

Housing Benefit

If you have Parkinson's, you may have concerns about how you will manage financially. But there is some financial support available, so it's important to find out what benefits you're entitled to.

This sheet explains what Housing Benefit is, who qualifies and how you can claim.

What is Housing Benefit?

Housing Benefit helps people pay their rent. All local councils, and the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland, run a Housing Benefit scheme.

For people under Pension Credit qualifying age, Housing Benefit is currently being phased out and replaced by a new benefit, Universal Credit. You can find out which benefit you can claim in your area using the postcode checker at universalcreditinfo.net. If you are already getting Housing Benefit, you will be moved, at some point, over to Universal Credit.

You cannot get Universal Credit to pay for temporary or supported housing. In this case you will still need to apply for Housing Benefit, regardless of your age.

Find out more: see our information on [Universal Credit](#).

If you are over Pension Credit qualifying age and need help to pay your rent, you should continue to claim Housing Benefit. The qualifying age will rise to 65 by November 2018 and will then increase in line with State Pension age to reach 66 by October 2020. You can check your Pension Credit qualifying age using the online calculator at www.gov.uk/state-pension-age

Do I qualify for Housing Benefit?

To qualify, you need to be responsible for paying the rent on your home. If you live with a partner, only one of you can get Housing Benefit. You cannot usually get Housing Benefit if you live in a close relative's household.

You can't normally get Housing Benefit if you are a full-time student, unless you have been awarded Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance.

If you have savings of more than £16,000, you are not eligible for Housing Benefit unless you are getting the Guarantee Credit of Pension Credit.

You must also receive one of the following 'passporting' benefits: income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, income-based Jobseekers Allowance or the Guarantee Credit of Pension Credit, or you must have a fairly low income.

How do I claim Housing Benefit?

If you're claiming a passporting benefit (see above) over the phone, you can claim Housing Benefit at the same time. Otherwise, you should apply for Housing Benefit using a claim form that you can get from your local council. Check whether your local council accepts Housing Benefit applications by telephone or online.

You may find it helpful to photocopy any completed claim form before you send it off. This might help to prevent any problems in the future. If you need any help with your claim, contact Citizens Advice or your local Law Centre or Housing Advice Centre.

What if I disagree with the decision?

Your local council (or the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland) will assess your claim for Housing Benefit and make a decision on whether you qualify or not. If you disagree with their decision, you should ask them to look at it again. You might also be able to appeal their decision to an independent appeal tribunal. Your council will give you details about this. Speak to Citizens Advice or your local Law Centre or Housing Advice Centre, who may be able to help you to appeal.

How much is Housing Benefit?

Eligible rent

Your Housing Benefit is based on your weekly 'eligible rent'.

If you live in a council or housing association property, your eligible rent is normally your actual rent, less any amounts that Housing Benefit cannot cover, such as charges for heating, water or meals. However, deductions may apply to working-age tenants who are considered to have one or more spare bedrooms – the so-called 'bedroom tax'. To find out more, see the Disability Rights UK factsheet at www.disabilityrightsuk.org/bedroom-tax

If you have been living in privately rented accommodation since before April 2008, your eligible rent is your actual rent, less any amounts that Housing Benefit cannot cover (as above). The council will also look at whether the amount of rent you pay is reasonable for your particular home and the area you live in, and whether your home is a reasonable size for you and your family. There are special rules if you are single and aged under 25.

If you have moved in to, or claimed Housing Benefit for, private accommodation after April 2008, your eligible rent will not be based on your actual rent but on a fixed amount called the Local Housing Allowance.

The Local Housing Allowance

The Local Housing Allowance is a flat-rate allowance and the amount set depends on the area you live in and who you live with. Allowance will be made if you have a carer who regularly provides overnight care for you

but does not normally live with you. The amount of rent you pay doesn't affect the level of Local Housing Allowance set for you (although the Local Housing Allowance cannot be more than your actual rent).

How Housing Benefit is calculated

If you are on income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or the Guarantee Credit of Pension Credit, Housing Benefit will cover all your eligible rent. Deductions will only be made if there are 'non-dependants' living with you (see below).

Otherwise, the council will work out how much Housing Benefit you are entitled to by applying a means test. In this, the council will look at your circumstances, such as your age, your family and the level of your disability. The council will take into account any money you (and your partner, if you have one) have coming in, including earnings, some benefits and tax credits and things like occupational pensions. Any savings (including your partner's savings) over £6,000 will affect how much Housing Benefit you can get. When this is all taken into account, the council will make deductions for any non-dependants living with you.

Non-dependants

A non-dependant is someone who normally lives in your home on a non-commercial basis – usually an adult son, daughter, friend or relative – who would be expected to contribute towards your rent. The amount deducted from your Housing Benefit will depend on the non-dependant's income. Such a deduction will not be made if you (or your partner, if you have one) receive Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance care component or Personal Independence Payment daily living component.

The benefit cap

A 'benefit cap' limits the total amount of out-of-work and children's benefits that you can get. If this cap applies to you, your Housing Benefit will be reduced to ensure that the total amount of benefit you receive is not more than the cap level. This varies according to your circumstances, and whether or not you live in Greater London.

- In Greater London, the cap is £296.35 a week for single people and £442.31 a week for single parents and couples (with or without children).
- Outside Greater London, the cap is £257.69 a week for single people and £384.62 a week for single parents and couples (with or without children).

You will be exempt from the cap if you or anyone in your household is getting certain disability or health-related benefits such as Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Employment and Support Allowance with the support component.

How will I be paid Housing Benefit?

If you pay rent to your council, Housing Benefit is given as a rebate towards your rent account. In any other case, Housing Benefit is normally paid straight into your bank account, but it can also be paid by cheque. Sometimes it can be paid straight to your landlord. Ask your council about this.

What are Discretionary Housing Payments?

These are extra payments that are administered by the council but are not part of Housing Benefit. Discretionary Housing Payments can only be given to people who qualify for at least some Housing Benefit.

You can claim for these if there is a gap between the eligible rent you have to pay and the amount of benefit you get to cover it. The payments can help, for example, if your rent has been reduced because of Local Housing

Allowance restrictions or if you are affected by the so-called 'bedroom tax'. Your council can give you a form to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment, or you can write a letter requesting it.

If you have a disability, this can be considered when a council decides whether you qualify for a Discretionary Housing Payment. So it's important to give details of any disability needs you may have. If you aren't given Discretionary Housing Payments, there is no right to appeal, but you can ask the council to look at a decision again if you aren't happy with it.

To find out more, see the Disability Rights UK factsheet on Discretionary Housing Payments, available at www.disabilityrightsuk.org/discretionary-housing-payments-your-rights-explained

What if my circumstances change?

It is always important to provide full, accurate information to benefits offices, and to let them know if your circumstances change. If you don't do this, your benefits may be stopped, you may receive demands for repayment, or you may face prosecution.

More information and support

Parkinson's nurses

Parkinson's nurses provide expert advice and support to people with Parkinson's and those who care for them. They can also make contact with other health and social care professionals to make sure your needs are met.

The role of the Parkinson's nurse varies. Each will offer different services, aiming to meet local needs. Some nurses are based in the community, whereas others are based in hospital settings.

Many Parkinson's nurses are independent prescribers. This means they can prescribe and make adjustments to medication, so someone with Parkinson's doesn't always need to see their specialist for changes to or queries about their Parkinson's drugs.

Parkinson's nurses may not be available in every area, but your GP or specialist can give you more details on local services.

You can find out more at parkinsons.org.uk/nurses

Information and support from Parkinson's UK

You can call our free confidential helpline for general support and information. Call **0808 800 0303** (calls are free from UK landlines and most mobile networks) or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk.

We run a peer support service if you'd like to talk on the phone with someone affected by Parkinson's who has faced similar issues to you. The service is free and confidential – ring the helpline to talk to someone about being matched with a volunteer.

Our helpline can also put you in touch with one of our Parkinson's local advisers, who give one-to-one information and support to anyone affected by Parkinson's. They can also provide links to local groups and services.

We also have a self-management programme for people with Parkinson's, partners and carers. It is an opportunity to reflect on life with the condition, learn about self-management and think about the future. To find out if there is a group near you, visit parkinsons.org.uk/selfmanagement

Our website parkinsons.org.uk has a lot of information about Parkinson's and everyday life with the condition. You can also find details of your local support team and your nearest local group meeting at parkinsons.org.uk/localtoyou

Visit parkinsons.org.uk/forum to chat to other people with similar experiences on our online discussion forum.

Thank you

Thank you to Disability Rights UK for updating this information sheet. Disability Rights UK also have a wide range of online factsheets relating to disability-related issues including Access to Work, education, the Blue Badge scheme, independent living and disabled facilities grants.

Visit their website: www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Can you help?

At Parkinson's UK, we are totally dependent on donations from individuals and organisations to fund the work that we do. There are many ways that you can help us to support people with Parkinson's.

If you would like to get involved, please contact our Supporter Services team on **0800 138 6593** or visit our website at parkinsons.org.uk/donate. Thank you.

Our information

All of our most up-to-date information is available at parkinsons.org.uk/information-support. If you'd prefer to read one of our printed leaflets or booklets, find out how to place an order at parkinsons.org.uk/ordering-resources or by calling **0300 123 3689**.

We make every effort to ensure that our services provide current, unbiased and accurate information. We hope that this will add to any professional advice you receive and help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to talk to your health and social care team if you are worried about any aspect of living with Parkinson's.

If you'd like to find out more about how we put our information together, including references and the sources of evidence we use, please contact us at publications@parkinsons.org.uk

Housing Benefit (WB13/2018)

Do you have any feedback about this information? Your comments will help us ensure our resources are as useful and easy to understand as possible. Please return to [Information Content team, Parkinson's UK, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ](#), or email publications@parkinsons.org.uk. Thank you!

1. Please choose the option that best fits you.

- I have Parkinson's and was diagnosed in I care for someone with Parkinson's
 I have a friend or family member with Parkinson's I'm a professional working with people with Parkinson's
 Other (please specify)
-

2. Where did you get this information from?

- GP Specialist Parkinson's nurse Parkinson's UK local group Parkinson's UK local adviser
 Ordered directly from us Call to the helpline
 Other (please specify)
-

3. Has it answered all your questions?

- Yes, completely Yes, mostly Not sure Partly Not at all

4. How easy was it to understand?

- Very easy Easy Not sure Quite difficult Very difficult

5. Has it helped you manage your condition better, or make choices that have improved your life in some way?

- It helped a lot It helped a little No change It didn't help It made things worse

6. What is your ethnic background?*

- Asian or Asian British Black or Black British Chinese Mixed White British White other
 Other (please specify)
-

*We ask about your ethnicity to ensure our information is reaching a broad range of people. However, this question is optional.

Want to hear more from us?

- I would like a response to my feedback I would like to be a member of Parkinson's UK
 I'm interested in joining the Information review group, to offer feedback on Parkinson's UK information

If you've answered yes to any of these options, please complete your details below.

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

How would you prefer us to contact you? Email Post Phone

We will not pass on your details to any other organisation or third party. To find out more, read our privacy policy at parkinsons.org.uk/termsandconditions

Every hour, two people in the UK are told they have Parkinson's – a brain condition that turns lives upside down, leaving a future full of uncertainty.

Parkinson's UK is here to make sure people have whatever they need to take back control – from information to inspiration.

We want everyone to get the best health and social care. So we bring professionals together to drive improvements that enable people to live life to the full.

Ultimately, we want to end Parkinson's. That's why we inspire and support the international research community to develop life-changing treatments, faster. And we won't stop until we find a cure.

Together we can bring forward the day when no one fears Parkinson's.

Parkinson's UK

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**

Monday to Friday 9am–7pm, Saturday 10am–2pm. Interpreting available.

NGT Relay **18001 0808 800 0303** (for use with smart phones, tablets, PCs and other devices).

For more information see www.ngts.org.uk

hello@parkinsons.org.uk

parkinsons.org.uk

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Please check our website for the most up-to-date versions of all our information.

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