

Bedroom Tax / Spare Room Subsidy / Social Size Criteria

The Government's Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a new Universal Credit which will replace most existing benefits and limits the total amount of benefit a person can claim. It also introduced a new size criteria or 'bedroom tax' which limits the Housing Benefit that is paid on any property.

When?

This came into force on the 1st April 2013 across the country with no exceptions.

Who will this affect?

Tenants who are eligible for Housing Benefit and are below state retirement age **and:**

have more than one bedroom and the bedroom is not occupied by:

- An adult couple living in a relationship
- Any other adult over the age of 16
- Two children of the same gender aged under 16
- Two children under the age of 10 regardless of gender
- Any other child under the age of 16
- A non resident carer who occasionally stays the night

If you have one room more than you are considered to need your Housing Benefit will be reduced by 14% of the rent charged (not the amount of Housing Benefit you are currently entitled to).

If you have two or more rooms more than you are considered to need your Housing Benefit will be reduced by 25% of the rent charged.

How many bedrooms do I need?

Under these new regulations, one bedroom is required for:

- An adult couple living in a relationship
- Any other adult over the age of 16
- Two children of the same gender aged under 16
- Two children under the age of 10 regardless of gender
- Any other child under the age of 16

- A non resident carer who occasionally stays the night

There is no consideration for:

- Spare bedrooms used for occasional visits
- Rooms for non permanent foster children
- Size of the bedroom. All bedrooms are considered to be suitable for up to 2 people regardless of size.

What happens if my Housing Benefit is reduced?

You will have to pay the amount of the shortfall. There will be no subsidy for this and so it will need to be paid out of your other income (wages or benefits).

If it is not paid then the debt will be rent arrears. Having rent arrears may impact on your tenancy, credit rating and your ability to move to an alternative property.

What should I do?

Get in touch with us or your local authority Housing Benefit Office for more information. There may be options available to you. If you think you are going to be affected then make sure you have all the facts.

Contact us on 01224 423000 for further information or contact your local authority from the list below:

- Aberdeen City – 03000 200 292
- Aberdeenshire – 03456 081 200
- Moray Council – 01343 563 456

If you are affected by the bedroom tax and you are not able to afford the shortfall there are options available to you.

You can:

- Apply for a Discretionary Housing Benefit Payment

Discretionary Housing Benefit (DHP) is a fund that all Local Authorities have to help cover housing costs. There are set criteria for this and all applications are based on the need of the applicant. You should contact your local Housing Benefit office for more information on this.

- Move to a Smaller Property

You can ask for a transfer to a smaller Langstane property. You can now apply to the Association online via our website for housing.

Applying for Housing

Please read the following instructions carefully about how to apply for housing with us.

If this is your first time applying for housing please click on the link below and follow the instructions.

If you previously had an Apply4Homes application we have transferred your information to our new system to save you applying again. We will be in touch with you by e mail or letter very soon advising you how to confirm your details with us and will ask you to complete a couple of new questions.

You can register for the portal by clicking [here](#)

If you have any difficulty either applying directly or logging in to your existing application please telephone 01224 423000. Someone will call you back as soon as possible and help you through the process. If you phone you will be asked security questions in relation to your application to verify your details.

You can also contact us at apply@langstane-ha.co.uk. Please include your name, address, Apply4Homes reference number and date of birth and we will get back to you.

Please be aware that the Association has around 9,000 applicants on our waiting list so please be patient if you are trying to contact the Association during this time.

House Exchange

You can apply for a mutual exchange with a tenant of a local authority or registered social landlord at www.houseexchange.org.uk, and download the House Exchange App on your phone. You can read the guide in the downloads menu. If you need help with either of these options, please contact us on 01224 423000. We cannot guarantee you will be re-housed quickly but you should make sure you apply to us.

Arrears

If you fall into rent arrears because you have a housing benefit shortfall due to the 'bedroom tax', we will pursue the arrears through our arrears process. Your home may be at risk if you do not pay the arrears.