

How will these changes affect you?

New regulations laid in Parliament as part of the Governments Welfare Reform Bill will have a significant affect on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

Who will be affected?

The changes will affect people who are, or will be, claiming LHA (Housing Benefit) and who pay rent to a **private landlord**. These changes will affect the amount of money you get towards your rent.

When will the changes take affect?

Changes will take affect from 1 April 2011 and apply to all **new claims** made after that date. Claims made prior to April 2011 **will not** be affected until they reach the **anniversary date**. (The next page explains how to work out your claim anniversary date).

What will change?

- > There will be no 'excess' Housing Benefit payments awarded after a claim anniversary date has been reached
- > There will be no 5 bedroom property rate, this will be restricted to the rate of a 4 bedroom property
- > LHA weekly rates will be reduced and limited. This table offers an example of the **new lower rates** and by how much your weekly Housing Benefit award will be affected:

Property Size Criteria	March 2011 Rate £	April 2011 Rate £
Shared Accommodation	69.23	63.46
1 Bedroom	98.08	91.15
2 Bedrooms	126.92	114.23
3 Bedrooms	150.00	132.69
4 Bedrooms	230.77	196.15
5 Bedrooms	346.15	196.15

Understanding your claim anniversary date

Existing Housing Benefit claims will not be affected by LHA changes until the claim has reached its **'anniversary date'**, also known as the **'annual review'** date.

Claims with an anniversary date in **April and May this year** will be the **first affected** claims. However a **'transitional protection'** period of up to 9 months will be applied, following the anniversary date provided that:

- > You do not move address, as this is treated as a new claim
- > Your household composition does not change, as this may affect your entitlement to a larger or smaller property.

Note: If you have a **'break'** in your claim, for any reason, this will also affect your benefit entitlement. An application after a break is a **'new claim'** and all new rates will therefore be applied.

Transitional Protection: Help adjusting to the changes

The transitional protection period is put in place to help you adjust to the changes. However, if you fall into either of the two circumstances outlined above, this protection may no longer apply to you. The following example shows how the anniversary date and transitional period of protection will apply to a claim provided the above changes do not occur:

Housing Benefit Award Date	11 April 2010
Claim Anniversary Date	11 April 2011
Transitional Protection Period for 9 months	11 January 2012
LHA changes affect Housing Benefit (Monday following)	16 January 2012

*Check your Housing Benefit Award letter to determine your anniversary date.



No 'excess' Housing Benefit payments

If you currently receive an excess payment amount due to your rent being less than the LHA you receive, **you will no longer receive this payment from the anniversary date of your claim**. There will also be **no transitional protection** for this payment.

No 5 bedroom rate

If you currently rent a 5 bedroom property, the rate for the property will be limited to the 4 bedroom rate, which may result in a reduced amount of Housing Benefit awarded to you. (See the table opposite for the projected rates)

Help for disabled people

There will be help for disabled people towards the cost of an extra bedroom where there is a need for **regular overnight care for you and your partner** and that the care is provided by a person not residing permanently at the property.

If you feel this applies to you, **contact us** to discuss your needs and how to apply.

What you should do now

If you have a claim which will be affected this April and May, we will have written to you explaining the changes. If you have a claim which will be affected later than May, we will write to you in due course. You therefore will not be required to do anything at this time.

Remember – all existing claims will not be affected until they reach their anniversary date (and provided none of the changes listed on page 2 occur), **the claim will continue to be unaffected for up to a further nine months due to the Transitional Protection Period.**

If you are thinking of claiming Housing Benefit on or after 1 April 2011, you need to be aware of the changes to the LHA laid out in this leaflet as they will apply to you and may affect your ability to meet your full rent costs.

If you are considering moving home, you may want to seek advice before signing a new lease / tenancy agreement. Our staff can advise what rate of LHA you may be entitled to, to ensure you are able to meet any future rent costs.

If you are worried about financial loss, you should contact Money Advice Scotland or visit them at www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk

Your landlord has also been advised of the changes by newsletter and invites will be extended to Private Landlords to attend a Landlord's Forum.

You are encouraged to discuss your rental agreement with your Landlord, or their acting agent, to ensure that any changes to your Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) rates will cover your current and future rent costs.

To help you plan and prepare for the changes you should...

Contact us by

Visiting your local Housing and Council Tax Benefit Centre at:

City Centre	280 George Street	G1 1PR
Anniesland	841 Crow Road	G13 1YT
Maryhill	1 Gairbraid Avenue	G20 8YA
Springburn	30 Charles Street	G21 2PN
Parkhead	125 Westmuir Street	G31 5EX
Easterhouse	1250 Westerhouse Road	G34 9EA
Shawbridge	24/34 Shawbridge Arcade	G43 1RT
Govan	780 Govan Road	G51 2YL
Castlemilk	61 Dougrie Drive	G45 9AP

Offices open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm
Closed at 1pm on the third Wednesday of every month for staff training.

Phone

0141 287 0055

Phone lines open Monday to Friday 8.30am – 6.00pm

Visit us at www.glasgow.gov.uk

Other contacts

Glasgow Advice and Information Network (GAIN)

Free phone Helpline **0808 801 1011**

www.gain4u.org.uk

Money Advice Scotland **0141 572 0237** or visit

www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk

To plan and compare current and new rates visit

www.scotland.gov.uk/lhfigures

For more information visit

www.direct.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau www.cas.org.uk

For housing, welfare benefits and debt advice

Free phone **0808 800 4444** or visit

www.shelter.org.uk

* Details correct at time of print

LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE CHANGES

Important changes to Local Housing Allowance from April 2011.

These changes will affect people getting Housing Benefit who pay rent to a private landlord.

