

**For further information please contact
the Benefits Section**

Benefits Section
Winchester City Council
City Offices
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Hants
SO23 9LJ

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Website www.winchester.gov.uk

**A private interview room is available at the
City Offices.**

discretionary housing payments

How to get extra
help with your rent
& council tax

If you already receive
Housing and/or Council Tax
Benefit but still have some rent
and/or council tax to pay you
can apply for a Discretionary
Housing Payment.



Discretionary Housing Payments are designed to provide a further payment in respect of rent and/or council tax to top up any Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit that you already receive.

Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of benefit. They are free standing payments made at the discretion of the Benefits Section where the Benefits Section considers that additional help with housing costs is needed.

Payments are subject to an overall annual cash limit imposed on the Benefits Section and every case is considered on its own merits.

Discretionary Housing Payments are **temporary** awards of extra benefit for a particular period.

Examples of circumstances when a Discretionary Housing Payment might be awarded are:

- if you are having unavoidable extra expenses due to special circumstances such as someone being ill or in hospital
- if you are having difficulty paying rent and/or council tax while you are trying to find a cheaper property
- if there are special reasons why you need to stay in a particular property, but the Rent Officer has restricted the amount of rent we can use in the calculation
- if your Council Tax Benefit has been restricted to Band E
- if your benefit has been reduced by non-dependant deductions

The above list does not cover all the circumstances in which a Discretionary Housing Payment might be awarded.

Discretionary Housing Payments cannot be awarded towards any of the following:

- ineligible charges e.g. heating & water rates
- your rent if you are only entitled to Council Tax Benefit
- your council tax if you are only entitled to Housing Benefit
- your council tax if you are only entitled to Second Adult Rebate
- increases to cover rent arrears
- reductions in benefit due to Child Support sanctions
- amounts of Housing/Council Tax Benefit that have been suspended

The total amount of existing Housing/Council Tax Benefit plus the Discretionary Housing Payment must not be more than:

- your eligible rent (the amount of rent that is due to your landlord minus any ineligible service charges)
- your liability for Council Tax (the annual amount of council tax you are billed for minus any discounts or exemptions)

How to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment

If you think you may qualify for this additional money, please contact the Benefits Section. We will arrange an interview for you. If you cannot come in to the Council Offices, we may be able to interview you in your own home. You will need to provide evidence of your weekly/monthly household expenses at the interview.

After the interview

If we decide that we can award you a Discretionary Housing Payment, it may only be paid for a short period while you try and sort out the difficulties you are having. We will write to tell you how much you will be paid and for how long.

If we decide that we cannot award you a Discretionary Housing Payment, we will write and tell you the reasons for our decision. If you do not agree with our decision you can write to us and ask us to look at our decision again.