

## Information on changes to Housing Benefit

### When is it changing?

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 the Government is making changes to Housing Benefit for tenants renting from a landlord in the private sector

### What is changing?

- There will be maximum rates caps, so that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) weekly rates in any area cannot be more than:-
  - £250 per week for a one bedroom property
  - £290 per week for a two bedroom property
  - £340 per week for a three bedroom property
  - £400 per week for a four bedroom property or for any property with more than 4 bedrooms
- An end to the extra Housing Benefit (up to £15 per week) that some customers get when their rent is less than the LHA rate for that size of property
- Limiting the LHA to the four bedroom rate. This will be the most you can get, even if you live in a 5 bedroom property
- Changing the way in which the LHA rates are calculated, which will mean that 3 out of every ten properties will be affordable to people on Housing Benefit rather than five in ten properties as now.
- New rules to help disabled people who have a carer who stays overnight but who does not normally live with them.

### Will this affect me?

**New Claims** – Yes, if you submit a new claim for Housing Benefit on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

**Existing claims** - Yes, if you are renting a property from a private landlord and receiving Housing Benefit and your claim was made after 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

### How will this affect me?

- **New claims** – If you submit a claim for Housing Benefit on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to the City of London, the amount we can pay will be restricted to the maximum LHA capped figures (see above). You may also be affected by the change in the way the LHA rates are calculated.
- **Existing claims** - There will be temporary protection for people who are in receipt of LHA on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, protecting their LHA rate for a further nine months from the date the changes apply to them. This transitional protection means that many existing LHA customers will not be affected until January 2012. But if your household changes (for example, if you move or if someone moves in or out of your home) this protection may no longer apply.

### When will this affect me?

- **New claims** - If you are making a new claim for Housing Benefit or moving home after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, the changes will affect you immediately.
- **Existing claims** - If you are already claiming Housing Benefit, you will normally have more time before your rate changes. If your circumstances

don't change, you will have nine months based on your current rate after your local authority next assesses your Housing Benefit on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

- If you would like to find out if and when you will be affected, please contact the City of London Benefits Section on 020 7332 1343 or 1264
- The changes may affect you sooner if:-
  - you are getting Housing Benefit and move home
  - your household changes, such as someone leaves or comes to live with you.

### **When will my claim next be assessed?**

You can work this out from the date you made your original claim for Housing Benefit. For example, if you first made your claim for Housing Benefit on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2010 your annual review date will be 5<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

### **Where to go for more information**

- City of London Housing Benefit Section. Telephone us on 020 7332 1343 or 1264. Email: [Benefits@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:Benefits@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
We will be able to advise you exactly how these changes will affect you.
- City of London Housing Options Team. They can be contacted by telephone on 020 7332 1237 or 3452 or by email at [housing.advice@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:housing.advice@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
They will be able to offer advice and assistance regarding your options.
- You can get more information at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) Directgov provides information on public services in one place including up to date information on the Housing Benefit changes.
- The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is an executive agency of HM Revenue & Customs and holds information on local housing allowance, fair rents & council tax and many other related topics website <http://www.voa.gov.uk>
- The Citizens Advice service provides a wide range of advice. To find your local Citizens Advice Bureau, look in the phone book or Yellow Pages, or visit their website at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk) for Scotland.
- Shelter offers confidential housing, welfare benefits and debt advice through a network of advice services; freephone Housing Advice Helpline on 0800 800 4444 8am-8pm Monday-Friday and 8am-5pm Saturday-Sunday and online at [england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_advice](http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice)  
[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

**It is important to note that some of the changes will limit or reduce the amount of benefit the City of London can pay. If you are getting Housing Benefit, are thinking of applying for it, or moving home, you need to consider these changes before you renew or sign a new tenancy agreement with a private landlord. Please contact the City of London Benefits Section or Housing Options Team for advice**