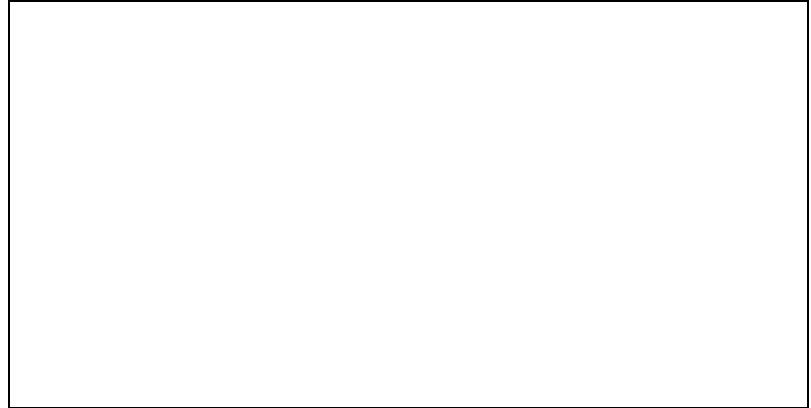
3.3 **Tell us about what you are doing to obtain smaller accommodation?**
Please give details of the discussions you have had with your landlord about tenant transfer

3.4 **Why are you unable or unwilling to move to smaller accommodation?**

3.5 Tell us about any support you receive from the council's Children's Services or Adult Social Care.



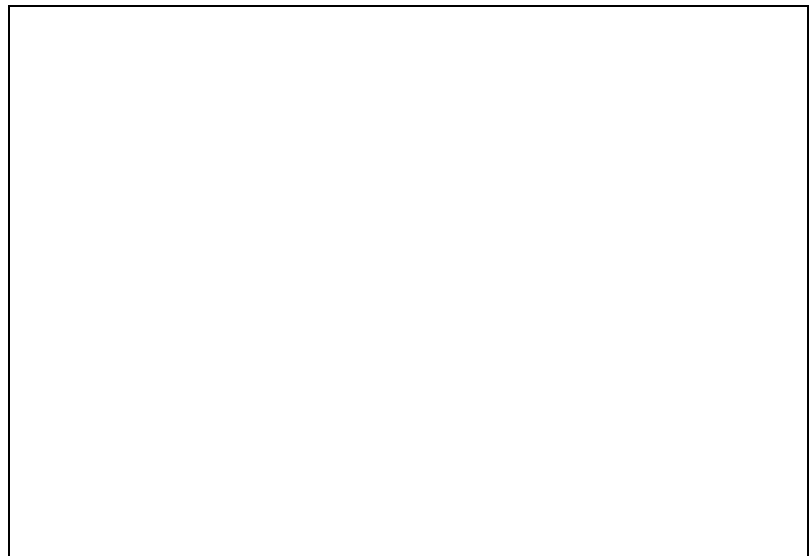
3.6 Tell us about any disability adaptations that have been made to your home.



3.7 Tell us why you were originally allocated a home with the number of bedrooms you have.



3.8 Tell us about any other circumstances that would make it difficult for you to move home.



Part 4: Housing benefit reduction because of the benefit cap

Central Government has introduced an overall cap on the total weekly amount of welfare benefit a person can receive. The benefit cap applies to housing benefit claimants who are below pension age who are out of work. The amount of the cap is £296.35 for single people and £442.31 for couples and people with children (lower amounts of £257.69 and £384.62 apply if the Council has placed you in temporary accommodation outside London). The benefit cap means the weekly total received in state benefits including for example jobseekers allowance, income support, employment and support allowance, child benefit, child tax credit and housing benefit cannot be more than the level of the cap. A household where the person claiming benefit or their partner is working is exempt from the benefit cap as long as they are eligible for working tax credit.

- 4.1 **Are you claiming a DHP because you are affected by the benefit cap?** Yes Answer the questions in Part 4 then go to Part 5
- No Go to Part 5
- 4.2 **Are you currently looking for work?** Yes Answer 4.3 then go to Part 4
- No Answer the questions from 4.4 onwards then go to Part 5

- 4.3 **Tell us about what you are doing to find work?**
Please give details of the actions you have agreed with Jobcentre Plus

- 4.4 **Why are you currently unable to look for work?**
Tell us about the barriers that are making it difficult for you to move into work

4.5 What steps are you taking to prepare yourself for being ready to find work in the future?

Tell us about any support you are receiving from Jobcentre Plus and the actions you have agreed to take

4.6 Tell us about any support you receive from the council's Children's Services or Adult Social Care.

There is no need to answer this question if you have already given the information in reply to either questions 2.3 or 3.5

4.7 If you are renting from a private landlord and you have not already completed Part 2, tell us about any circumstances that would make it difficult for you to move to more affordable accommodation.

Part 5: Other information about your claim

You must complete Part 5.

Please use the space below to tell us anything else you want us to take into account. Here are some examples:

- Medical conditions or disabilities that you or a member of your household has.
- You are claiming a DHP because your benefit has been reduced because another adult lives with you and they can't contribute towards your rent – please say why they can't.
- You are claiming a DHP because you have to pay rent for two homes for an overlapping period. Tell us why you were unable to move home when your new tenancy started.

For how long would you like to receive a DHP? And please say why.

Part 6: Declaration

You must complete Part 6.

Please check you have completed the form accurately and then read and sign the following declaration.

I understand all the following:

- If I give information that is incorrect or incomplete, you may take action against me. This may include court action.
- You will use the information I have provided to check my claims for DHP, housing and council tax support. You may check some of the information with other council records and with other local councils.
- The council may ask me to pay back any DHP that it decides it has overpaid.

I know I must let the council know about any changes in my circumstances that may affect my claim.

I declare the information I have given on this form is correct and complete.

Signature of person claiming

Date

Supporting evidence

You must provide the following documents in support of your DHP claim:

- Bank current account statements covering at least 3 recent consecutive months
- If you rent from a private landlord, proof of the rent the landlord is currently charging
- If you rent from a private landlord, proof of the rent payments you are making
- If you are working, the most recent payslip
- Your partner's most recent payslip (if you have a partner and they are working)

It will assist us to decide your claim if you also provide the following documents:

- Proof of any loan or credit-card or hire-purchase repayment agreements
- Any letters you have received from the landlord about rent arrears
- Proof of any expenses that are especially high.

We accept photocopies of these documents – you do not need to send us the originals.

What happens next?

Send the form and any photocopies we need to:

Westminster Benefits Services

PO Box 82

Erith

DA8 1WJ.

Or hand the form to us at one of our reception offices at **180 Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1V 1ER** or **101 Orchardson Street, NW8 8EA.**

If we need more information, we will contact you. When we have all the information we need, we will consider your claim and write to you with our decision and reasons.

If you disagree with our decision, you can apply for a review. If you do, a Review Advisory Panel of up to three Westminster councillors will review your case and make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Customer Services.

Our decision letter will contain more information about how to apply for a review.

Part 7: Consent to share information

You only need to complete Part 7 if you are claiming a DHP because of a rent restriction. Anyone who has completed Part 2 of the DHP claim must also complete Part 7.

Data sharing powers in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 allow the council's Benefits Service to share information you have given in support of your claims for housing benefit and DHP with the council's Housing Options Service. The purpose of sharing information is to identify and support people at risk of becoming homeless. The Housing Options Service offers a range of support to households affected by benefit changes depending on the circumstances of each case. This support includes:

- help negotiating with landlords over rent levels
- access to housing-related support for vulnerable households
- debt counselling and budgetary advice
- help with finding a new home where appropriate and help with moving and settling into a new area.

The Housing Options Service will only contact your landlord to discuss a possible rent reduction with your permission.

I give consent for the council to contact my landlord to negotiate a rent reduction on my behalf. Yes
No

Signature of person claiming

Date

You can withdraw your consent at any time by writing to Westminster Benefits Services, PO Box 82, Erith DA8 1WJ

The outcome of your claim for DHP does not depend on whether you choose to give consent or not. However, if we restrict your housing benefit because of the caps on LHA, it's important for us to know whether or not the landlord is willing to reduce the rent.