

# Thinking of renting

## PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION



Likely to need help with the rent?  
Apply for a Pre-Tenancy  
Determination

## Introduction

If you are thinking of renting from a private landlord (not Wakefield and District Housing or a housing association) and you are likely to need Housing Benefit to help pay your rent, you can find out how much of that rent we will use to work out your Housing Benefit before you decide to rent the property.

Before you take on a tenancy and claim Housing Benefit, apply for a Pre-Tenancy Determination.

A Pre-Tenancy Determination is a rental valuation done by the independent Rent Service. This valuation gives you the rent figure the Benefit Service will use to work out your Housing Benefit.

Housing Benefit will normally only fully meet rents which are around the general level for properties in the area you have chosen to live. If the rent for your home is above this, you are unlikely to get all your rent paid from Housing Benefit.

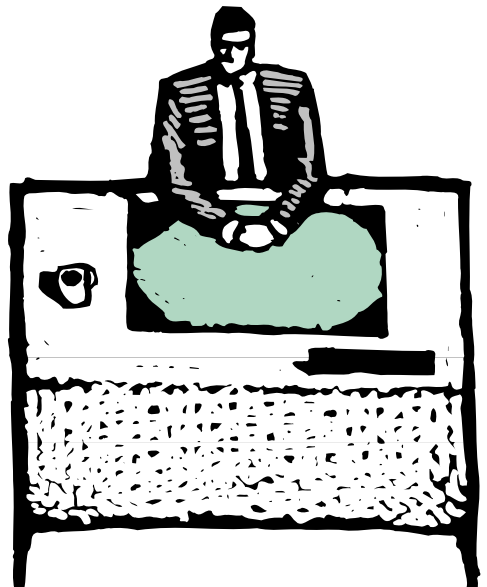
The Pre-Tenancy Determination does not guarantee you will get Housing Benefit or tell you how much you will get when we work out your Housing Benefit. We take your income and other circumstances into account.

## How to apply

This service is free. Contact your local Service Access Point or Benefits Service for a Pre-Tenancy Determination Application form.

On the form, you need to give details of the property you are thinking of renting. The landlord also needs to sign the form to agree to and let the Rent Service look at the property.

Once the form is filled in and signed, send or take it to the Service Access Point in the area where the property is, or the Benefits Service at King Charles II House, Headlands Road, Pontefract.



## What happens next?

Within one working day the Service Access Point or Benefits Service will pass the application to the Rent Service. The Rent Service will value the property and decide how much rent it would be reasonable to pay for it.

If the Rent Service has valued the property on the same tenancy terms in the last 12 months, that valuation will stand. The Benefits Service will then send you a copy of that decision. Otherwise, the Rent Service will send you, the landlord and the Benefits Service copies of their new decision. The Rent Service will do this within 5 working days of receiving a correctly completed application.

The information the Rent Service gives you will help you decide if you can afford the rent that is being asked.

If you decide to take the tenancy, claim Housing Benefit at once. You can get a Housing Benefit claim form from your local Service Access Point, or Benefits Service.



## The Rent Service decision and your Housing Benefit

The Rent Service may need to look at property you are thinking of renting. If so, they will arrange with the landlord to visit it.

**The Rent Service will consider things such as:**

- ◆ The rent charged
- ◆ What services are included in the rent
- ◆ The number of rooms in the property
- ◆ The size of your household
- ◆ The length and terms of the tenancy
- ◆ The general level of rents for the property in the area.

From this the Rent Service will decide how much:

- ◆ The property is worth in the rental market
- ◆ Is generally paid in that area for a suitable size property for your needs.

If you are single and under 25 years old the Rent Service will base their decision on the rent for a non self-contained room (where you have shared use of the kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities, and any living area) in the same area as the property in which you are thinking of living.

This decision lasts for 12 months from the date it was made.

## What will the decision tell you?

The decision notice from the Rent Service tells you the maximum rent that will generally be used when we work out your Housing Benefit. It also provides a valuation for any services (such as laundry and room cleaning) included in your rent which Housing Benefit cannot pay for.

If you are **single and under 25 years old**, the maximum rent we will use to work out your Housing Benefit is

limited to the average cost for a non self-contained room in the area you are thinking of living. This is called a **single room rent**.

You are exempt from this rule if:

- ◆ You have someone else who normally lives with you (a non-dependant) who is not either a partner, a dependant child or a joint tenant.  
or:
- ◆ You live alone  
and
  - a) you get the care component of Disability Living Allowance, or middle or higher rate Attendance Allowance,  
and
  - b) no-one gets Invalid Care Allowance for looking after you.  
or:
- ◆ You are under the age of 22 and have been subject to a care order.

*If you feel you should be exempt from the single room rent, tell the Council straight away. You may need to provide some proof.*

When the Benefit Service works out your Benefit, if the figure seems unreasonably high for your particular housing needs, we can reduce the maximum rent figure even more.

## **Will the maximum rent figure be the amount of Housing Benefit you get?**

### **Not necessarily.**

We usually work out your Housing Benefit using the maximum rent. But if you are under 25 years old, the maximum rent is generally limited to the single room rent.

**Remember, the decision given by the Rent Service does not guarantee you will get Housing Benefit or tell you how much you will get.**

If your Housing Benefit does not meet all your rent, you may be able to get some extra help in exceptional circumstances.

If you do get Housing Benefit, we pay from the date of your Benefit Application, not from the date of your Pre-Tenancy Determination Application.

## **Important**

Please make sure:

- ◆ You answer all the questions on the Pre-Tenancy Determination Application form
- ◆ Both you and your prospective landlord sign the Pre-Tenancy Determination Application form.

It is important that the Rent Service can contact the landlord of the property straight away, to do your Pre-Tenancy Determination within five days. Because of this, the landlord's telephone number is very important. If the landlord is on the phone, please make sure their number is on the Application form.

## Remember

Remember an application for a Pre-Tenancy Determination is not an application for Housing Benefit.

If you:

- ◆ Need help to fill in the Pre-Tenancy Determination Application form
- ◆ Would like to know more about Pre-Tenancy Determinations
- ◆ Want to claim Housing Benefit

please contact your local Service Access Point or Benefits Service where staff will be pleased to help you.

*The information in this leaflet is general guidance only. It is not a complete authoritative statement of law.*

**Renting Privately** - a leaflet which explains private tenants and landlords basic legal rights and duties - is available from Housing Aid, The Springs, Wakefield and Private Sector Housing Offices in Castleford, and Wakefield.

**For this information in any other format, such as, large print, cassette, Braille or in a different language please call 0845 8504504**