

# Housing Benefit – Appointee

Claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit when you are ill, disabled or have special needs can be difficult.

A benefit claim may involve forms, evidence, information, changes in circumstances and/or receiving award notifications.

When somebody is unable to do these things for themselves, due to age, illness, disability or other special needs, they may appoint someone to deal with their claim for them. This person is called 'The Appointee.'

The Appointee can be nominated for a temporary period, for example following an accident or a short-term illness or where the incapacity is on a long-term basis it may be a permanent arrangement.

An Appointee is arranged to help remove the barriers that vulnerable people in the community face when wishing to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

It enables them to have an equal opportunity to claim the benefit that they are entitled to.

## Who becomes the Appointee?

There are three groups of people who can be Appointees:

1. A receiver appointed by the Court of Protection with power to claim or receive payment
2. An attorney appointed by the Powers of Attorney Act These people are automatically Appointees as they have greater legal rights to represent someone. However in the absence of one of the above the third category is:
3. A person over the age of 18, who makes a written request to the Council to become an Appointee

## What does the Appointee do?

The Appointee carries out all duties involved in managing the benefit claim including:

Completing the claim form and review forms, supplying evidence of income, savings, and rent. Informing the Council of any changes in the claimant's circumstances. Receiving Housing Benefit cheques in the cases of tenants of a private landlord where the landlord is not paid direct, Repaying overpaid benefit where applicable. The Appointee has the same rights of appeal as the claimant

## **How do I become an Appointee?**

Ideally the benefit claimant is able to complete a written authority giving details of the person they wish to act as their Appointee, with both the claimant and the Appointee consenting to the arrangement.

In some cases the claimant may be too incapacitated to complete a written authority. Where this is the case they may already have a representative that has been appointed by the Court or under the Power of Attorney Act.

That representative can supply proof of this to the Council with a written request for Appointee status for the Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit claim.

If the claimant is unable to complete a written authority and there is no legal representative already appointed to deal with their affairs, then a friend or relative of the claimant can make a written request to the Council to become their benefits Appointee.

It is important that full details of both the Appointee and the claimant are provided, the Council may make a visit to the claimant to confirm their circumstances and that the Appointee arrangement is suitable.

The Council do need to be satisfied that the arrangement is beneficial to the claimant and that the Appointee is able to take on the responsibility.

## **Change of circumstances**

It is important that the Council is informed straight away if any information that is put on a claim form for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit changes.

It is also important to note that the Department for Work and Pensions and the Council are two completely separate bodies and you will need to let **BOTH** agencies know if your details change.

It is vital that you inform both agencies of any changes as a failure to notify us of a change in circumstances may mean having to repay the Council any extra Benefit you received after the change happened.