

If you have any questions about your Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit phone us on: **01322 343705**

We welcome calls via Talktype.

Write to us at:

**Benefit Section  
Dartford Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Home Gardens  
Dartford  
Kent  
DA1 1DR**

E-mail us at [benefits@dartford.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@dartford.gov.uk)

Visit our main Dartford office at the following times:

**Monday to Thursday: 8.45am - 5.15pm**

**Friday: 8.45am - 4.45pm**

## What if I want to comment on your service?

Please get in touch with us. We would like to know what you think. Information on how we deal with comments about our services is available on our website [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk)

Alternatively, a leaflet entitled '**How to complain to Dartford Borough Council**' is available from our offices. This leaflet includes an easy to use complaint form.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit  
Changes you need to tell us about



[www.dartford.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.dartford.gov.uk/benefits)

**DARTFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Equal Opportunities Statement

Dartford Borough Council recognises that there are groups in society who are discriminated against and therefore aims to make sure that all the people it serves have equal access to all facilities and services.

Leaflets available:

- A Guide for Working Age People (Leaflet 1)
- A Guide for Pensioners (Leaflet 2)
- Can my claim be backdated? (Leaflet 3)
- Changes you need to tell us about (Leaflet 4)
- A Guide for the Self-Employed (Leaflet 5)
- Extra help towards your rent & council tax (Leaflet 6)
- What do I do if I disagree with your decision? (Leaflet 7)
- What happens when I have been paid too much? (Leaflet 8)
- A guide for landlords (Leaflet 9)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, please phone: 01322 343705**

**This leaflet can be explained in other languages please phone: 01322 343705**

Please note that whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the details given in this leaflet are correct, the information should not be treated as an authoritative statement of benefit regulations.

## What kind of changes do I need to tell you about?

We need to know about any changes to the information you have given us on your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit application form.

You must tell us about changes in your or your partner's income, investments, savings, benefits, as well as changes in your rent paid to a private landlord and make-up of your household. Here are some examples:

### **Benefits:**

- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Benefit.

### **Income:**

- Wages
- Tax Credits
- Maintenance
- Private Pension

Tell us whether the income starts, stops, goes up or down.

### **Investments and Savings:**

- Bank Accounts
- Savings
- Stocks and shares (excluding day-to-day changes).

### **Household:**

- Someone leaves or joins your household
- Someone who lives with you starts or stops work
- Any change in the income of someone who lives with you
- A child leaves school.

### **Rent:**

- Your landlord increases or reduces your rent.

## When should I tell you?

You must tell us straight away - delay longer than 1 month and you could lose out.

Any changes to your benefit usually take effect from the Monday after the change in your circumstances. For example, if your wage/pension increases on a Wednesday, then your benefit will change from the following Monday.

## Do I need to tell anyone else about my changes?

If you get Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or any other social security benefit, you need to tell the Department for Work and Pensions or Jobcentre Plus.

If you move, we always check if you are getting these benefits at your new address. If the Department for Work and Pensions or Jobcentre Plus do not know you have moved, it might hold up our processing of your claim.

## What happens if I delay telling you about changes?

This will depend on whether the change results in you getting more benefit or less benefit.

If the change means you should get more benefit, we would normally pay the new higher benefit from the Monday after the change happens.

If you take longer than a month to tell about such a change, we will only pay the extra benefit from the Monday after the date you tell us of the change. If there are special circumstances why you delayed telling us we may be able to go back. Contact us and we will see if we are able to help you.

If the change means you would get less, we will work out the reduced benefit going back to the Monday after the date of the change and ask you to pay back any overpaid benefit. So, if you delay you will have more benefit to pay back.

It is important to declare changes. Our specialist investigations team will review all your claims, current and previous, if changes come to light that you have not declared.

## What if I move?

Tell us as soon as you know you are moving. If we do not know you have moved we may carry on paying benefit at your last address.

If you move on or after 7 April 2008 to a private landlord you will be considered under the Local Housing Allowance scheme (LHA).

LHA is calculated by the Rent Service for individual areas, known as Broad Market Rental Areas (BMRA's), each month. It is based on the mid point of a list of values for that size of property within the BMRA.

If you move to a registered social landlord you will exempt from the LHA scheme, and you will continue to receive Housing Benefit calculated under existing rules.

## What if I have a break in my claim on, or after 7 April 2008?

If you have a break in your claim of one week or more and you live in privately rented accommodation you will be considered under the LHA Scheme.

If your renting from a registered social landlord you will continue to receive Housing Benefit calculated under existing rules.

## What if I start work or change my hours?

Tell us as soon as you start a new job, increase or reduce your hours, do overtime or get a pay rise.

## What happens to my benefit if my Income Support/ Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) or Employment and Support Allowance (IR) stops because I have started work?

You may still get some Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit. This will depend on your new income. Get details of your new earnings (before and after deductions) from your employer and send them to us. We can then do a trial calculation and give you an estimate of your new Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit.

After you have started work we will need to see your actual payslips (two consecutive months if you are paid monthly; five if you are paid weekly) to work out your benefit claim correctly.

If you have been on Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) or Employment Support Allowance (IR) you will need to fill in a change in income form. These can be printed from our website [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk) or picked up from our offices. You can also telephone and ask us to send you one - our telephone number and opening times are at the back of this leaflet.

### Extended payments

Your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit may carry on for up to 4 weeks after you start work or increase your hours. When you tell us you have started work or increased your hours, we will check to see whether you are entitled to an Extended Payment and advise you of the outcome.

### Other help

You may be able to get tax credits. Tax credits are taken into account when we work out your Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit so do tell us as soon as you are awarded a tax credit or the amount you get changes.

### How should I tell you about the changes?

Complete the form on page 9 and send it to us. Do not forget to tell us the date on which the change happened. For example, if someone moves in with you we need to know the date on which they moved in as well as their name and date of birth. Please also include your Benefit reference number (you will find this on any of the letters we have sent you).

### Do I need to provide proof of the change?

We will need proof of rent increases, changes to earnings, new benefits, or changes to benefits, tax credits, or changes to tax credits, pension increases. Also proof of any other income like savings or any non-dependant's income.

### What happens if I have been paid too much benefit?

Once we have considered the change we will write and tell you what the new award of benefit is. If you have been overpaid we will tell you by how much. We will also tell you whether you need to pay it back or not.

### How will you get the money back from me?

- **From your Council Tax Account**

If you have been overpaid Council Tax Benefit we will send you a new Council Tax bill. This will give you details of the amount of overpayment and tell you what your new instalments are.

- **From your Housing Benefit**

If you are still receiving Housing Benefit we may reduce this each week by the amount shown on your letter. Your landlord will ask you to make up any difference if we pay your Housing Benefit to your landlord.

- **Sending you a bill**

If you no longer receive Housing Benefit we will send you a bill for the amount you owe.

If no payment is received, or agreement is made with you to clear the overpayment, then the following options may be used:

- recover the overpayment through deductions from any state benefits you get
- add interest to the debt
- seek recovery through the County Court; this could result in a County Court Judgement and you will have to pay added costs or
- refer your debt to the Council's debt collection agency.

For more information see our leaflet

**What happens when I have been paid too much?** (leaflet 8).

### What can I do if I disagree with the overpayment?

The first thing to do when you receive your overpayment letter is to read it carefully.

If you still disagree with the overpayment you can:

- telephone, write or visit the offices where a Benefit Officer will explain our decision
- ask us to look at the decision again or
- appeal against the decision.

You must do this within one calendar month of the date of the overpayment letter.

If you want us to look at the decision again or you want to appeal your request must be in writing.

For more information see our leaflet

**What do I do if I disagree with your decision?** (leaflet 7).

## Change of circumstances

Benefit reference no.:

\_\_\_\_\_

Full name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of change:

\_\_\_\_\_

Details of change (your new address/income etc.):

*Continue over the page (if necessary)*

**Declaration.** To my knowledge the details on this form are true and correct. I understand that if I give incorrect information, or withhold information, I will have to pay back any overpayment of benefit, and you may also take action against me. I know I must let the Benefit Section know about any further changes in my circumstances that may affect my claim.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Where can I get help?

You can always phone us for help and advice. For details visit our website [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk) or see the back of this leaflet.

You could also contact or visit the following:

**Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau**  
**Trinity Resource Centre**  
**High Street**  
**Dartford**  
**Kent**  
**DA1 1DE**

Telephone: 01322 224686  
Fax: 01322 220448  
Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Telephone Advice:

Tues, Wed & Thurs 10am-1pm

Open Door (no appointments necessary):

Monday 10am-1pm

Wednesday 10am-1pm

Thursday 10am-1pm

Home visits are available by appointment for clients who are housebound and can be arranged by telephoning 01322 224686.

Free independent advice and information on a range of issues including legal rights, housing rights, welfare benefits and debt counselling.