

Notes for filling in the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction form



About this form

The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claim form has been specifically designed to be easy to fill in. It may look rather long, but we have to ask a lot of questions to make sure that everyone who claims gets the right amount of benefit. You may not have to fill in all parts of the form, but you must fill in any part that is relevant to you. Every part starts with a question to help you decide if you need to fill in that part.

Local Housing Allowance

New and change of address claims in the private rented sector (not Registered Social Landlords/Housing Associations) are assessed under new regulations from 7 April 2008.

Second Adult Rebate

Second Adult rebate is Council Tax Reduction for people who may not have a partner but who share their home with someone who:

- is 18 or over; and
- is on a low income; and
- does not pay them rent.

NOTE: Second Adult Rebate is only available where the chargepayer is of state pension age.

Civil Partnerships

With effect from 5 December 2005 the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force and the definition of 'partner' used in our claim form for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction changed.

On the front page under Part 1 'About you and your partner', as well as meaning 'someone of the opposite sex you are married to or live with as if you are married', a partner now includes someone of the same sex that you have a civil partnership with or live with as if you were in a civil partnership.

Civil partners and those living together as if in a civil partnership will need to complete the rest of the claim form giving details for 'You' and 'Your partner'.

First Contact claim date

Changes to regulations now allow that customers may advise of their intention to make a claim, typically by phone, provided that the claim is received within one month of the date the claim form is issued.

If you contact the Benefits Office on 0300 131 2 131 give your full name, address and date of birth when requesting a claim form, this date will be recorded and taken as the claim date if you return the claim form and supporting proof within one month.

Evidence

We need to see evidence of some of the things you tell us about. There is a checklist at the end of the form to help you. If you are not sure if we need to see evidence of something, get in touch with us. We will tell you what we need to see. We cannot pay you benefit until we have seen the evidence we have asked for.

Please note: you no longer have to provide original documents to support your application, instead you can provide copies.

Filling in the form

If you are filling in this form by hand, **use black ink**. Do not use pencil. If you make a mistake, just cross it out and put the right answer next to it. Do not use correction fluid or tape.

Answer 'No' or 'Yes' questions **by putting a tick ✓ in the relevant box**. If you are picking an answer from a list of answers, put a tick ✓ in the relevant box. **Do not put a cross in any boxes. If you answer a question with a cross we will have to send the form back, and this will delay the claim.**

If someone else fills the form in for you, there is a special space for them to sign at Part 14 (page 20).

If you need help filling in the form

If you need any help, our phone number is 0300 131 2 131. Benefits staff will assist you if you have any difficulties filling in the form at the Customer First centre. Or you can get in touch with an organisation like the Citizen's Advice. Contact details are at the back of these notes.

The Council now subscribes to "Language Line" which allows people whose first language is not English to access the Benefits Service via a translator. This service is available at the Customer First centre in Scarborough.

What to do next

When you have completed the application form, sign and date it and return it to the Benefits Office with the evidence we need to see. Do not send valuable items such as bank books or passports in the post. You no longer have to provide original documents to support your application, instead you can provide copies. You can email copies of your documents directly to us at benefits.office.sca@northyorks.gov.uk. If you cannot get the evidence we need straightaway, return the form to us without delay then send the proof as soon as you have it (within one calendar month of returning the form).

The Benefits Office will be unable to return any original documents to you. Any original documents received after this date will be retained for 2 months and then destroyed.

When we usually pay benefit from

We can usually award benefit from the Monday after the date we receive your claim. Sometimes we can pay benefit from an earlier date if you have a good reason for not claiming earlier. If you think your benefit should start earlier, please tell us why on a separate sheet of paper or on a backdating request form available from the Benefits Office.

Changes you must tell us about

Tell us straight away if:

- any of your children leave school or leave home;
- anyone moves into or out of your home (including lodgers and subtenants);
- your income or the income of anyone living with you, including state benefits, Tax and Pension Credits, changes;
- your capital, savings or investments change;
- you or anyone living with you becomes a student, starts an apprenticeship, goes into hospital or a nursing home, goes into prison, or gets, changes or leaves a job;
- your rent changes;
- you move;
- you or your partner are going to be away from home for more than a month;
- you receive any decision from the Home Office; or
- anything you have told us about changes.

If you don't tell us about these changes you may lose money you are entitled to or you may get too much benefit. You must make sure that you tell us about these changes. Don't rely on someone else to pass the message on. It is an offence not to tell us about any changes of circumstances that effects your benefit. **Failure to declare a change in circumstances is a criminal offence and you may be prosecuted (Theft Act 1968, Fraud Act 2006 or Social Security Acts).** We may take court action against you and if we pay you too much benefit, you will probably have to pay it back.

How we pay your benefit

Council Tax Reduction is credited straight to your Council Tax Account, so you have less to pay. If you are a new tenant of a private landlord, your Housing Benefit will usually be paid directly into your bank or building society by automated bank transfer (BACS), under Local Housing Allowance.

If you are a tenant of a Registered Social Landlord/Housing Association you can have your Housing Benefit paid straight to your landlord. If you wish to have your Benefit paid straight to your landlord, please tell us at Part 9 (page 14).

Using your personal information

We will process your personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. We may use your personal information in a number of ways, but only for the purposes for which it was given, for example to provide you with the information or services requested or to administer and protect public funds. We may share your information with, and obtain information about you from, other departments of the Council or other organisations where it is lawful to do so, for example to check the accuracy of information or to prevent or detect crime. For further information on how we collect, use, share, secure and retain your personal information, and your legal rights, please see our Privacy Notice at www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy or by contacting Customer First.

Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at the Town Hall, St Nicholas Street, Scarborough, YO11 2HG (tel 0300 131 2 131 or email infogov@northyorks.gov.uk).

Important

If you delay, or fail to tell us about a change, you will be asked to repay any overpaid benefit. If you do not advise us of a change that may result in you being entitled to more benefit within 1 month of the change occurring, you will only receive the increased amount from the Monday following the date you notify us.

Help with your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claim form

If you require any help filling in your claim form we have Benefits Assistants available at the Town Hall, Scarborough and at the Jobcentre Plus, Whitby each weekday. Opening Times below.

For further information or advice, please contact

The Benefits Office on 0300 131 2 131

9.00 am - 5.00 pm Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays

9.30 am - 5.00 pm on Wednesdays

9.00 am - 4.30 pm on Fridays

or call in at:

Customer First Centre, Town Hall, St. Nicholas Street, Scarborough for General Enquiries

9.00 am - 4.30 pm Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays

9.30 am - 4.30 pm on Wednesdays

Whitby Jobcentre Plus 6 Bobbies Bank (closed for lunch 12 pm - 1 pm)

9.00 am - 4.00 pm Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays

10.00 am - 4.00 pm on Wednesdays

or email us at: benefits.office.sca@northyorks.gov.uk