



Leaflet MCL7

Discretionary Housing Payments

Housing & Council Tax Benefit



Leaflets and where to get them

All of these leaflets are available free of charge. You can get them from the One Stop Shops, Citizen Advice Bureaux and libraries. You can also download copies on www.knowsley.gov.uk.

For your ease, all of the leaflets have a reference to identify them:

- MCL1** Starting Work
- MCL2** Help with Rent
- MCL3** Help with Council Tax (a guide to Council Tax Benefit)
- MCL4** How to claim Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit
- MCL5** Help with Disputing a Benefit Decision
- MCL6** Housing Benefit information for Private Landlords
- MCL7** Discretionary Housing Payments - Housing & Council Tax Benefit
- MCL8** Housing & Council Tax Benefit for Young People
- MCL9** Council Tax Discounts (including Disabled Relief)
- MCL10** A guide to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit & Council Tax for Students



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1. What are Discretionary Housing Payments?

The Government provides a limited amount of money for Discretionary Housing Payments every year and this money can be used to help people with their rent and Council Tax.

2. Am I eligible?

You must be in receipt of some Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit and:

- There must be a shortfall between your Housing Benefit and your rent or between your Council Tax Benefit and the amount of Council Tax you need to pay and;
- The amount of Discretionary Housing Payment paid, when added to your Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit entitlement must not be more than your rent or Council Tax and;
- You cannot afford to pay the shortfall out of your existing budget.

Discretionary Housing Payments are only for helping with short term problems, and are not intended to cover long term situations with your rent or Council Tax.

3. How can I apply?

You must apply in writing. Discretionary Housing Payment application forms are available from our One Stop Shops and from our website.

Alternatively you can call our Contact Centre and they will send an application form out to you.

4. How will it be paid?

A Discretionary Housing Payment award will be paid with your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit. The length of the Discretionary Housing Payment award will be decided from the information you supply and will vary according to your circumstances. It is usually made for a fixed period, usually between three and six months, after which you will have to apply again. If you do reapply there is no guarantee that you will get any further payment.

How much you get depends on your circumstances. Each case is looked at individually and is paid for different periods of time. However, there is no guarantee that you will actually get a payment.

5. What happens if I have a change in my circumstances?

You must tell us about any changes in your circumstances in writing straight away. This includes any change in the amount of rent you have to pay or a change in your income, savings or if anyone leaves or joins your household.

Your Discretionary Housing Payment will be looked at again to see if there is a change to the award. If the change means your award is reduced this may result in an overpayment.

You may have to pay back some or all of the overpayment.

6. What should I do if I disagree with the decision?

If you disagree with our decision about your Discretionary Housing Payment application you can ask us to look at it again. This must be done in writing within one month of the decision letter, telling us why you do not agree. You do not have a right of appeal to the Tribunals Service.

7. What if I have a query?

You can call our Contact Centre or you can call in person at any of the One Stop Shops. You can write a letter to us, or email us. Contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

Merseyside authorities working together

This leaflet is one of a series produced by a number of Merseyside authorities to help you understand Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. It is a general guide. People have different circumstances, so please contact us if you need more detailed advice. Addresses are on the back of this leaflet.



Knowsl@y Council

www.knowsley.gov.uk



www.sefton.gov.uk



www.wirral.gov.uk

FIGHT FRAUD – PLAY YOUR PART

Benefit Thieves take money from your pocket. Don't turn a blind eye and let them get away with it. If you know or suspect a Benefit Thief, report it in confidence. You do not have to give your details.

Call FREE on **0800 0730532** or use the simple Online Form at **www.knowsley.gov.uk**

You can also get this information in other formats and languages. Please phone **0151 443 4031** or email **customerservices@knowsley.gov.uk**

How to contact us

Information relating to the services which the Council provides and how to contact the various departments can be obtained from any Branch Library or One Stop Shop.

In person: Please call at:

Huyton One Stop Shop
Municipal Buildings
Archway Road
Huyton
Merseyside
L36 9XJ

Kirkby One Stop Shop
Municipal Buildings
Cherryfield Drive
Kirkby
Merseyside
L32 1TX

Prescot One Stop Shop
Prescot Shopping Centre
Aspinall Street
Merseyside
L34 5GA

Halewood One Stop Shop
Roseheath Drive
Off Leathers Lane
Merseyside
L26 0UP

One Stop Shop opening times: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

By post: Please write to:

Housing Benefit Section
Knowsley Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Cherryfield Drive
Kirkby
Merseyside
L32 1TX

By telephone:

Please ring contact centre on
0151 443 4042

By e-mail:

benefits@knowsley.gov.uk

By fax:

0151 443 4142

Disabled access is available at all of the One Stop Shops. The following facilities are available:

- Wheelchair/pram access and lowered desks
- Minicom telephone system for hearing impaired people. Please dial: 0151 443 4248
- Advisors trained in British Sign Language (up to Level 2)
- Access to BT's language line through which we can contact an interpreter in minutes
- Private interview rooms
- Friendly staff who are happy to assist