

Housing Benefit Service

Publicity and Take-up Strategy

- Publicity about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits will be placed in appropriate council offices and passed to partnership organisations. Leaflets on various social security benefits will be available at our offices. Where specialist advice is needed a referral will be made to our Welfare Rights Unit.
- We will especially target places where people are likely to access council services such as Libraries, mobile libraries, housing offices, cashiers offices, Social Services day centres, First Contact and Action Points.
- We will also ensure that partners have access to publicity and appropriate liaison is set up.
- We have a statutory responsibility for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit take-up under section 123 (3) and (4) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992: to take such steps as appear to it appropriate for the purpose of ensuring that any person who may be entitled to Housing Benefit (Sec.3) and Council Tax Benefit (Sec.4) becomes aware that he may be entitled to it.
- We will make sure that each household that receives a Council Tax Bill also receives a book with information on Council Tax Benefit.
- Where we run a take-up campaign we will take note of the advice and the DWP best practise guide.
- We will regularly publicise to the pensioners paid by Barnet and to the employees that there is help available for those on a low income.
- When someone claims housing and council tax benefit with us we will use our knowledge of other benefits to recommend that they claim other social security benefits they may be entitled to. We will work in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Sangam, Warm Front, Social Landlords, Barnet Health Authority and other interested parties to achieve our goals. We will use the Housing Benefit computer system and the Council Tax computer system to identify those who did not qualify in the past who might qualify following a change in the law.
- We will, where resources allow, speak to partners and explain Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit to raise awareness of the benefits. We will also target their client groups such as the vulnerable, disabled or those whose first language is not English to ensure that they have access to our services.

- We will also work with partners to see if some of the hurdles to claiming can be overcome.
- Where claimants are disabled, vulnerable or sight impaired we will make arrangements to visit them in their homes to offer help with making their claims.
- We will let claimants know about the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme and encourage applications for help under the scheme.
- Where we identify claims that may qualify under the backdating rules we will encourage the claimant to make their case under the "good cause" rules so their entitlement may be backdated.
- To allow for easy access to the service we will run surgeries at various outlets in the borough where resources permit. These might include the Employment Services and DWP offices. We will also provide help at First Contact and Action Points in a number of libraries to assist claimants who want to make a claim.
- Council tenants will be offered the opportunity of making a claim when signing up for a tenancy, as will, housing association tenants where we are working with associations to increase take-up. Where housing associations require assistance with block lettings we will supply trained staff to assist with the task.
- Where our records indicate that there may be entitlement to Income Support or Working Tax Credit we will take steps to alert the claimant to that potential entitlement.
- We will provide, as required, translation services for claimants who do not have English as their first language. We will also use necessary sign language for the hearing impaired and large type or Braille for the visually impaired.