

# Working out your Local Housing Allowance if you are a couple

**Local Housing Allowance is the way of working out new claims for Housing Benefit from 7 April 2008, for tenants renting accommodation from a private landlord. It also affects tenants already getting Housing Benefit who move into accommodation rented from a private landlord. If you live in council accommodation or other social housing, Local Housing Allowance will not affect you.**

To work out how much benefit you might get you need to find out what Local Housing Allowance rate your benefit will be based on.

If you are part of a couple and do not live with any dependants, your benefit will be based on the one bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate if you live in:

- a self-contained property
- shared accommodation but have two or more rooms (bedrooms or living rooms) that no-one else can use

If you are part of a couple and do not live with any dependants, your benefit will be based on the Local Housing Allowance shared room rate if you live in shared accommodation.

By couple we mean a man and a woman who are married or are living together as if they are married, or two people of the same sex who are civil partners of each other and are members of the same household.

By a self-contained property we mean one where you have your own room plus your own:

- bathroom
- toilet; and
- kitchen (or facilities to cook with)

For example, this could be a one-bedroom flat.

## *Bill and Jane*

Bill and Jane are a couple who have no children. They live in a house where they share facilities.

They are entitled to one bedroom for themselves. As they share facilities, this means any benefit they are entitled to will be based on the Local Housing Allowance shared room rate.

## *Gary and Roger*

Gary and Roger are a couple. They live in a self-contained flat.

They are entitled to one bedroom for themselves. This means any benefit they are entitled to will be based on the Local Housing Allowance rate for one bedroom.

You can find out what the Local Housing Allowance room rates are by checking leaflet **SHBC(LHA)5**. You can get this from the Council Offices or from the Council's web-site on [www.surreyheath.gov.uk](http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk).

You also need to find out if you can get the full amount of benefit. The amount of benefit you can get will be affected by:

- any money you have coming in
- any savings you have
- how much your rent is
- if we expect anyone living with you to pay towards your rent
- if you share paying the rent with someone else who is not your partner

### **Non-dependants**

If you claim benefit you can only get it for yourself and your family. If you share a property with someone who is not part of your family, your benefit may be reduced. This is because we may expect them to pay towards your rent.

### **Joint tenants, care leavers or the severely disabled.**

If you are a joint tenant, a care leaver or severely disabled this might affect the benefit you can get. For more information, please get in touch with us at the address below.

## **What if my rent is less than the Local Housing Allowance rate that applies to me?**

If your rent is up to £15 less than the Local Housing Allowance rate that applies to you, any benefit you might get will still be based on the Local Housing Allowance rate. If your rent is over £15 less than the Local Housing Allowance rate that applies to you, any benefit you may get will be based on the amount of your rent plus a maximum of £15.

For details about this, please see **SHBC(LHA)6** *Local Housing Allowance: rights and responsibilities*

### **Further information**

For more information about anything included in this leaflet, please get in touch with us at as follows:

- phone the Housing Benefit department on 01276 707121
- visit the Housing Benefit department at: Surrey Heath Borough Council, Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3HD
- look on our website at [www.surreyheath.gov.uk](http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk)
- email us : [benefits@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@surreyheath.gov.uk)

Remember that this leaflet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the cover, we cannot cover all circumstances and some of the contents may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this leaflet is likely to become less accurate over time because of changes to the law.