

A housing guide for refugees in Scotland



Rent responsibilities and how to pay for housing costs

Leaflet 7 – April 2011

Rent and housing cost - English

If you have received leave to remain, you will be responsible for paying rent for your accommodation. This leaflet is a brief guide to the assistance available if you are on a low income or not working. It also provides information on how you may be able to get help with paying your rent.



Paying your rent is your responsibility as a tenant. If you do not pay your rent, it could lead to you being evicted and losing your home.

Because these matters are complex, you should seek advice; information at the end of this leaflet tells you how to do this.

I rent my home from a council or housing association. What help can I get to pay the rent?

If you are on a low income or you receive welfare benefits, you may be able to claim Housing Benefit.

How do I do that?

As soon as you think you will need help, phone or visit the housing benefit office at your local council. The staff there will give you a claim form to fill in and return to them.

If you need help with filling in the form, contact the housing team at Scottish Refugee Council on **0800 085 6087** or a money advice agency. Check the end of this leaflet for contact details.

As well as handing in a completed form to the Council, you will need to provide proof of all the information on it – identity, income, rent, etc.

Use the checklist that identifies required information to support a claim on the Shelter Scotland website: [http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/ data/assets/pdf file/0014/23081/Checklist - items to support a benefit claim.pdf](http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/23081/Checklist_-_items_to_support_a_benefit_claim.pdf)

When you hand in the form, make sure you get a receipt for it and any other documents you hand over.

What happens next?

The Council will decide whether you are entitled to Housing Benefit and, if so, how much. It may ask you for further information to help it make a decision.

If you have not received a decision after 14 days, contact the housing benefit office to ask for an interim payment so that you do not fall behind in paying your rent.

The Council will write to tell you its decision. If they are able to assist you, then the Council will start paying housing benefit directly to your landlord. If you think the amount decided is wrong, you can appeal this. You can get advice from one of the agencies listed at the end of this leaflet.

I rent my home from a private landlord. What help can I get to pay the rent?

If you are on a low income or do not work, you may be able to claim local housing allowance. Proving eligibility is complex, and you should therefore consult your local council on what it will pay for private renting. You can also get advice from any of the contacts listed at the end of this leaflet.

How do I do get help?

If you are thinking of renting privately, you should initially look on your local Council's website to estimate how much housing benefit you would be eligible for. As soon as you think you will need help, phone or visit the housing benefit office at your local council. The staff there will give you a claim form to fill in and return to them. You should also ask for a form to claim Council Tax Benefit while you are there.

If you need help with filling in the form, contact the housing team at Scottish Refugee Council on **0800 085 6087**

How do I get help paying my rent if I am a student?

Most full-time students are not entitled to claim housing benefit. However, if you are a part-time student or if you are in one of the exempt categories, then you may be able to get help with your rent. For example, if you are a single parent or have a disability, you may be able to access housing benefits.

Find out more about eligibility criteria for accessing housing benefit if you are a student on the Department of Work and Pensions website: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/technical-guidance/rr2-a-guide-to-housing-benefit/students/>

You can get advice about accessing housing benefit if you are a student from your local Council, Shelter Scotland or your local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If you are not eligible for housing benefit, you should contact your student services at your college or university for further advice.

What happens next?

The Council will decide whether you are entitled to local housing allowance and, if so, how much. It may ask you for further information to help it make a decision.

If you have not received a decision after 14 days, contact the housing benefit office to ask for an interim payment so that you do not fall behind in paying your rent.

The Council will write to you to tell you its decision. If they are able to assist you, then the Council will start paying you the amount it has indicated.

If the amount the Council says it will pay doesn't meet the whole cost of your rent, you can apply to it for a discretionary housing payment to cover the shortfall. You can get advice on how to make your claim from any of the services listed at the end of this leaflet

I have fallen behind in paying my rent. What can I do?

Falling behind paying your rent is called 'being in arrears'. If you have rent arrears, your landlord could evict you from your home, so you must seek help as soon as possible.

This is what you should do:

- Speak with your landlord

It may be possible to come to an arrangement that will help you catch up on your late payments. If you rent for a council or housing association, they should check whether you are entitled to any benefits to help you pay your rent. Some landlords employ welfare rights officers who can assist you.

If you rent from a private landlord, you should check with your local council's housing benefit office: you may be eligible for local housing allowance.

- Get help

Contact a Citizens Advice Centre, a local advice centre, or Scottish Refugee Council. Don't delay!

Where can I get further information?

You can contact:

Scottish Refugee Council's Refugee Housing Team

Phone this number free for advice or to make an appointment with an advice worker: 0800 085 6087

Shelter Scotland

Phone this number free advice: 0800 800 4444

Positive Action in Housing

Phone this number for information about its services: 0141 353 2220

A local advice centre

Call the GAIN Helpline on 0808 801 1011 to get details of your nearest centre

Find more information about paying rent on the Shelter Scotland website:

http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/getadvice/advice_topics/paying_for_a_home/paying_rent