

# **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit**

**CHANGES YOU NEED  
TO TELL US ABOUT**



## Equal Opportunities Statement

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to ensuring that no service user or customer is discriminated against on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, disability, sexuality or religion.

### Leaflets available:



A Guide for Working Age People (Leaflet 1 WRK)



A Guide for Pensioners (Leaflet 2 PNS)



Can my claim be backdated (Leaflet 3 BKD)



Changes you need to tell us about (Leaflet 4 C/C)



A Guide for the Self-Employed (Leaflet 5 S/E)



Extra help towards your rent & Council Tax (Leaflet 6 DHP)



What do I do if I disagree with your decision (Leaflet 7 APP)



What happens when you have been paid too much (Leaflet 8 O/P)



A guide for landlords (Leaflet 9 L/L)



Attending an Interview Under Caution (Leaflet 10 IUC)



Can I ask someone to act on my behalf (Leaflet 11 ACT)

**This leaflet is available in large print, please phone:  
01732 227414.**

This leaflet can be explained in other languages please  
phone :  
01732 227000.

Please note that whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the details given in this leaflet are correct, the information should not be treated as an authoritative statement of benefit regulations.

# What kind of changes do I need to tell you about?

We need to know about any changes to the information you have given us on your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit application form.

You must tell us about changes in your or your partner's income, investments, savings, benefits, as well as changes in your rent paid to a private landlord and make-up of your household. Here are some examples:

## Benefits:

- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Benefit

## Income:

- Wages
- Tax Credits
- Maintenance
- Private Pension

Tell us whether the income starts, stops, goes up or down.

## Investments and Savings:

- Bank Accounts
- Savings
- Stocks and shares (excluding day-to-day changes)

## Household:

- Someone leaves or joins your household
- Someone who lives with you starts or stops work
- Any change in the income of someone who lives with you
  
- A child leaves school

## Rent:

- Your landlord increases or reduces your rent

## **When should I tell you?**

You must tell us straightaway - delay longer than 1 month and you could lose out.

Any changes to your benefit usually take effect from the Monday after the change in your circumstances. For example, if your wage/pension increases on a Wednesday, then your benefit will change from the following Monday.

## **Do I need to tell anyone else about my changes?**

If you get Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or any other social security benefit, you need to tell the Department for Work and Pensions or Jobcentre Plus.

If you move, we always check if you are getting these benefits at your new address. If the Department for Work and Pensions or Jobcentre Plus do not know you have moved, it might hold up our processing of your claim.

## **What happens if I delay telling you about changes?**

This will depend on whether the change results in you getting more benefit or less benefit.

If the change means you should get more benefit, we would normally pay the new higher benefit from the Monday after the change happens. If you take longer than a month to tell about such a change, we will only pay the extra benefit from the Monday after the date you tell us of the change. If there are special circumstances why you delayed telling us we may be able to go back. Contact us and we will see if we are able to help you.

If the change means you would get less, we will work out the reduced benefit going back to the Monday after the date of the change and ask you to pay back any overpaid benefit. So, if you delay you will have more benefit to pay back.

It is important to declare changes. Our specialist investigations team will review all your claims, current and previous, if changes come to light that you have not declared.

## **What if I move?**

Tell us as soon as you know you are moving. If we do not know you have moved we may carry on paying benefit at your last address.

If you move on or after 7 April 2008 to a private landlord you will be considered under the Local Housing Allowance scheme (LHA).

LHA is calculated by the Rent Service for individual areas, known as Broad Market Rental Areas (BMRA's), each month. It is based on the mid point of a list of values for that size of property within the BMRA.

If you move to a registered social landlord you will exempt from the LHA scheme, and you will continue to receive Housing Benefit calculated under existing rules.

## **What if I have a break in my claim on, or after 7 April 2008?**

If you have a break in your claim of one week or more and you live in privately rented accommodation you will be considered under the LHA Scheme.

If your renting from a registered social landlord you will continue to receive Housing Benefit calculated under existing rules.

## **What if I start work or change my hours?**

Tell us as soon as you start a new job, increase or reduce your hours, do overtime or get a pay rise.

## **What happens to my benefit if my Income Support/ Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) or Employment and Support Allowance (IR) stops because I have started work?**

You may still get some Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit. This will depend on your new income. Get details of your new earnings (before and after deductions) from your employer and send them to us. We can then do a trial calculation and give you an estimate of your new Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit.

After you have started work we will need to see your actual payslips (two consecutive months if you are paid monthly; five if you are paid weekly) to work out your benefit claim correctly.

If you have been on Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) or Employment Support Allowance (IR) you will need to fill in a change of circumstances form (form COCEND). These can be printed from our website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk) or picked up from our offices. You can also telephone and ask us to send you one - our telephone number and opening times are at the back of this leaflet.

## **Extended payments**

Your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit may carry on for up to 4 weeks after you start work or increase your hours. When you tell us you have started work or increased your hours, we will check to see whether you are entitled to an Extended Payment and advise you of the outcome.

## **Other help**

You may be able to get tax credits. Tax credits are taken into account when we work out your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit so do tell us as soon as you are awarded a tax credit or the amount you get changes.

## **How should I tell you about the changes?**

Complete the form on page 9 and send it to us. Do not forget to tell us the date on which the change happened. For example, if someone moves in with you we need to know the date on which they moved in as well as their name and date of birth. Please also include your Benefit reference number (you will find this on any of the letters we have sent you).

## **Do I need to provide proof of the change?**

We will need proof of rent increases, changes to earnings, new benefits, or changes to benefits, tax credits, or changes to tax credits, pension increases. Also proof of any other income like savings or any non-dependant's income.

## **What happens if I have been paid too much benefit?**

Once we have considered the change we will write and tell you what the new award of benefit is. If you have been overpaid we will tell you by how much. We will also tell you whether you need to pay it back or not.

## **How will you get the money back from me?**

- **From your Council Tax Account**  
If you have been overpaid Council Tax Benefit we will send you a new Council Tax bill. This will give you details of the amount of overpayment and tell you what your new instalments are.
- **From your Housing Benefit**  
If you are still receiving Housing Benefit we may reduce this each week by the amount shown on your letter. Your landlord will ask you to make up any difference if we pay your Housing Benefit to your landlord.
- **Sending you a bill**  
If you no longer receive Housing Benefit we will send you a bill for the amount you owe.

If no payment is received, or agreement is made with you to clear the overpayment, then the following options may be used:

- recover the overpayment through deductions from any state benefits you get
- add interest to the debt
- seek recovery through the County Court; this could result in a County Court Judgement and you will have to pay added costs or
- refer your debt to the Council's debt collection agency.

For more information see our leaflet **What happens when I have been paid too much** (leaflet 8 O/P).

## **What can I do if I disagree with the overpayment?**

The first thing to do when you receive your overpayment letter is to read it carefully.

If you still disagree with the overpayment you can:

- telephone, write or visit the offices where a Benefit Officer will explain our decision
- ask us to look at the decision again or
- appeal against the decision.

You must do this within one calendar month of the date of the overpayment letter.

If you want us to look at the decision again or you want to appeal your request must be in writing.

For more information see our leaflet **What do I do if I disagree with your decision** ((leaflet 7 APP).

# Change of Circumstances

My benefit ref no

My full name

My address



Date of change

Details of change (your new address/income, etc)



Continue over the page (if necessary).

**Declaration.** To my knowledge the details on this form are true and correct. I understand that if I give incorrect information, or withhold information, I will have to pay back any overpayment of benefit, and you may also take action against me. I know I must let the Benefit Section know about any further changes in my circumstances that may affect my claim.

Signature .....

Date / /

Continued from over the page

## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

You can always phone us for help and advice. For details visit our website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk) or see the back of this leaflet.

You could also contact or visit the following:

### **Edenbridge & Westerham Citizens Advice Bureau**

68 High Street

Edenbridge

TN8 5AR

Call 01732 865131

Email: [Edenbridge@cabnet.org.uk](mailto:Edenbridge@cabnet.org.uk)

### **Swanley Bureau**

16 High Street

Swanley

BR8 8BG

Call 01322 664949

Email: [Swanley.cab@dial.pipex.com](mailto:Swanley.cab@dial.pipex.com)

### **Sevenoaks Bureau**

Buckhurst Lane

Sevenoaks

TN13 1HW

Call 01732 454443

Email: [info@sevenoakscab.org.uk](mailto:info@sevenoakscab.org.uk)

### **Shelter Kent Housing Aid**

Bull Yard

High Street

Ashford

TN24 8SN

Call 01233 610669

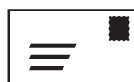
Email: [ashford@shelter.org.uk](mailto:ashford@shelter.org.uk)

# IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HOUSING BENEFIT OR COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT.



Phone us on: 01732 227000

A service is available for minicom users on: 01732 227496 (for textphone users only)



Write to us at:

Benefit Section  
Sevenoaks District Council  
P.O Box 102  
Argyle Road  
Sevenoaks  
Kent TN13 1GT



E-mail us at [Benefits@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:Benefits@sevenoaks.gov.uk)



Visit our main Sevenoaks office at the following times.  
Monday to Wednesday 8.45am - 5.00pm  
Thursday 9.30am - 5.00pm  
Friday 8.45am - 4.45pm

For appointments at our Edenbridge, Hartley & Swanley surgeries please call 01732 227000

## WHAT IF I WANT TO COMMENT ON YOUR SERVICE?

Please get in touch with us. We would like to know what you think. Information on how we deal with comments about our services is available on our website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk).

Alternatively, a leaflet entitled 'Comments, Compliments, & Complaints' is available from our offices. This leaflet includes an easy to use complaint form.

