



Notes on Completion of the Application form

Please read the following notes carefully

If you rent your home and/or pay Council Tax you can apply for help based on your income, to pay your rent and/or Council Tax.

If you or your partner have £16,000 or more in capital, savings and investments you are not entitled to Housing or Council Tax Benefit.

Please keep these notes for your information. They give advice on completing the application form and useful notes about making a claim for benefit.

Our address is:

**Housing and Council Tax Benefits,
Revenues Division, City Treasury,
Plymouth City Council,
Civic Centre, Plymouth PL1 2AA**

Our telephone number is: (01752) 304889

Our fax number is: (01752) 304278

Our email is: revenues@plymouth.gov.uk

The telephone number for landlords is: (01752) 304000



FRAUD HOTLINE: (01752) 304450

email: hbfraud@plymouth.gov.uk

Do not be put off by the length of the form. We need to check all your details to make sure you are paid the right amount of benefit.

The form has been spread out to make it easier to fill in. This is to make sure you do not miss an important question and get less benefit than you should.



You need to answer all the questions on the form. You should tick the Yes/No boxes in every case.

Do not delay in returning your form.

Benefit is normally paid from the Monday after we receive your application. There are a lot of details we need. If you do not have them all at the time of making your claim you should send the form in and let us know when you can supply the missing details. **Do not delay in returning your form as you may lose benefit if you do.**

Do not worry if you need help to fill in the form as we are happy to help you. Any member of staff at our enquiry counter can fill the form in with you. If you need someone to visit you at your home, because you are unable to visit the enquiry counter, please give us a ring on the above number to arrange this.

PROOF

We can only accept **original** documents. We will take a copy of all original evidence supplied to hold on your file. We cannot accept photocopies.

If you have a problem in being able to bring or send these documents to the Civic Centre or any Housing Department Branch Office please contact us for advice. We can arrange a home visit if needed.

Please read these important notes before you fill in the form

How to fill in this form

This form covers both Housing and Council Tax Benefit. You must answer **all** of the questions that apply to you. A lot of the questions have tick boxes for your answers. Please fill in this form in **black ink**. If at any time when filling in this form you are unsure what to put or would like any advice please contact us. We are here to help you.

Why do we need so much information and detail?

We need all the information we ask for to be able to pay you the right amount of benefit.

For example:

If you are receiving an allowance for a disability you may be entitled to certain premiums that could mean you get more benefit.

If you pay for a registered childminder while you are at work, we can take these payments into account when we work out your benefit. This would mean you may receive more benefit.

If you have any queries or would like further advice please contact us.

How we pay your benefit

We aim to tell you what your benefit is within 14 days of getting your completed form and all the proof we need. If you do not send the proof we need your benefit may be delayed or not paid at all.

Housing Benefit helps you pay your rent if you are on low income.

Council Tenants - We pay your benefit straight to your rent account each week meaning you could pay less rent each week.

Private Tenants including Housing Association - We pay your benefit by cheque 2 weeks in arrears to you, and 4 weeks in arrears if direct to your landlord. If you would like payment sent direct to your landlord please ask us for a form, or simply put the request in writing to us. There are some cases when we will not be able to pay your landlord. We will let you know if this applies to you.

Council Tax Benefit helps you pay your Council Tax if you are on a low income.

Council Tax Benefit is paid straight to your Council Tax account. This means you could pay less Council Tax each month.

Second Adult Rebate helps you with your Council Tax if someone who lives in your home is on a low income.

This will usually apply if you are the only person in your home who pays Council Tax and you have someone else living in your home **who is not your partner, does not pay you rent and is on a low income or in receipt of benefits**. It does not matter about your level of income. This benefit is paid straight to your Council Tax account meaning you could pay less Council Tax each month.

What if you disagree with the decision about your benefit?

If you disagree with the decision made by us about your benefit you can:

- ◆ Ask us for an explanation of our decision
- ◆ Ask us to revise our decision
- ◆ Make an appeal to an independent appeals tribunal

Please write in and give your reasons for disagreeing with our decision as fully as you can. If after our reply you are still not satisfied you can put your case to the Appeals Service to decide.

Please note that any appeal **must** be made within one calendar month of the date of the letter telling you about our decision.

What if you cannot pay the difference between your benefit and your rent and/or Council Tax?

If you are having difficulty meeting the shortfall between the benefit you receive and the rent and/or Council Tax that you must pay, you can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment. We will use the details you provide on your benefit application form to decide whether you qualify for a Discretionary Housing Payment. If we need more information we will get in touch with you.

Claims can be backdated for up to 52 weeks, but you must be able to show good reason for not applying earlier. You can either give details of this in section I 1a (Additional Details) or send us a letter.

What if my circumstances change?

Once you have put in your claim you will be awarded benefit on the details you have given on this form. If any of these details change you **must** tell the Council immediately **and** confirm the changes in writing. As stated in the declaration at the end of the application, if you do not tell us about any changes which could affect your claim you may be prosecuted.

Some examples of changes in circumstances that could affect your claim are:

- ◆ If you change room or flat within a property or move to a new property
- ◆ If you or your partner's income goes up or down
- ◆ If you or your partner's savings go up or down
- ◆ If you or your partner stop working, start working* or take a job
- ◆ If anyone joins or leaves your household
- ◆ If you come off Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- ◆ If the rent you pay changes
- ◆ If the income or capital of any non-dependents in your household changes

* If you are in receipt of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and start work you may be entitled to claim an 'Extended Payment' of benefit for up to four weeks. You should contact your local Benefits Agency for further details as soon as possible.

What do I do when I have completed the application form?

Once you have completed your claim form and checked that you have included as much of the **original** proof as you can, you can either post the form or take it to your local Housing Department Branch Office or the Benefits Enquiry Counter in the Civic Centre. The Enquiry Counter opening times are 8.45am to 4.00pm every day except Wednesdays when the counter opens at 9.45am.

If you have any queries at any time you can either visit the Benefits Enquiry Counter at the Civic Centre or telephone the office for advice. Remember to keep these notes for reference.

We aim to deal with your claim within 14 days of having received **all** the details and proofs needed.

The following services are provided in our public area at the Civic Centre:

- ◆ accessible toilet for disabled customers
- ◆ wheelchair access
- ◆ waiting area and vending machines for refreshments
- ◆ leaflets on all types of benefits, including 'Housing Benefit - A Guide for Claimants' and 'The A-Z of Council services provided by Plymouth City Council'
- ◆ Induction loop

Is the form available in another format?

Yes. These notes are available in large print for people with a visual impairment. Please contact the office if you require a large print version.

We do offer a home visiting service to help people fill in the form if they are having trouble or cannot visit the Enquiry Counter. If you need a visit please call us to arrange this.

What should I do if I have a problem with my claim?

If you have any further questions while your claim is being dealt with or when your claim is in payment, you can call into our enquiry counter or ring us on the number given on the front page of these notes.

There is a list of organisations who can offer advice and support on the next page.

Other organisations that may be able to help you

Citizens Advice Bureau

Virginia House
40 Looe Street
Plymouth PL4 0EB
Tel. (01752) 207088

Shelter

Virginia House
40 Looe Street
Plymouth PL4 0EB
Tel. (01752) 221187

Youth Enquiry Service (YES)

14-16 Union Street
City Centre
Plymouth PL1 2SR
Tel. (01752) 206626

Children & Lone Parents

19 North Street
Greenbank
Plymouth PL4 9AH
Tel. (01752) 201243

Mind Oasis

8 Woodside
Greenbank
Plymouth PL4 8QE
Tel. (01752) 254004

National Children's Home (NCH)

Bedford Villa
Amity Place
Plymouth PL4 8LX
Tel. (01752) 662253

Connexions (for 13-19 year olds only)

10-12 Union Street
Plymouth
PL1 2SR
Tel. (01752) 207700

Housing Advice (Harwell Centre)

28/42 Harwell Court
Western Approach
Plymouth PL1 1PY
Tel. (01752) 306275

TUC Unemployed Workers Centre

40 Tavistock Road
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL4 8AX
Tel. (01752) 301454

Disability Information & Advice Centre

Ernest English House
Buckwell Street
Plymouth PL1 2DA
Tel. (01752) 201065

Racial Equality Council

Virginia House
40 Looe Street
Plymouth PL4 0EB
Tel. (01752) 312640

Age Concern

Elsbeth Sitters House
Hoegate Street
Plymouth PL1 2JB
Tel. (01752) 665424

If you find yourself in an **emergency homeless situation** (eg. through fire, flood, domestic violence etc.) You can contact the 24hr Duty Housing Officer on (01752) 668000.



For over 60's and their carers

Useful telephone numbers for other departments of the Council

Main Switchboard668000
Council Tax Account Enquiries304924
Trading Standards.....304580

Special Domestic Refuse Collections.....304750
Plymcard Enquiries307001
Planning and Building Control.....304927