

Discretionary Housing Payments

What is a Discretionary Housing Payment?

A discretionary housing payment is an extra amount of money that the Council can give you to help you pay your rent.

Discretionary housing payments are not benefits. No one has an automatic right to a payment. They are awarded at the discretion of the Council. The details below explain when a discretionary housing payment may be awarded.

Can I get a Discretionary Housing Payment?

Discretionary housing payments can only be paid to people who are already getting some housing benefit or Universal Credit to help their rent. If you are getting enough help to pay your rent, you will not be able to get any extra help.

Discretionary housing payments cannot be awarded to help you pay for non-rent charges like water rates and service charges.

If you make a claim for a discretionary housing payment you will have to explain why you think you need extra help with your rent. You must show us that you or your family will suffer hardship if you do not get this extra help. We will also ask you to explain what other action you are taking to prevent you or your family suffering hardship. For example, if you are paying a high rent or you have extra bedrooms that you do not need, you will be expected to look for a cheaper place or a smaller place to live.

How much will I get?

There is no fixed rate for a discretionary housing payment. The level of payment is something we will decide when we are looking at an individual claim.

The Government has set a limit on the total amount the Council can spend on discretionary housing payments. When we receive a claim we have to think about how much money is available and how many people in this Borough may need extra help.

A discretionary housing payment is paid for a limited period of time to give people the chance to find other ways of reducing their housing costs. If you ask for further extra help at the end of this period we will only be able to help you if exceptional circumstances have stopped you from reducing your housing costs.

How do I make a claim?

We have a special form for claiming a discretionary housing payment. If you would like a claim form please contact us. Details of how to contact us are at the end of this leaflet.

You must answer all of the questions on the form that apply to you. It is important that you give us as much information and evidence as possible to support your claim.

Types of evidence we need

- If you are ill we will need confirmation from your doctor or health worker.
- If a member of your family is ill we will need confirmation from their doctor or health worker.
- If you have rent arrears you will need to provide a letter from your landlord or their agent confirming your rent arrears.
- If your landlord is taking action to evict you we will need to see the letters your landlord has sent to you about this.
- If you have savings we will need to see your proof of your savings.
- If you are paying rent we will need to see proof of your recent rent payments.
- If you have debts we will need to see confirmation of these debts from the financial institutions you have borrowed money from.
- If your property has been adapted to meet your disabled needs or those of a family member we will need confirmation from your landlord of the work that has been done.

We will look at your claim and consider all of the information and evidence you have provided. We will then write and tell you what our decision is. If you disagree with our decision you can ask us to look at your claim again.

If you need help

If you need any help, our phone number is 020 8891 1411. If you have any problems hearing, our minicom number is 020 8831 6001.

You can come to see us at the Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BZ.

We are open from 9 am to 5.15 pm from Monday to Thursday and 9 am to 5 pm on Friday.

You can fax us on 020 8891 7934.

You can email us at benefits@richmond.gov.uk

If you need any help or advice about your housing situation please contact our Housing Advice and Assessment Team on 020 8891 7409.

There is more information about benefits and other Council Services on our website at www.richmond.gov.uk

For independent information and advice you can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Their advice line is 0844 8269 700 and further contact details can be found by visiting their website at www.rcabs.org.uk