

# Housing Benefit and help with high housing costs

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Tell us what you think

August 2011



Easy Read

**DWP** Department for  
Work and Pensions

# Important

## Maroon writing

In this easy-read booklet we sometimes explain what words mean.

The first time we mention any of these words, it is in **bold maroon** writing. Then we write what the words mean in a **light purple** box. If any of the words are used later in the booklet, we show them in **normal maroon** writing.

These words and what they mean are also in a Word List at the back of the booklet.

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CDS, 7 Eastgate, Leeds LS2 7LY  
Tel: 0113 399 4000  
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## What this booklet is about

The government is thinking about making changes to the way **Housing Benefit** helps people with high housing costs for **supported housing**.

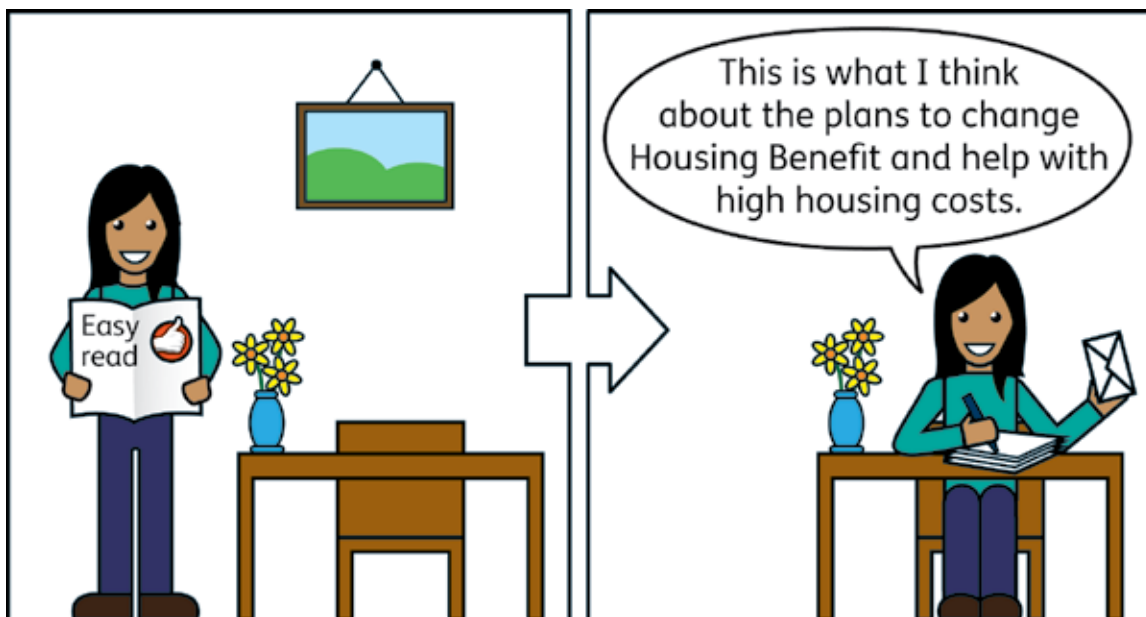
### Housing Benefit

This is money that helps people who are both in and out of work to rent a home.

### Supported housing

Supported housing is when people get help so that they can live in their own home. Supported housing can be somewhere like a house, a flat, a hostel or sheltered housing.

But, the rent in a hostel may be high because the landlord might have to pay for people to look after the buildings and the people who live there. Supported housing helps lots of people, like older people, people who sometimes behave badly and people who take drugs.



## DWP Housing Benefit and help with high housing costs

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We want people to tell us what they think about these plans.

We are asking people in England, Scotland and Wales what they think about our plans.

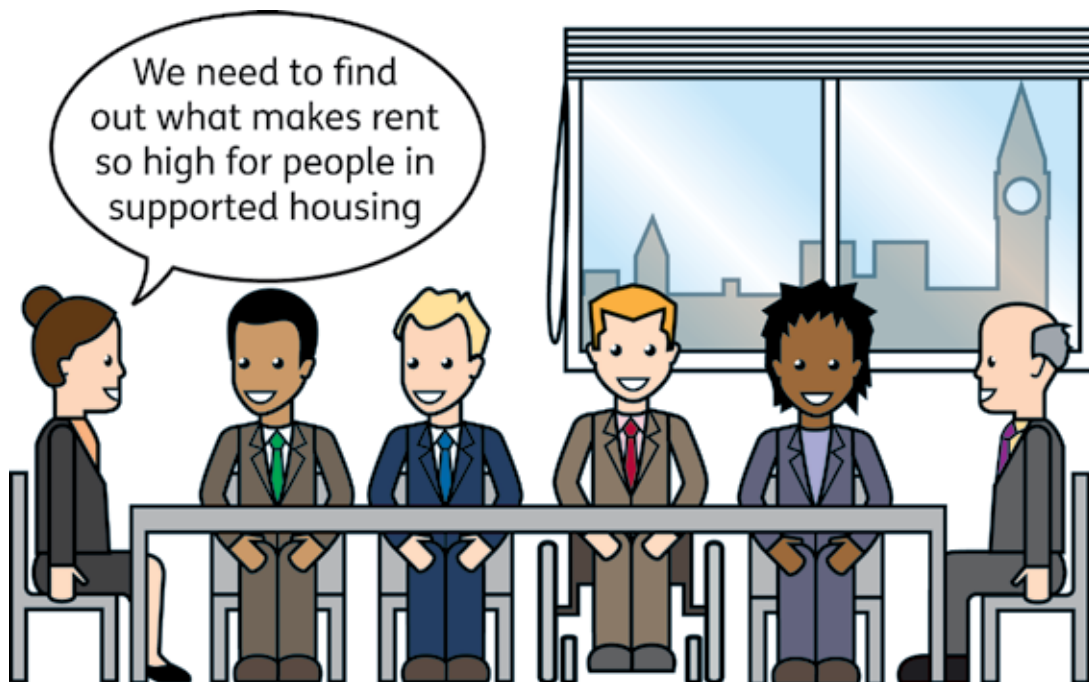
What people tell us will help us decide what to do.

**Housing Benefit** payments for **supported housing** can be higher than for other kinds of housing.

The rules that we have at the moment were set up in the 1990s and they do not work properly now. Also, they are hard for people to understand.

So, it is time that we looked again at how we work out **Housing Benefit** for people in **supported housing**.

We want to understand what makes rents so high for people in **supported housing**. We also want to find out if it is right that we meet the cost of the rent using **Housing Benefit**.



The **Universal Credit** is starting in 2013 and we need to work out how to pay for the rents for supported housing and how it should work.

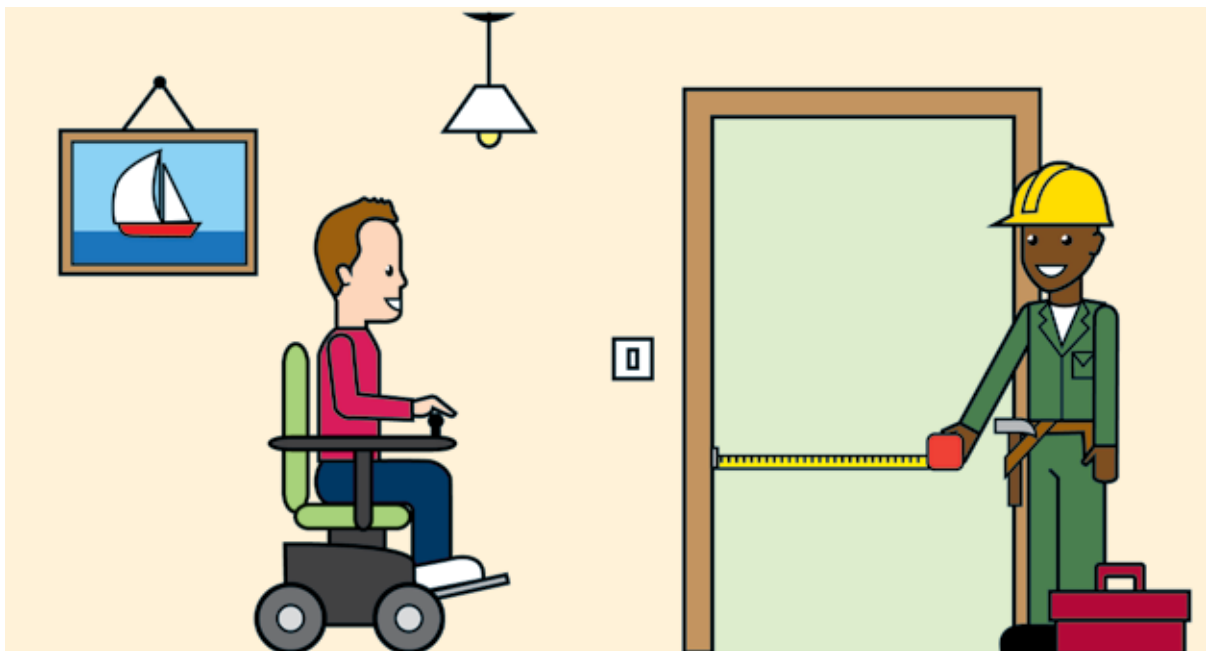
### Universal Credit

Universal Credit will help people who do not have a job or who do have a job but do not have enough money.

We want **Housing Benefit** to help people to be independent and we want it to be fair and affordable.

The need for **supported housing** falls into 2 groups.

- People who need lower levels of **care and support** to help them stay in places like hostels and sheltered housing.
- People who need high levels of **care and support** to help them stay in places like houses that have been built for them or adapted for them.



## Care and support

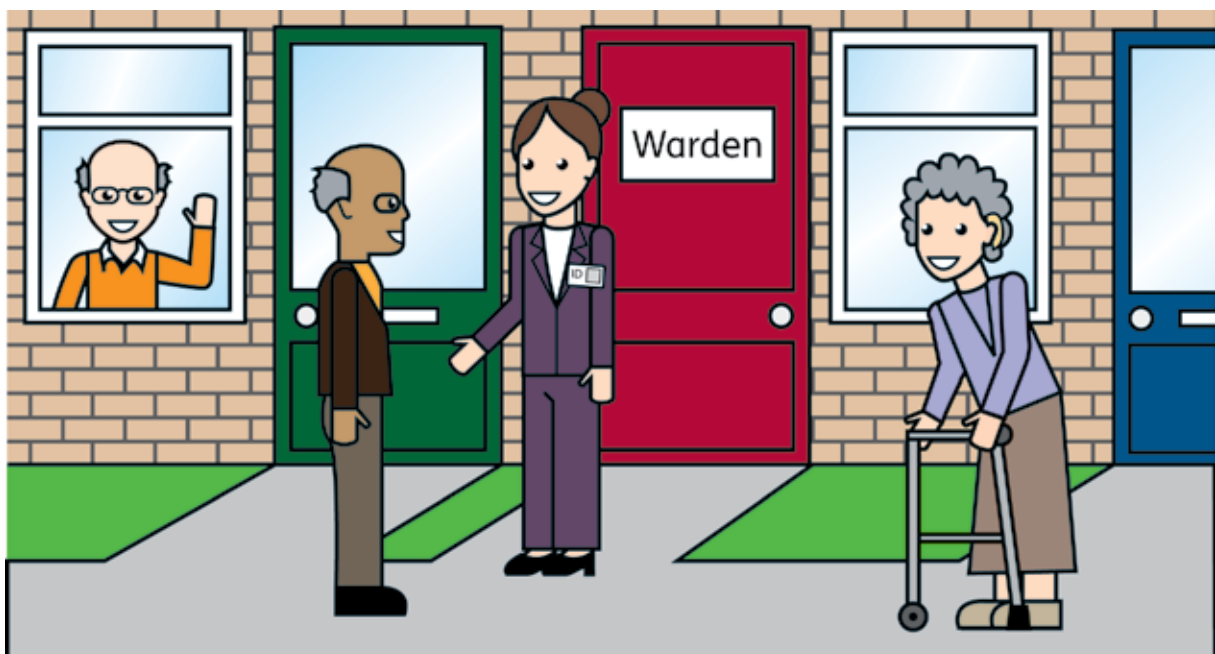
Care and support are the services and other things that help people live full, independent, active and healthy lives.

## People who need lower levels of care and support

For people who need lower levels of **care and support** we are thinking about paying the **Local Housing Allowance**, but with extra money because of the higher costs of **supported housing**.

## Local Housing Allowance

If you rent a property or a room from a private landlord and you do not have a lot of money coming in, the Local Housing Allowance is used to work out how much Housing Benefit you get. The amount of Housing Benefit you get will depend on where you live and who lives with you.





## People who need high levels of care and support

For people who need high levels of **care and support**, they could get the **Local Housing Allowance**.

Experts who work for the council would then look to see if the person should get extra money because they need high levels of **care and support**.



## Paying extra money to people

One other idea is that extra money should not be worked out with **Housing Benefit**. It may be better to get council workers to talk to experts and then decide how much people should get.

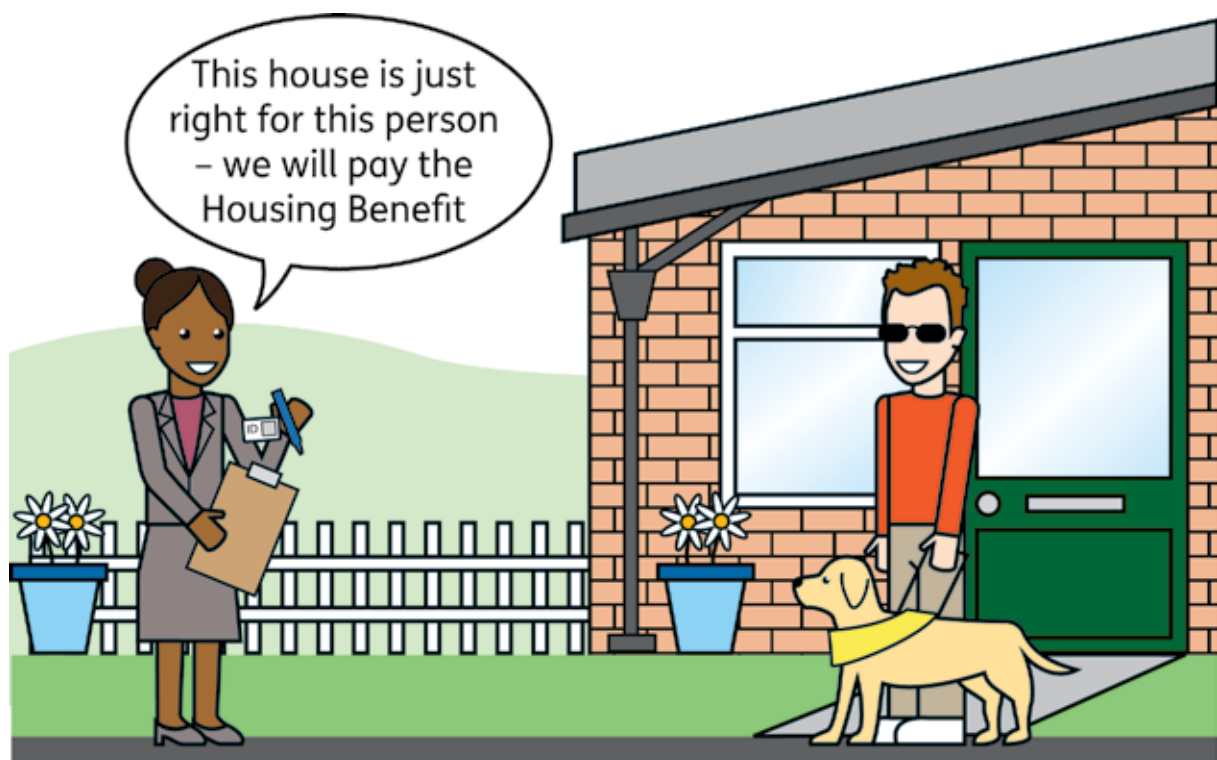
## Housing associations

We think that **supported housing** that belongs to a housing association should be treated in the same way as the housing association's other homes.

A **rent officer** will look at the rent if we think a person is living in a property that is too big for them or if we think a person's rent is much too high.

### Rent officer

A rent officer is a person who works for the council. The rent officer is an expert at working out how much rent someone should be paying for the place in which they are living.



### Important

We want to make it clear that we are not trying to cut down on the money we spend. We just want to use the money in a better way.

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# Our questions

## Normal supported housing

### Question 1

What types of **supported housing** can people get?

How do people know which type of **supported housing** to get?

How should these types of **supported housing** be grouped together?

### Question 2

Should there be different amounts of **Housing Benefit** for each type of **supported housing** depending on where you live? Or should there be just one rate of **Housing Benefit**?

### Question 3

What kind of extra things can people usually do or get in **supported housing**? How can we say what these extra things are worth in money?

### Question 4

How should we work out how much extra help is worth? Please tell us what is good about your choice.

## Housing for people with certain needs

### Question 5

What type of **supported housing** is for people with certain needs?

How do people know which type of **supported housing** to get?

### Question 6

What type of higher housing costs does this kind of house have that are not to do with the house being specially built or adapted or having special equipment?

How should we measure these costs?

### Question 7

Should the extra help that people with their own special housing needs get come from **Housing Benefit** or should it come from a separate pot of money run by councils, housing experts or care in the community?

### Question 8

Which part of the government should choose who gets extra help, how much they get and when they get it?

Which part of the council do you think should look after handing out this money?

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## Question 9

Should we use a different method of choosing who pays the money? If yes, how should we do this?

## Question 10

How can we make sure there is enough money to pay for **Housing Benefit** without it costing us more than the **Housing Benefit** system we use now?

## Bigger changes

### Question 11

Do you think we should look at the whole payment of housing costs? We could look at taking extra costs out of **Housing Benefit** and paying them locally in the same way we do for **Personal Budgets**.

#### **Personal budget**

This tells a disabled person how much money they can spend on their care and support services. It also shows how it was worked out.

### Question 12

Would this way of working only be for those people who live in specialised or adapted properties?

## Supported housing of housing associations and social landlords

### Question 13

When we are working out **Housing Benefit**, should we treat **supported housing** from a housing association in the same way as all other housing?

### Question 14

We are thinking about having 3 types of **supported housing**. These are people who get **supported housing** from housing associations, people who need lower levels of **care and support** who get **supported housing** and people who need high levels of **care and support** who get **supported housing**.

Do you think we are right to do this?

### Question 15

Do you think it is enough to pass a case to the **rent officer** if we think the rent is very high or the house is too big. This is to make sure that only reasonable **supported housing** costs are met for **supported housing** from housing associations.

Could we do this in a better way?

## Finally

### Question 16

How do you think we should bring in these new rules?



# How to let us know what you think about our plans

Please send your replies to us in one of these ways.

Send an email to [HB.supportedhousing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HB.supportedhousing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Post your replies or questions to

Housing Benefit Team (Supported housing consultation)  
Department for Work and Pensions  
1st Floor  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

Your replies must reach us by **9 October 2011**.



## Word list

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Copies of the full report can be made available in other formats on request. Our contact details are shown below.

Housing Benefit Team (Supported housing consultation)  
Department for Work and Pensions  
1st Floor  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

Email: [HB.supportedhousing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HB.supportedhousing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

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