Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit

This factsheet explains what may be available to help you pay your Council Tax and your rent.
**About Independent Age**

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That’s why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago, we’re independent so you can be.

The information in this factsheet applies to England only.

If you’re in Wales, contact Age Cymru (0800 022 3444, ageuk.org.uk/cymru) for information and advice.

In Scotland, contact Age Scotland (0800 12 44 222, ageuk.org.uk/scotland).

In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI (0808 808 7575, ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland).

In this factsheet, you’ll find reference to our other free publications. You can order them by calling 0800 319 6789, or by visiting [www.independentage.org/publications](http://www.independentage.org/publications)
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Part one: Getting help with Council Tax

1. Introduction to Council Tax

Council Tax pays for local government services, such as road repairs, social care and emergency services. The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on the value of your home and the people living there. Every home is assigned to one of eight tax bands (A–H) based on its market value. Council Tax applies to both rented and owner-occupied homes.

If you’re responsible for paying Council Tax, you may be eligible for help with your bill in the form of:

- Council Tax exemptions (see chapter 2)
- Council Tax discounts (see chapters 3, 4 and 6)
- Your local council’s Council Tax Support scheme (also called Council Tax Reduction) (chapter 5).

Good to know

It’s possible to receive help from all of these schemes at the same time if you meet the relevant criteria for each one.
2. Exemption from Council Tax

Homes may be exempt from Council Tax if, for example:

- they’re unoccupied, in certain circumstances ([gov.uk/council-tax/second-homes-and-empty-properties](gov.uk/council-tax/second-homes-and-empty-properties) explains when an unoccupied home might be exempt)

- everyone living there is ‘severely mentally impaired’. This could include people with dementia or a serious mental health condition. A GP would need to sign a medical certificate confirming this, and the people in the property would need to be receiving certain disability benefits. Contact your local council for more information ([gov.uk/find-local-council](gov.uk/find-local-council)) or call us on 0800 319 6789 to arrange to speak to an advisor.

- there is a self-contained annexe and the person living in it is a dependant relative of someone living in the main property – ie if they’re of State Pension age, substantially or permanently disabled, or severely mentally impaired. Only the annexe is exempt in this case, not the main property.

To do

If you now live in a care home or hospital, or you’ve gone to live with a relative or friend so they can look after you, and your home is unoccupied, check with your local council if your home is exempt. The council can also advise on other cases where exemption applies.
3. Council Tax discounts

A full Council Tax bill is based on at least two adults living in a home, so if you live alone, you’re entitled to a 25% discount on your Council Tax bill.

Some people aren’t counted as adults for Council Tax purposes, so you may also be treated as living alone if you live with another adult who is, for example:

- severely mentally impaired – see chapter 2
- a carer providing at least 35 hours a week care for you, as long as you’re receiving certain disability benefits, and aren’t their spouse or partner.
- a full-time student.

Check with your local council if you’re unsure who is responsible for paying Council Tax in your household.

**Roy, Betty and John**

Roy and Betty live with their grandson John. Betty has late-stage dementia, claims Attendance Allowance and has a certificate confirming she’s severely mentally impaired. John is a full-time university student. This means Roy is the only adult in the house for Council Tax purposes. He will get a 25% discount on his Council Tax bill, as he is treated as living alone.
Good to know

You’ll usually have to apply to your council for any discounts. If you notify them of a change of circumstances, they may apply any relevant discounts at that stage.

There is no time limit to apply for a discount. You can ask for it to be backdated to when you were first eligible for it. See chapter 7 for information about appealing decisions on Council Tax discounts.
4. Discounts for disabled people

You can get a discount through the Disabled Band Reduction Scheme (Disability Reduction Scheme) if your house is larger than you would need because you, another adult or a child living with you is ‘substantially and permanently’ disabled. To qualify for this reduction, you must have:

- an extra bathroom, kitchen or other room which the disabled person needs because of their disability, or
- extra space in your home for the disabled person to use a wheelchair indoors.

There’s no set test for what counts as a substantial and permanent disability, or for deciding whether an extra room is needed by someone due to their disability. Councils must use their judgment on this.

Contact your local council to apply for the reduction. You may have to send in supporting evidence such as a letter from your GP. The council may also want to visit your home.

What reduction could you get?

If you qualify for this scheme, your Council Tax bill will be reduced to the band below, or by one sixth if your home is already in the lowest band.
5. Council Tax Support

If you need help to pay your Council Tax bill, you may qualify for Council Tax Support. This is also known as Council Tax Reduction. Each council sets its own rules, so schemes vary from council to council.

Who can apply for Council Tax Support?

You can apply for Council Tax Support whether you rent or own your home. Anyone who has no income or a low income may be eligible. If you and your partner have savings and capital over £16,000 between you, you won’t qualify for Council Tax Support unless you’re receiving Guarantee Pension Credit. Read our factsheet Pension Credit for more information on this benefit.

How much will you get?

Council Tax Support is means-tested. The reduction you receive will depend on:

- your income, savings and investments – the less you have, the higher the reduction you might get
- whether you’re over State Pension qualifying age (find out your State Pension qualifying age at gov.uk/state-pension-age)
- how the scheme works in your area.

If you get Guarantee Pension Credit, you might get your Council Tax paid in full. However, if you live with a non-dependant you may get a lower reduction. A non-dependant is another adult who isn’t your partner or an adult child who is still dependent on you, and who is expected to pay towards the Council Tax bill.
A weekly deduction is made from your Council Tax Support for each non-dependant – for couples, only one deduction is made for each couple. The amount deducted depends on the non-dependant’s circumstances, including how much they earn and what benefits they get. There are some exemptions to this – for example, no deductions will be made if you or your partner receive certain disability benefits or if you’re blind – so speak to your council for more information.

To do

Ask your local council for details of their scheme, look on their website or contact your local Citizens Advice (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).
6. Second Adult Rebate

If you live with another adult who has a low income or receives certain benefits, and isn’t your partner, you may be able to apply for Second Adult Rebate.

The second adult can’t be a joint owner or joint tenant of the property with you, or be someone who is ignored when the council works out what Council Tax you should pay (see chapter 3).

You can’t receive both Second Adult Rebate and Council Tax Support. If you’re not entitled to Council Tax Support because your income or savings and investments are too high, you may qualify for Second Adult Rebate from your council instead. In some circumstances, even if you’re entitled to Council Tax Support, you may be better off getting Second Adult Rebate.

What rebate might you get?

The amount your Council Tax is reduced by will depend on the income of the second adult living with you, and what benefits they’re receiving. There are three levels of rebate: 25%, 15% or 7.5%.

How to apply

Contact your council. If you apply for Council Tax Support, your local council should automatically consider whether Second Adult Rebate would give you the bigger reduction, so you don’t need to make a separate application. They should automatically pay you whichever is higher.

If you’re not applying for Council Tax Support because your savings and investments are too high for you to qualify, then apply for Second Adult Rebate. Ask your local council for more information (gov.uk/find-local-council).
7. **Appealing decisions about help with Council Tax**

You have the right to appeal decisions about whether you should be paying Council Tax, whether your property should be exempt, or whether you should be getting any discounts or Council Tax Support.

Write to the council stating why you disagree with their decision. They should respond within two months. The council may ask you to send in additional information.

If you’re not satisfied with the response, you can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal for England (0300 123 2035, valuationtribunal.gov.uk). You must contact the Valuation Tribunal within two months of the council’s decision.

If the council hasn’t replied with a decision within two months, you can still appeal, as long as it’s less than four months since you wrote to your council.

If you get Housing Benefit and you disagree with a decision about Council Tax Support, it’s usually a good idea to write to your council within one month of the decision, as this can affect your Housing Benefit.

If you need help with your appeal, contact your local Citizens Advice (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk) or Age UK (0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk) to see if they can help.
Part two: Getting help with paying rent

8. What is Housing Benefit?

Housing Benefit helps pay your rent if you’re a tenant with a low income. The amount you get depends on your income and circumstances, so it could cover all or some of your rent.

As well as paying your rent, Housing Benefit can help with certain service charges, such as upkeep of lifts or a communal garden. It can’t be claimed towards heating, hot water or other energy bills, unless they’re for a communal area and you’re obliged to pay them. If these charges are included in your rent, that part of your rent is not eligible for Housing Benefit. Your landlord should be able to tell you what charges are included in your rent. The Housing Benefit department will be able to tell you which are and aren’t eligible for Housing Benefit.

If separate charges aren’t specified, a set amount will be deducted from your Housing Benefit. This will likely be higher than the actual cost of these charges, so it’s best to ask your landlord to provide a breakdown of the service charges. If you’re not sure whether charges are eligible for Housing Benefit, contact Shelter (0808 800 4444, england.shelter.org.uk).

An example

If you pay rent of £100 per week, which includes heating for your flat, the Housing Benefit department will deduct the flat rate standard amount of £30.30 a week for heating if there is no evidence of the actual amount. This means
your eligible rent will be £69.70 and the maximum Housing Benefit you could receive is £69.70 a week.

If you live on a houseboat, in a caravan or in a mobile home, you can claim Housing Benefit to cover your mooring or site fees.

People who pay for their board/lodgings or are living in a hostel may also be eligible to receive Housing Benefit for the accommodation part of their charges.

You can’t claim Housing Benefit to pay your mortgage.

**Good to know**

If you’re having trouble with mortgage payments, you may be eligible for a Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loan. Contact the Money Advice Service for more information (0800 138 7777, moneyadviseservice.org.uk/en/articles/support-for-mortgage-interest).
9. Who can claim Housing Benefit?

You may be able to claim Housing Benefit if all the points below apply to you:

• you’re personally or jointly liable for paying rent
• you have a low income, or receive Guarantee Pension Credit or certain other working-age benefits
• you have less than £16,000 in savings and investments (unless you receive Guarantee Pension Credit).

If you receive Guarantee Pension Credit, you may get your rent paid in full by Housing Benefit.

If you live with your husband, wife, civil partner or partner, only one of you can claim Housing Benefit for you both. Whether or not you can get Housing Benefit will depend on your joint income, savings and investments, and if any other adults live with you.

Remember

From 15 May 2019, you may have to claim Universal Credit instead of Housing Benefit if you have a partner who is below State Pension Age. Contact Citizens Advice if you think this might affect you (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).

Who can’t claim?

You can’t normally claim Housing Benefit if for example:

• you live in a care home
• you rent from a close relative who owns the property
• you have savings and investments of over £16,000 (this includes your partner’s savings and investments). If you get Guarantee Pension Credit, this limit doesn’t apply.

• you don’t normally live in the UK. You’re also unlikely to get Housing Benefit if you’re subject to immigration control.

**Good to know**

If you’re claiming Universal Credit, the rules around some of the benefits we mention in this factsheet will be different. Call Citizens Advice to find out more (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).
10. How your Housing Benefit is calculated

What Housing Benefit you can get will depend on your income, savings and investments, circumstances, whether you’re a private tenant or rent from the council or a housing association (including shared ownership), and how much your rent is.

Your eligible rent will be calculated. This is the maximum amount you can receive from Housing Benefit. It may be less than your actual rent if, for example, your rent includes certain service charges like heating or Council Tax, which Housing Benefit won’t cover (see chapter 8).

If you’re a council or housing association tenant

If you’re already receiving Guarantee Pension Credit, your full rent will be used as the starting point for calculating your Housing Benefit. You may get less than this, for example if you live with another adult other than your partner – called a non-dependant. One weekly deduction is made for each non-dependant (or one deduction for each non-dependant couple). The amount deducted depends on the non-dependant’s circumstances, including how much they earn and the benefits they get. These deductions won’t be made if you or your partner are registered blind or receiving certain disability benefits.

If you’re not receiving Guarantee Pension Credit, your income, savings and investments will be looked at, including:

- earnings
- most welfare benefits – certain disability benefits are ignored
• income from anyone living with you, for example, relatives or lodgers

• occupational and private pensions

• maintenance payments (except child maintenance)

• assumed income of £1 per £500 (or part of £500) for savings between £10,000 and £16,000 if you have reached Pension Credit qualifying age

• savings and investments of £16,000 or above (this will exclude you from Housing Benefit).

Good to know

The ‘bedroom tax’

If you’ve reached State Pension age and rent from the council or a housing association, this will not affect you. To find out when you’ll reach State Pension age, use the online calculator at gov.uk/state-pension-age.

If you’re below State Pension age, your Housing Benefit will be reduced if you have more bedrooms than the government says your household needs. For example, an adult couple would normally be expected to share one bedroom, so a husband and wife in a two-bedroom flat would be counted as having one spare bedroom. The reduction is 14% of your eligible rent for one spare room, or 25% for two or more spare rooms.

If this affects you, you may be able get help from the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme (see chapter 12). Contact your local council for more information.

Remember

From 15 May 2019, you may be subject to the ‘bedroom tax’ if you or your partner are below State Pension age and you’re making a new claim. Contact
Citizens Advice if you think this might affect you (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).

**If you’re a private tenant – Local Housing Allowance**

If you’re a private tenant, how much help you can get with your rent depends on your council’s Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. These are standard maximum rent figures set by your local council. How much Housing Benefit you get depends on:

- the maximum rent allowed for properties in your area
- the number of bedrooms your household needs.

LHA rates change every month. Once you make a claim, you will stay on the same rate for 12 months.

**To do**

Find out what the Local Housing Allowance is in your area from your local council (gov.uk/find-local-council) or the Valuation Office Agency (03000 501 501, lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx).

**Maximum LHA limits**

The set maximum LHA depends on the area you live in and the size of property you need. If your rent is more than the maximum, you’ll have to make up the difference. You may be able to get help from the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme (see chapter 12) but this would only be a temporary solution. Longer term, the council may expect you to consider looking for cheaper accommodation.

Exact LHA rates vary from area to area. For example, for March 2019 in inner north London you can’t get more than:
• £268.46 for one bedroom (either a whole property or in shared accommodation)
• £311.40 for two bedrooms
• £365.09 for three bedrooms
• £429.53 for four bedrooms.

The highest LHA rate is for a four-bedroom property. Even if you live in a property with more than four bedrooms, the Housing Benefit you receive will be limited to the maximum LHA for a four-bedroom property.

Don’t forget, after the LHA rate has been applied to your circumstances, non-dependant deductions will affect how much Housing Benefit you’re entitled to – see page 17.

**Good to know**

If you’re disabled and need regular overnight care from a carer who doesn’t live in the property, an extra bedroom for the carer to stay overnight is allowed. Speak to your local council for more information (gov.uk/find-local-council).

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David and Jim

David is 72 and lives with his 70 year-old husband Jim in a privately rented two-bedroom house. They receive Pension Credit but are struggling to pay the £250 weekly rent. David currently cares for Jim, who has some health problems and limited mobility.

When David claims Housing Benefit, the council says the couple only need a one-bedroom property. The amount of LHA for a one-bedroom property in their area is £175 a week. This means that David and Jim still need to pay £75
a week towards their rent after their maximum Housing Benefit award.

David may be able to get the LHA rate for a two-bedroom property in the future if Jim’s condition deteriorates and he is unable to continue caring for him overnight or if it’s no longer reasonable for them to share a room because of Jim’s disability. If the council is satisfied that he needs an overnight carer, they would then be allowed an extra bedroom for David or if a carer needed to sleep in the house.
11. How to claim Housing Benefit

If you’re claiming Pension Credit, you can claim Housing Benefit at the same time. You can apply through the Pension Service (0800 731 0469), and they will forward the forms to your local council. However, it’s often better to make a claim directly with your local council, or contact them if you’ve made a claim through the Pension service, so you can be sure they’ve received it.

You will have to apply directly to the council if you want to claim Council Tax Support.

If you’re under State Pension age and claiming Universal Credit, contact Citizens Advice for further advice (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).

If you’re not claiming these benefits, apply through your local council (gov.uk/apply-housing-benefit-from-council). You’ll need to provide your national insurance number, details of your income, savings and investments and information about your rent, including any service charges or anything else that’s included in your rent.

If you pay rent to a private landlord, the local council may need additional information, including your tenancy agreement which shows how much rent you pay.

Some councils may have an advisory team who can visit you at home if you’re unable to go out, to help you complete the forms and verify any documents required to support your application. Check with your local council.

When will a decision be made?

The council should try to work out your Housing Benefit entitlement within 14 days of receiving all the information it needs. You will still have to pay your rent in the meantime to avoid going into arrears. If you pay rent to a
private landlord and the local council hasn’t made a decision on your claim within 14 days, they must make an interim payment while your claim is being dealt with. This is called a Payment on Account. The council should do this automatically – if they don’t do this, contact them.

Your local council will write and tell you if you’ve been awarded Housing Benefit and if so how much you’re entitled to. It’s important you check the details in the award letter to ensure the information you provided in your claim has been listed correctly. If anything appears wrong, tell the council straight away to avoid a possible under- or overpayment.

**How Housing Benefit is paid**

Housing Benefit is paid in arrears. This means you may get it after your rent is due.

If you’re a council tenant, your Housing Benefit will be paid straight into your rent account and deducted from your rent.

If you pay rent to a private landlord or a housing association, the money will be paid directly to you. In some situations, it may be possible for it to be paid directly to your landlord instead. Check with your council.

The council decides how often you should be paid your Housing Benefit, but they should take into account how often and on what date your rent payment is due. Payments can be made weekly, every two weeks, every four weeks or once a month. Contact your local council if your Housing Benefit payments don’t match your rent payment dates.
Backdating Housing Benefit claims

It may be possible to get your Housing Benefit backdated by up to a month. Check with your local council. If you’ve reached Pension Credit qualifying age and believe you should have been receiving Housing Benefit but didn’t claim, you can ask for your claim to be backdated by up to three months.
12. If you’re still struggling to pay your rent – Discretionary Housing Payments

If you qualify for Housing Benefit but your benefit doesn’t cover all your eligible rent, you may be able to claim Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) from your local council if meeting the shortfall is causing you financial hardship.

**Good to know**

There are no set rules for who receives DHPs, but councils have to be fair and reasonable when deciding who to award them to. Each council has a fixed budget for this and decides how to allocate it.

**Who qualifies for Discretionary Housing Payments?**

You can only get a DHP if you’re eligible for Housing Benefit (or the housing costs part of Universal Credit). DHPs can help pay your eligible rent if you don’t receive enough Housing Benefit to cover it. For example, this might be the case if your Local Housing Allowance is lower than your rent. Sometimes, DHPs can be given for one-off costs relating to moving home, such as rent deposits or rent in advance.

**To do**

Ask your local council how to apply for a DHP. They may have an application form, or if they don’t, you could write a letter to them instead.

The decision to award a DHP is based on your individual circumstances, so it's important to give as much information as
possible when you apply. For example, you should give details of income and outgoings, any disabilities you have, debts, and any other benefits you receive, explaining why it's so difficult for you to pay the shortfall in your rent.

**How much can I get?**

There is no set amount for a DHP because it is a discretionary payment – it’s up to the council to decide whether to award it, for how long, and how much you will get. They can award it for up to one year. Your DHP and Housing Benefit combined can’t total more than your eligible rent.

A DHP may be paid in instalments or as a lump sum. It may be paid to you or to your landlord. It’s also possible for the council to use its discretion to backdate an award.

Because it’s discretionary, you can’t appeal against the decision if it’s refused, or dispute the amount if awarded, or the length of time it has been awarded for. Instead, you could ask the council to reconsider their decision and submit further information or evidence to support your request. It’s a good idea to get help from a local advice service, such as Citizens Advice ([03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)).
13. If your circumstances change

You must tell your local council if your situation changes while you’re receiving Housing Benefit. For example, contact your local council straight away if:

- someone new moves in with you or you’re moving out
- someone moves out or their circumstances change
- your income or savings change
- there’s any change to the benefits you’re receiving
- your rent changes.

Your Housing Benefit will then be reassessed to take account of the changes, and may go up or down. Keep a record of any contact you have with the council.

If you’re receiving Pension Credit, you should report most changes to the Pension Service on 0800 731 0469 and they will pass on the details. It’s a good idea to tell your local council directly to make sure it has received the information.

Good to know

If your rent increases, check whether you’re now entitled to more Housing Benefit. You could miss out on money you’re eligible for if you delay reporting a change. Contact your local council’s Housing Benefit department to make sure they’re aware of any increases (gov.uk/find-local-council).

Overpayments
If you’ve been paid too much Housing Benefit, you may be asked to pay back the extra money you received.

If you were overpaid and it wasn’t your fault, and you’re asked to pay it back, you have the right to challenge the Housing Benefit department. You can ask them to reconsider their decision, and if you’re still not happy, you can appeal. If it’s not your fault, it could be because of an ‘official error’. This can include times when the Housing Benefit department incorrectly calculated how much you should be paid, and you were unaware you were being overpaid. See chapter 14 for more on challenging Housing Benefit decisions.

However, if you’ve been paid too much Housing Benefit because you failed to provide the council with the correct information about your situation, or you were aware that the council had wrongly assessed you, then you will likely have to pay the money back.

If you need help to check if the amount and time period of the overpayment is correct or to challenge the decision, it’s a good idea to get help from a local advice service, such as Citizens Advice (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).

If you’re away from home

You can continue to receive Housing Benefit if you’re temporarily away from home. How long you can continue to receive it depends on the reason you’re away from home.

If you go abroad, it can usually only be continued for four weeks, as long as when you leave you don’t intend to be away for longer than four weeks. This can be extended to eight weeks if you’re abroad because of the death of a close relative. Contact the Housing Benefit department for more advice if this applies to you.
You can continue to receive Housing Benefit for 13 weeks, if you’re away from home but within Great Britain. This includes if you move into a care home on a trial basis.

If you need to leave the country to get medical treatment, you can continue to receive Housing Benefit for up to 26 weeks. This also applies if you’re accompanying a partner who is receiving treatment. Your absence must be unlikely to last longer than 26 weeks when you leave.

You can continue to receive Housing Benefit for up to one year if you’re in hospital or receiving care in a residential home, as long as you stay within Great Britain. This also applies if you leave home to provide care to someone.

You won’t be able to receive Housing Benefit if you rent out your home while you’re not living in it.

Contact Shelter for more information (0808 800 4444, england.shelter.org.uk).

**To do**

Contact the Housing Benefit department at your council before you travel.

**If you’re moving home**

If you’re thinking of moving home, have a new property in mind and will be privately renting, first check what the LHA will be for that area. This won’t tell you how much Housing Benefit you may get for the new property so it may be useful to get a benefits check as well. This may help you decide whether the new property is affordable before you sign a tenancy agreement or move in. Contact the Independent Age Helpline to arrange a benefits check (0800 319 6789) or Shelter (0808 800 4444, england.shelter.org.uk) for housing advice. You could also
use our free online benefits calculator (independentage.org/benefits-calculator).

In some situations, you may be able to receive Housing Benefit to help pay the rent for two properties if you’re currently renting. You’ll only be able to claim for two properties if they’re with different landlords. You can only do this for up to four weeks, if for example:

- you’re waiting for your new home to be adapted to meet your needs, or the needs of someone you live with who has a disability

- you can’t move into your new home straight away because you’re waiting to leave hospital or a care home

- you can’t reasonably avoid paying rent on the old property after you have moved into the new property (because you had to move quickly, for example).

You must make a claim for Housing Benefit straight away and not wait until after you have moved into the new property.
14. Appealing decisions about Housing Benefit

Finding out more

When the Housing Benefit department makes a decision, they’ll write to you with an explanation. If there’s anything you don’t understand, you can ask them to clarify. If you’re unhappy with the council’s decision, make sure all the information you’ve given them is accurate, and that they have all the information they need to make a correct decision.

If something is missing or inaccurate, let them know you want them to review the decision. You must do this within one month of the date on the decision letter. The council should respond to you within 14 working days. You can sometimes ask for a review later, for example if you’ve been in hospital.

You have the right to ask the council to review its decision (called a reconsideration) on almost anything to do with Housing Benefit, including if you have been asked to repay an overpayment.

Reviewing the decision

You usually have to request a reconsideration before you can appeal to a tribunal. In some cases you can go straight to appealing the decision. If you decide to ask the council to reconsider its decision you have within one month from the date of the decision to do so. They must take into account any additional information or evidence you provide. The council will write to you to tell you their decision and give you their reasons.
Challenging the decision

If you’re still dissatisfied with the council’s decision following a reconsideration – you can ask for your case to be heard by an independent appeal tribunal, called the Social Security Tribunal (0300 123 1142, gov.uk/appeal-benefit-decision). You have one month from the date of the original decision (or reconsideration) to appeal.

Get help with this from a local advice agency, such as your local Citizens Advice (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk). Shelter has some useful information about this process too (0808 800 4444, england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice).

Challenging Local Housing Allowance

You can’t challenge the Local Housing Allowance set in your area. If you can't meet the gap between the Housing Benefit you’re getting and the cost of your eligible rent, you may be able to get help through Discretionary Housing Payments (see chapter 12).
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