

Harlow Council Benefits Unit

Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow, Essex
CM20 1WG
Telephone: 01279 446633
E-mail: hdc.benefits@harlow.gov.uk



Discretionary Housing Payments

What are Discretionary Housing Payments?

If you need extra help with housing costs or Council Tax, Discretionary Housing Payments may be available to you. Discretionary Housing Payments are payments that can be made, along with any Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit already in payment.

We have a limited annual Discretionary Housing Payment budget, which is allocated quarterly. This application form will help us to decide if an award can be made to you. Please note that not all applications will be successful as funds for Discretionary Housing Payments are limited and normally used in full before the quarter expires. To ensure consistency we will only consider information included on the form and any current supporting evidence supplied, no assumptions can be made. Each claim made is unique they are not continuations therefore if another claim is made all information is required once more, we cannot refer to previous claims.

What are Housing Costs?

Housing costs are in essence rent and communal service charges. A number of items are excluded:

- Parts of rent not covered by benefit, such as charges for fuel, hot water or meals
- Charges for individual water and sewerage
- Increases in rent due to rent arrears
- Any short fall between Second Adult Rebate and Council Tax liability
- Benefit that has been suspended because you have failed to supply the information necessary for your claim
- Any reduction in Benefit as a result of non-attendance at a work-focused interview
- Any reduction or loss of Benefit due to Job Seeker's Allowance employment sanction
- Any reduction in Benefit due to Benefit Direction or failure to comply with Child Support Agency in arranging maintenance
- Any reduction in Benefit due to recovery of an overpayment, social fund loan or direct payments
- This list does not cover all exclusions

Who can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment?

To be eligible for a payment, you must be receiving Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Rebate, and you must then satisfy us that you require further help with your housing costs and or Council Tax liability.

If you are already on full benefit you will not be able to get a Discretionary Housing Payment.

If you do not get Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit you cannot apply for Discretionary Housing Payments. If you only get Housing Benefit and not Council Tax Benefit, you will not be able to get help with your Council Tax. If you only get Council Tax Benefit and not Housing Benefit, you will not be able to get help with your rent costs.

How can I apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment?

Complete and return this form immediately, along with any recent supporting evidence you may have. The more supporting evidence supplied, the better your chance of qualifying for an award.

If a previous claim was refused as the budget had expired and you are now re applying please submit this form as per the refusal notification.

If you are acting on another's behalf, please make this clear on the form.

How will it be paid?

Payment will either be made with you Housing Benefit or credited to your Council Tax account. Awards will normally start from the Monday following the receipt of your application.

Awards can only make up to the end of the financial year. If you remain in hardship you should reclaim two weeks before your award runs out.

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Discretionary Housing Payments Form

Complete and return this form as soon as possible.

Confidential

Title: Mr Mrs Miss Ms

Surname:

Other Names:

Date of Birth:

Day			/	Month			/	Year				
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National Insurance Number:

You will find your National Insurance Number on your National Insurance Number Card, payslips, tax papers, or other letters from the Department of Works and Pensions.

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime Telephone Number:

If you have been at the same address for more than 6 months miss 1-3, private tenant go to question 4 others go to question 5, those in receipt of only Council Tax benefit go to question 7

1. Why did you leave your last address?

2. How did you find out about your current property?

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3. Did you ask for a Pre-Tenancy Determination prior to moving into the property? Yes No

4. Have you tried to negotiate with the landlord to reduce the rent? Yes No

If YES please state what you did and provide proof of refusal to reduce rent if held

5. Have you attempted to find cheaper alternative accommodation? Yes No

If YES please give details of what you have done and why you are not able to move

6. Is there a risk you will be evicted if you do not pay the short fall? Yes No

If YES please provide proof of rent arrears or copies of letters from your Landlord, notices of repossession or notice to quit

7. Are all members of your household in good health? Yes No

If NO please provide details and supporting medical evidence

8. Has the property been adapted in any way? Yes No

If YES, please give details.

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9. Do you have any special circumstances associated with support or incapacity of yourself or others? Yes No

If YES, please give details.

10. Do you have any special circumstances associated with the schooling or care of dependant children? Yes No

If YES, please give details.

11. Do you have any family living locally who could give you help or financial support? Yes No

If YES, please give details.

12. Do you have any income that you could use to top up your rent and/or council tax? Yes No

If YES how much could you pay towards the shortfall?

£ _____ Per week (Rent)

£ _____ Per week (Council Tax)

13. Do you have any assets, property or belongings that you could sell to help pay the rent and/or council tax? Yes No

If YES, please give details.

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Request for Financial Information

Income Details	Weekly	Monthly
Wages / Salary of the Claimant		
Wages / Salary of any Partner		
Working Tax Credit		
Child Tax Credit		
Income Support / Job Seeker's Allowance		
Other Benefits (Please specify which)		
Retirement Pension		
Pension Credit		
Other Pensions (please specify)		
Other Income		
Total Capital		

Please use the following space to give details of any other income you may have.

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Outgoings	Weekly	Monthly
Mortgage or Rent		
Council Tax		
Electricity		
Gas		
Water		
Phone Bills		
Television / Satellite costs (please specify)		
Travel costs (please specify)		
Insurances		
Food		
Maintenance		
Medical costs		
Court Orders / Fines		
Clothing		
Household Items		
Loans (please state when they were taken out)	Repayments	
(Continue on page 12)		
Any others (please state)		

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Please use this space to tell us of any other income, outgoings or financial liabilities which you may have

14. Could you move if rent or council tax cannot be met? Yes No

If NO please give details why

15. Have you approached Harlow Welfare Rights and Advice, the Citizens Advice Bureau or similar organisation to check that you have claimed all benefit to which you are entitled? Yes No

16. Have you attempted to find cheaper alternative accommodation? Yes No

Use this space to provide any other information you think is relevant in support of your application

Discretionary Housing Payments

Declaration & Warning

We have a duty to protect public funds therefore we may use the information you have provided on this form to prevent and detect fraud. We may also share this information, for the same purposes, with any organisations that handle public funds. This information may be made available to other departments within the council.

The information may also be used for statistical surveys, which means we may pass this information, in confidence, to the Department for Work and Pensions and agencies working on our behalf.



Any false information or failure to disclose relevant information may lead to a prosecution under the Thefts Acts 1968 and 1978 or the Social Security Act 1992

- The information I have given is true and complete
- I authorise the local authority to verify the information if they wish to do so
- I will write and tell you if there are any changes in my circumstances or my households circumstances
- I understand that my application may not be considered if I do not provide all the information you have asked for

The following must be completed by all applicants

I / We have read the declaration and warning above and declare that to the best of my/our knowledge and belief, the information shown on this form is in accordance with that declaration and warning.

Your Signature:

Date:

Your Partner's Signature:

Date:



Do not delay in returning this form. Any delay may affect your award.

Discretionary Housing Payments

What do I do if my circumstances change?

You must inform us of any changes in your circumstances as soon as possible. We may need to revise an award of Discretionary Housing Payment where your circumstances have changed. If the change means that you have received monies to which you are not entitled to, you may be asked to pay the money back.

Examples of changes in income and family circumstances:

- When Income Support or Job Seeker's Allowance stops or starts
- If Tax Credits are awarded withdrawn or the rate of award changes
- Change of address
- Changes in income or savings
- When someone moves in or out of your home

If you are not sure if a change in your circumstances will alter your Discretionary Housing Payment, tell us anyway.

What should I do if I do not agree with your decision?

Discretionary Housing Payments are made outside of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit scheme and therefore there are no statutory appeal rights.

If you disagree with the decision you can write to us and ask us to look at your application again. A Senior Officer other than the one who made the original decision will then review your original request. You must contact us within one month of the date on the decision letter, giving the reasons why you disagree and supply any new supporting evidence that you believe is relevant.

Alternatively you can phone or write to us and ask for a full explanation of the decision.

Discretionary Housing Payments

For Further Help and Advice

In Person

Contact Harlow

Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow, Essex
CM20 1WG

Opening Times:

Monday - Friday 8 am – 6 pm
Saturday 9 am - 12 am

By Post, Phone or Email

Harlow Council Revenues & Benefits Department

Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow, Essex
CM20 1WG

Telephone: 01279 446633

Email: hdc.benefits@harlow.gov.uk

For Independent Help and Advice

Harlow Welfare Rights and Advice

The Advice Centre
2 East Gate
Harlow, Essex
CM20 1ND

Opening Times:

Monday - Friday 10 am – 4 pm

*Harlow Welfare
Rights & Advice*



Telephone: 01279 446622

Out of hours answerphone: 01279 446777

Email: admin@hwra.org.uk

Website: www.hwra.org.uk

Harlow CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau)

Rooms 1 and 2
The Advice Centre
2 East Gate
Harlow, Essex
CM20 1ND

Opening Times:

**Monday, Wednesday
and Friday** 10 am – 12.00 am
Drop in advice



Telephone: 0845 120 3717

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

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