Changes to Housing Benefit for single people under 35 years old

What will the changes mean?
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From 1 January 2012 single people aged from 25 to 34 are only entitled to the Housing Benefit shared accommodation rate. By single people we mean someone who is not living as a couple or with dependent children. Before January 2012 this rule only affected people under the age of 25.

The shared accommodation rate is based on the level of local rents for properties that are not self contained. This usually means that there is a shared kitchen, bathroom, toilet or living room.

If you already get Housing Benefit at the one bedroom rate your Housing Benefit may go down if you move to the shared accommodation rate.

If your Housing Benefit is paid directly to your landlord, the amount your landlord gets towards your rent could go down.

If you are getting, or thinking of claiming Housing Benefit, you need to consider this change before you renew or make a new tenancy agreement with a private landlord.

Who will the changes affect?

These changes will affect you if you:

• rent accommodation from a private landlord
• already get Housing Benefit, or are going to make a new claim
• are single
• do not normally have children living with you
• are under 35 years old
• live in a self contained property

These changes will not affect you if you:

• rent from a local authority or housing association.
• are aged under 22 and have been in care.
• live in supported housing provided by a housing association, registered charity, voluntary organisation or a county council (in England).
• get the severe disability premium in your benefit because you are entitled to the middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.
• need an extra bedroom for a carer who provides you with the overnight care you need but who doesn’t normally live with you.
• Are 25 to 34 years old and have spent at least three months (they do not need to be continuous) in one or more
  - homeless hostels or
  - hostel/s specialising in rehabilitating and resettling within the community.

To benefit from this exemption you need to have been offered and accepted support services to enable you to be rehabilitated or resettled in the community.
• Are 25 to 34 years old and are managed under active multi-agency management under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

**When will the changes affect me?**

If you have been continuously receiving Housing Benefit for your current address since 1 April 2011 under the Local Housing Allowance arrangements, you will have been given nine months protection from these changes. You will not be affected by the change to the shared accommodation rate until the nine months has ended.

The nine months start from when your local authority carries out your first Housing Benefit yearly assessment after 1 April 2011. For example, if your yearly review was in June 2011 the change to the shared accommodation rate will not affect you until March 2012 (nine months later).

If you make a new claim for Housing Benefit before 1 January 2012, the change will affect you from your next yearly review.

If your Housing Benefit is not worked out using the Local Housing Allowance arrangements because you have been claiming Housing Benefit from before April 2008 the change will affect you from your next yearly review.

If you live in a privately rented home and make a new claim for Housing Benefit from 1 January 2012, the change will affect you straightaway.

The protection could end sooner if you change your address. If you move before 1 January 2012, the change will affect you from your next yearly review. If you move after 1 January 2012, the change will affect you straightaway.

**What options do I have?**

If you are managed by MAPPA, you will not need to apply for an exemption as we will be informed in strict confidence by the Probation Service or police.

If you believe any of the other exemptions apply to you, complete the enclosed form and return it to the Benefits Service.

If none of the exemptions apply to you, you will probably need to consider moving to somewhere cheaper. You might want to talk about your situation with our Housing Options Team.

• **Our Housing Options Team** (telephone 01908 253481) will be able to give you advice on finding another property. If you are having difficulty moving they may be able to help you with a deposit bond to secure new accommodation or recommend a Discretionary Housing Payment to supplement your rent for a short period to give you time to find another property.
Under 35 - Exempt From the Shared Accommodation Rate?

Your Name: 

Your Address 

Post code: 

Claim Reference, National Insurance Number or Date of Birth 

I believe my benefit should not be restricted to the shared accommodation rate because:

- I live with someone as a member of a couple.
  
  We have lived as a couple since: 
  
  My partner’s name is: 
  
  My partner’s date of birth is: 
  
  My partner’s National Insurance number is: 

- I have a dependent child who normally lives with me and for whom I receive child benefit.
  
  *Please note, where a child spends equal amounts of time in different households the child shall be treated as normally living with the person who receives child benefit in respect of them)*

- I rent from a local authority or housing association.

- I am aged under 22 and have been in care.

- I live in supported housing provided by a housing association, registered charity, voluntary organisation or a county council.

- I receive the middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.

- I need an extra bedroom for a carer who provides me with overnight care.

continued overleaf
I am 25 to 34 years old and have spent at least three months in one or more hostels for homeless people and while in the hostel I accepted support services aimed at helping me be rehabilitated or resettled in the community. Give as much of the address as you know to allow us to check your residency. If you have stayed in more than 3 hostels, please provide additional details on a separate sheet of paper.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hostel 1</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Dates you were resident: From</th>
<th>To</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hostel 2</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Dates you were resident: From</th>
<th>To</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hostel 3</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Dates you were resident: From</th>
<th>To</th>
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If you are 25 to 34 years old and managed under active multi-agency management under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) you do not need to inform us as we will be notified by the police or the probation service. Access to the information on your claim will be restricted.

If your benefit is reduced to the shared accommodation rate and you do not think it should be you should initially contact your probation officer to check if the correct documentation has been sent to Milton Keynes Council.

Please read this declaration carefully before you sign and date it.

I understand the following:
I declare that the information I have given on this form is correct and complete.
• If I give information that is incorrect or incomplete, you may take action against me. This may include court action.
• You may use the information I have provided to process my claim for Housing and Council Tax Benefit, or both. You may check some of the information with other sources within the council, rent offices and other councils.
• You may use any information I have provided in connection with this and any other claim for Social Security benefits that I have made or may make. You may give some information to other government organisations, if law allows this.

I know I must let the council know about any changes in my circumstances, which might affect my claim.

Signature  Date

Return to: Housing Benefit Service, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3HQ
You can also get advice from:

- The Housing Benefit Service. We can help you to find out exactly how these changes will affect you. Telephone 01908 253100

- The Citizen’s Advice Bureau (telephone 01908 604475, or visit their website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk or www.miltonkeynescab.org.uk)

- Shelter offers confidential housing, welfare benefits and debt advice through a network of advice services; freephone Housing Advice Helpline on 0808 800 4444 8am-8pm Monday-Friday and 8am-5pm Saturday-Sunday and online at england.shelter.org.uk/getadvice or www.shelter.org.uk

- You can get more information at www.direct.gov.uk Directgov provides information on public service 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