

Reviewing Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit Decision

What to do if you have any questions about your Housing Benefit and / or Council Tax Benefit decision.

If you do not understand how your benefit was worked out or if you disagree with the amount of benefit you have been awarded you should contact the Revenues and Benefits Department at the Council on 01702 215001. Please note we can only deal with queries in regards to your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claim. We cannot deal with any decisions made by the Pension Service, The Rent Service or the Department for Work and Pensions.

Who can contact the department about a decision?

The following people can contact us:

- The person claiming the benefit.
- An appointee (this is someone who is appointed to act on behalf of someone who cannot act for themselves).
- A landlord, if it is regarding a decision about whether Housing Benefit will be paid direct to you, or if you are querying an overpayment.

What can I do if my application is refused?

You can do any of the following. You can ask for:

An explanation

An explanation can be asked for at any time. You can either

- Phone the department on 01702 215001.
- Email your query.
- Write to us. Send the letter to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Support Services Directorate, Revenues and Benefits Division, PO Box 21, Southend on sea, Essex SS2 6AN.

We shall endeavour to explain our decision to you. If you email or write to us please include a contact number. In some cases it might be easier to speak to you.

A Written Statement

A written statement will be sent explaining exactly how the department made its decision on your claim. The written statement will include all the relevant regulations the decision was based on. You must ask for a written statement within one month of the date of the decision letter.

Reconsideration of the decision

If you disagree with the decision on your benefit claim, or if you do not believe we have taken all your circumstances into account you can ask to look at our decision again. A reconsideration must be requested in writing within one month of the date of our decision. In order to reconsider our decision a separate member of staff will look at the claim and the decision. If it is decided that the original decision was wrong we will change it and write a letter to you telling you what the new decision is. If it is decided that the original decision is still correct we will write to you to confirm that our original decision still stands.

Appeal

You can ask for the Tribunals Service (an independent organisation) to consider your case at an appeals tribunal. You must write to us within one month of the date on our decision letter. If we have already

reconsidered your claim and have not changed the decision, you must write and ask for an appeal within one month from the date of the letter confirming our original decision.

What happens if I do not contact you within the one month time limit?

If you contact us late we can only deal with your request if you have special circumstances which meant that you could not contact us sooner. If you are contacting us late you must tell us the reasons why you did not contact us sooner.

Further information and advice

You can find further information and advice about claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit at:

Directgov: www.direct.gov.uk

The Department for work and Pensions: www.dwp.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus: www.jobcentreplus.co.uk

The Citizens Advice Bureau: www.citizensadvice.org.uk or www.southendcab.org.uk

(The contact number for the Citizens Advice Bureau for Southend on Sea is 01702 610610).

Or you can contact the Revenues and Benefits Department on 01702 215001.

Remember to contact us as soon as you have a problem with a decision. If you do not contact us straight away, you may lose your right to dispute the decision.