

Local Housing Allowance Vulnerability and Safeguard Policy

One of the aims of the Governments Housing Benefit reform is to encourage tenants to take responsibility for their rent payments.

With payment of Housing Benefit under the Local Housing Allowance scheme in most cases payment of Housing Benefit will be made direct to the tenant.

Local Housing Allowance makes provision for payments to be made directly to a landlord where the Local Authority considers that the tenant 'is likely to have difficulty managing their affairs.'

The intention of this policy is to prevent tenants who may experience difficulties in managing their finances from falling into rent arrears.

There is a need to balance the provisions to pay the landlord direct with the need to promote the aims of the HB reforms.

There are certain circumstances in which the Council must pay the landlord direct and others where it has the discretion to do so to protect vulnerable tenants.

The guidelines under which consideration should be given to individual cases are set out below:

- To help prevent rent arrears and to avoid tenants being put at risk of eviction
- To help sustain tenancies for vulnerable tenants
- To reassure landlords that Housing Benefit may be paid to them if they have vulnerable tenants
- To help put tenants in touch with other agencies to assist in their financial affairs
- To ensure council officers make reasonable, fair and consistent decisions
- To treat each case individually to provide a safeguard for the most vulnerable benefit claimants.