

Housing Benefits – Working with Landlords

We aim to treat landlords fairly and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, The Human Rights Act 1998, the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 and our Equal Opportunities Policy.

We will make payment direct to the landlord:

- Where the tenant has asked us to and the landlord has agreed
- Where we think it is in the best interest of the tenant to do so
- If the tenant has left the property and there are rent arrears outstanding, but only to the value of the benefit due and not exceeding the level of those rent arrears
- Where an amount of Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based), Guaranteed Pension Credit or Income Support, payable to the tenant, is being deducted from that benefit and paid to the landlord by DWP
- If the tenant is 8 weeks or more in arrears with their rent, unless it is in their over-riding interest not to
- On account, if we are waiting for further information before we can assess the claim for benefit, through no fault of the tenant or landlord.

We will provide information to landlords about housing benefit claims by:

- Notifying them of Housing Benefit entitlement due and the period covered, and by providing a schedule of payment dates where we are going to pay them direct
- Providing a payment schedule detailing their tenants' names, addresses and the periods included, where we pay a number of their tenants' benefit through one cheque
- Providing Third Party Authority forms for tenants to complete, allowing information about a Housing Benefit claim to be passed onto the landlord. (Items of a confidential nature will not be disclosed unless the tenant has expressly asked us to do so).

We will also:

- Enter into Service Level Agreements with those Registered Social Landlords who want to
- Establish whether the landlord is a 'fit and proper person' in all cases where direct payment is considered
- Encourage landlords to contact the Benefit Section direct before taking court action
- Prioritise urgent cases where there is a risk of eviction or loss of tenancy
- Provide information leaflets about Housing Benefit designed specifically for landlords
- Participate in the Huntingdonshire Landlords Forum to maintain open communication and ensure we are always working together in the best of interests of tenants and each other

When recovering overpaid housing benefit, we will:

- Recover amounts paid to the landlord from the tenant
 - in cases where fraud has been established or where the landlord has reported suspected fraud to the Council and not colluded with the tenant
 - if the tenant makes a written request, and agrees to make repayment himself
- Recover it from the landlord in other cases, where it is reasonable to do so.

In all cases, we will aim to provide a seamless service ensuring prompt payment, always in the best interest of the benefit claimant.