

London Borough of Barnet

Resources Department

Housing Benefit Service

Working with Landlords Strategy

We need to work with landlords both in the private and social care sector to encourage them to let to people on low incomes who claim Housing Benefit. This assists the Housing Benefit Service in supporting the vulnerable in the community and means that people who are homeless can have a choice of decent affordable accommodation.

We will support the Landlord's Forum.

We will support the Housing Associations Forum.

We will support the Citizens Panel.

We will supply landlords with an information pack concerning their rights and duties under the law if Housing Benefit is paid to them.

Our application forms will allow claimants to agree that the landlord can be told about the claim as well as payments. Where tenants have allowed us to divulge information we will do so with care.

We will encourage landlords who are considering evicting their tenant to contact us so that we can check whether or not there are any arrears of Housing Benefit due and the landlord can make their decision about starting proceedings with the knowledge of all the relevant facts.

Our application form will allow claimants to request that their Housing Benefit be paid to their landlords in special circumstances in line with our Safeguard Policy. Where the Housing Benefit is being made to the landlord we will answer the landlord's or agent's enquiries about the payments but not about how the benefit has been calculated unless permission has been given that we may do so.

Notification letters sent to landlords will comply with the regulations.

The landlord's appeal rights will be protected and publicised on the landlord's notification letters and the landlord pack. Where we do not believe the landlord can appeal we will explain why.

Where the landlord can show that the tenant is eight weeks in arrears with their rent or more than eight weeks and this is not in dispute, we will pay the Housing Benefit to the landlord in accordance with the regulations. Where the matter is in dispute, the landlord will have to prove to the Housing Benefit decision maker's satisfaction that the tenant is in arrears. This may mean the landlord has to show a County Court judgement.

Overpayments made to landlords will be recovered where the law allows, in line with Barnet's Housing Benefit Overpayment Policy, Housing Benefit Overpayment Strategy and Housing Benefit Overpayments Procedures.

We will action changes of circumstance reported by the landlord promptly.

We will refer suspicions of fraud reported by landlords to the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team promptly.

We will not seek to recover an overpayment from a landlord if the overpayment was the result of fraudulent action by the claimant unless the landlord was involved in the fraud.

We will seek suggestions and improvements to the service from landlords either through the forums or, where appropriate, through surveys.