

Housing Benefits News

Welcome to the first Housing Benefit Newsletter

We aim to produce two newsletters per year which will let you know of changes to Housing Benefits and the Housing Benefits Service.



In this issue:

The changes in the benefit paid to those who are sick.

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What is on the web

Employment and Support Allowance is a new benefit for those who are sick



Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a new benefit for those who are sick and unable to work.

- It is paid to people below pension age, up to 60 for women, 65 for men
- From 27 October 2008, new claimants will receive ESA instead of Incapacity Benefit
- It will only be paid to people who make new claims
- Those people who are on Incapacity Benefit now won't be affected until 2010 at the earliest.

ESA is designed to help people regain their independence and return to work. This is because the Government has found out that people are better off financially and their health is better when they are working. Most people when they first claim sickness benefits say they want to work.

For the first thirteen weeks people will be paid a standard rate during which they will be medically assessed to find out what work they can do. This is unlike Incapacity Benefit where the test was to find out what work they could not do.

Single people under 25 will receive £47.95 each week. Single people aged 25 or older will receive £60.50 pr week. Couples aged 18 and over will be entitled to £94.95. Couples aged under 18 will receive a lower amount.

After the 13 week assessment period people will receive a higher rate of ESA. The amount received will depend on the result of the assessment. Those that can work will be paid a work related activity component and helped to find work whilst those that need support will receive a higher support component.

Single people will be entitled to £84.50 if they are being helped to find work and £89.50 if they cannot work.

Couples will be entitled to £118.95 if they are being helped to find work and £123.95 if they cannot work.

Higher amounts will be paid to pensioners and those who are disabled.

Anyone receiving income related Employment Support Allowance will receive maximum Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Fenella has closed

On 31 July 2008 the Housing Benefit and Council Tax enquiry service moved out of Fenella in Babington Road, Hendon, and temporarily relocated to Hendon Library.

The customer service centre in the newly refurbished Burnt Oak Library opened on 9 October and you can now access the service at Watling Avenue, Burnt Oak, Middlesex HA8 0UB from 9am-4.30pm Monday-Friday.

If you want to show us valuable documents which we advise people never to send through the post you can also take them to a First Contact Point or Surgery. At the First Contact Point or Surgery the documents will be copied by trained staff and the originals handed back to you. There is at least one First Contact Point in Barnet open every day including Saturdays and Sundays.

The Surgeries and First Contact Point Opening Times are shown below

Surgeries	First Contact Points
Barnet House 1255 High Road, Whetstone, N20 0EJ Monday 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm Tuesday, and Friday 9am to 4.30pm	Chipping Barnet Library 3 Stapylton Road Barnet Herts EN5 4QT Monday to Saturday plus Sunday afternoon
Finchley Jobcentre Plus Ballards Lane, N3 2BL Every Monday 9am to 12noon	Edgware Library Hale Lane Edgware Middlesex HA8 8NN Monday to Saturday
	Golders Green Library 156 Golders Green Road London NW11 8HE Tuesday to Saturday plus Sunday afternoon

A First Contact Point is open 7 days a week except public holidays
www.barnet.gov.uk/housing-benefits-contactus.htm

If you are interested in learning more about local history go to www.barnet.gov.uk/archives

History of Fenella

Housing Benefits moved to Fenella from Finchley Central in 1988 and we often had people commenting on the unusual name of the building. It was named after a large red brick house built on the site in 1887 by Dr Cameron. Fenella was next to the original Ravensfield House. The original Ravensfield House stood where the student halls of residence are now and not where the current building is.

In 1950 Fenella was the home of Hendon Citizens Advice Bureau when the photograph was taken. The current Fenella House is now owned by Middlesex University and is part of their Hendon Campus.

The information about the history of Fenella is taken from an article by Yasmin Web of Barnet local studies written in 2005



The Original Fenella House in 1950



How quickly are we working out your benefit?

We aim to

- assess new claims within 14 days of receiving all the information and
- alter your benefit within an average of 10 days of being notified of a change of circumstance.

We also measure the average time taken to assess claims and action changes of circumstance from first contact from you to making the decision on your claim.

	April 2007 to March 2008 Achieved	April 2007 to March 2008 Target	Achieved up to August 2008
Average time taken to assess New Claims	27.98 days	30 Days	28 days
Average time taken to assess Change of circumstance	13.41 days	13 days	7 days

For more information about our performance please go to www.barnet.gov.uk/housing-benefits-team-performance

What is on the web

The Barnet website www.barnet.gov.uk publishes useful information for residents including an A - Z list of all council services which includes contact details.

The Housing Benefits area www.barnet.gov.uk/benefits has forms and leaflets about housing benefit, links to the rent officer website, information about how to claim and how to report changes to us. You can also find information about how your benefit is worked out and why you may not receive as much housing benefit or council tax benefit as you were expecting.

How to contact us

tel: 020 8359 2111

In person at Burnt Oak Library, or one of our surgeries or First Contact points see page three.

By post to
London Borough of Barnet,
P. O. Box 333
Sale M33 6XP

Fax: 0871 911 6101
email: benefits@barnet.gov.uk

We also support:
Type-talk: 18001 020 8359 2111

This newsletter has been published by London Borough Of Barnet, North London Business Park London Oakleigh Road South London N11 1NP

If you know anyone is claiming benefit fraudulently please call 020 8359 2007.