

**A guide to
Housing Benefit and
Council Tax Benefit
for people who are away
from home**

**CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL**



www.carlisle.gov.uk

Useful contacts

Get in touch with us by writing to:

Revenues & Benefits Services
Carlisle City Council
Civic Centre
Carlisle
CA3 8QG.

Fax: **01228 817266**

E-mail: **hben@carlisle.gov.uk**

Or you can phone us on one of the following numbers.

- Benefit queries: **01228 817201**
- Council Tax queries: **01228 817200**

If you prefer you can call into the Civic Centre to speak to someone.

Our Customer Contact Centre on the ground floor of the Civic Centre is open from:

- 9am to 5pm, Monday to Thursday;
- 9am to 4pm on Fridays.

You can get independent advice on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit from the following:

Citizens Advice
Old Post Office Court
Devonshire Street
Carlisle
CA3 8LE
Phone: **01228 633900**

Benefits Advice Centre
Civic Centre
Carlisle
CA3 8QG
E-mail: **bac@carlisle.gov.uk**

Please phone **01228 625250** between 1pm and 3pm on Mondays to arrange an appointment.

Please ring **01228 817400** between 2pm and 4pm on Thursdays for advice over the phone.

Can I claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit when I'm away from home?

Normally, we will only pay Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit while you are living at the property.

In certain circumstances, we can pay benefit while you are away from home.

To qualify, you must intend to return and live in the property and it must not be sublet or re-let while you are away.

When you know you are going to be away from home, tell us.

Different rules apply in different situations, so please read the sections below to see if you qualify.

The 13-week rule

The 13-week rule states that you may be able to claim benefit while you are away from home for a period of up to 13 weeks, if:

- you are on holiday and your circumstances do not change;
- you are absent due to domestic reasons (such as the illness or death of a close relative);
- you are absent for religious reasons;
- you are working away from home, in the UK or abroad, either paid or unpaid; or
- you are a sentenced prisoner. (Please note that in this case we can only award a benefit claim if the total absence, including any period served on remand, is likely to be less than 13 weeks.)

In all of these cases, you must also:

- not claim Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit elsewhere; or
- intend to return to live in the property within 13 weeks.

If you're not sure, please contact us. (Our contact details are on page 2 of this leaflet.)

The 52-week rule

The 52-week rule states that you may be able to claim benefit while you are away from home for a period of up to 52 weeks if you are:

- a patient in hospital;
- receiving medically approved care, treatment or convalescence;
- attending an approved training course;
- providing care for a child whose parent or guardian is receiving medical treatment;
- a certain type of student;
- in fear of violence; or
- a prisoner on remand. (Once sentenced, you automatically fall under the 13-week rule.) However, if you have already been absent for 13 weeks or more, we cannot pay you any more benefit. We can only pay benefit for a total of 13 weeks once you have been sentenced.

In all cases above you must:

- not claim Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit elsewhere; and
- intend to return to the property within 13 weeks.

If you're not sure, please contact us. (Our contact details are on page 2 of this leaflet.)

What if I go into residential care accommodation?

If you move into residential care accommodation but intend to return home, you may be entitled to benefit for up to 52 weeks.

If you go in on a trial basis, you may be entitled to benefit for up to 13 weeks.

You must intend to return home if the accommodation does not meet your needs.

If you go into permanent accommodation, you are no longer entitled to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit on your previous home.

How do I make a claim for benefit if I am going to be away from home?

If you are going away from home and want to continue claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit, you must tell us as soon as possible.

We will confirm your details and check to see if you qualify. We will write to you with our decision.

What should I do if anything changes when I'm getting benefit?

Tell us straightaway if your circumstances change.

It may affect how much you get.

If you don't tell us about a change and we pay you too much benefit, you may have to pay it back.

Pick up our leaflet called 'Changes you need to tell us about if you are claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit' for more information.

What can I do if I don't agree with your decision?

If you don't agree with our decision you can ask us to look at it again. Our letters about our decision tell you what your rights are.

You could also pick up our leaflet 'If you think the decision about your Housing or Council Tax Benefit is wrong' which gives you more detailed information.

Where can I get help?

You can always phone us for help and advice. (See page 2 of this leaflet for our contact details.)

Or, you can contact Citizens Advice or the Benefits Advice Centre. (See page 2 of this leaflet for details.)

What if I want to comment on your service?

We would like to know what you think about this leaflet or about the service we provide to you. If you have any comments, please contact us. (Our contact details are on page 2 of this leaflet.)

The following leaflets are available to give you information about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

- Discretionary Housing Payments – help you can get to top up your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit – can your claim be backdated?
- A guide to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for students
- A guide to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for landlords
- Changes you need to tell us about if you are claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit
- What happens when you have been paid too much Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit
- How to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Council Tax Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- A guide to Housing Benefit
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for people who work
- How other people in your home affect your Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit

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