

Please read this information sheet before completing the application form

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a new way of paying Housing Benefit to people living in private rented sector accommodation.

LHA is usually paid to the tenant, and tenants cannot simply request that payment is made direct to their landlord.

There are circumstances where **we must** pay LHA directly to the landlord, and these are:

- The tenant is 8 full weeks or more in arrears with their rent
- The tenant is having deductions made from their Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance to pay for rent arrears

We can also make a decision to pay the LHA directly to the Landlord where we consider the tenant is unlikely to pay their rent, or they are unable to pay their rent because they are vulnerable or have severe financial difficulties:

What do we mean by unlikely to pay the rent?

- A tenant has rent arrears and has consistently failed to pay.
- A tenant has previously absconded from a property leaving rent arrears.

What do we mean by financial difficulties?

- Those who are unable to open a bank/building society account.
- Those with severe debt problems.
- People who are bankrupt.

What do we mean by vulnerable?

By vulnerable we mean someone who may have difficulty managing his or her money and this may include persons:

- with medical conditions
- with learning difficulties
- with physical disabilities
- mental health problems
- that are illiterate or unable to speak English
- who live alone with no support
- receiving assistance from a homeless charity
- with alcohol/substance/gambling addiction
- that are homeless
- that are receiving funding from the Supporting People Grant.

The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other reasons why a tenant is considered to be vulnerable.

What evidence is required?

In all cases we must have written evidence and the evidence required will depend on the person's circumstances.

People who can give evidence include:

- Family and friends of the tenant
- The landlord
- Welfare groups
- Care workers
- Money and Debt Advisers
- Social Services
- GP
- Probation officers
- Jobcentre Plus
- The Pension Service
- Support workers
- Community nurses
- Hospital
- Court

This list is not exhaustive and we may require permission from tenants to contact third parties on their behalf.

Making a decision

Once we have collected evidence we will decide as quickly as possible whether payment of the LHA should be made to the landlord or the tenant.

We may pay LHA to the landlord while we are making our decision. We will inform tenants if they are considered vulnerable, and we will write to the tenant or their representative and explain the decision.

Reviewing decision

Where a decision is made to pay the landlord we will set an appropriate review date to see if the circumstances of the claimant have changed in the future, which might mean that they can receive direct payment of their LHA.

In most cases, we will work with the tenant to help them manage their finances and receive direct payments of the LHA.

This will include:

- Assisting the tenant to obtain a bank account
- Referring the tenant to the appropriate agency for financial advice and assistance with severe debt issues.

Appeals

If the tenant or landlord disagrees with our decision they can appeal. The rules for this are the same as the rules for Housing Benefit. Ask for more information about this. Details about how to get in touch with us are at the end of this leaflet.

Further Information

If you would like more information please:

Telephone: 01352 704848. This helpline is open Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5pm.

Email: benefits@flintshire.gov.uk

Visit: Benefit Department, County Hall, Mold. CH7 6NR. Our office for personal visitors is open Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5pm and no appointment is necessary.