



Housing Benefit Local Housing Allowance **vulnerable tenants**

Local Housing Allowance is usually paid to the tenant. The tenant cannot decide to have their Local Housing Allowance paid to their landlord. But we can pay Local Housing Allowance to the landlord if we decide a tenant is vulnerable.



What do we mean by vulnerable?

By vulnerable we mean someone who may have difficulty managing their money. We do not mean someone who does not want to pay their rent.

Who decides who is vulnerable?

The Benefits Section of Winchester City Council decides if a tenant is vulnerable. We must have evidence that the tenant cannot manage their money. This will normally be on a form which is obtainable from the Benefits Section. Evidence must usually be in writing. People who can give evidence include:

- The tenant
- Friends and family of the tenant
- The landlord
- Welfare groups (including money advisers)
- Social services
- GP
- Probation officers
- Jobcentre Plus
- The Pension Service

We will work with the tenant in making our decision.

Who might be vulnerable?

There are many reasons why someone cannot manage their money. A vulnerable tenant might be someone who:

- Has severe debt problems
- Has a recent County Court judgement against them
- Is an undischarged bankrupt
- Is unable to open a bank or building society account

- Has some of their Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance paid direct to the gas, electricity or water company by the Department for Work & Pensions
- Is getting Supporting People help
- Is getting help from a homeless charity
- Has learning difficulties
- Has an illness that stops them managing on a day-to-day basis
- Cannot read English
- Cannot speak English
- Is addicted to drugs, alcohol or gambling
- Is homeless

Making a decision

Once we have collected evidence we will decide as quickly as possible if a tenant is vulnerable. We will still pay Local Housing Allowance to either the tenant or landlord while we are making our decision.

We will tell a tenant they are vulnerable. We will write to the tenant and explain the decision.

Reviews and appeals

If the tenant or landlord disagrees with our decision they can appeal. The rules for this are the same as the rules for Housing Benefit. Ask us for more information about this. Details about how to get in touch with us are at the end of this leaflet.

Money advice

Tenants can get help managing their money by visiting a welfare organisation such as Citizens Advice. Details about how to get in touch with your local office are also at the end of this leaflet

You can contact the Benefits section in the following ways

- You can email us at benefits@winchester.gov.uk
- You can telephone us on 01962 848 539
Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 5pm
Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm
telephone calls may be recorded
- You can fax us on 01962 841 365
- You can write to us at

The Benefits Section
Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 9LJ

- You can visit us at the City Offices
(address above)

Monday to Thursday from 8.45am to 5pm
Friday from 8.45am to 4.30pm

A private interview room is available at the City Offices

Website: www.winchester.gov.uk

Department for Work and Pensions

Website: www.dwp.gov.uk

Or, you could contact your local
Citizens Advice Bureau as detailed below

**Winchester
Citizens Advice Centre**
The Winchester Centre
68 St Georges Street
Winchester
Hants SO23 8AH

**Bishops Waltham
Citizens Advice Centre**
The Library
Bank Street
Bishops Waltham
Hants SO32 1AN

Tel 01962 848 000

Tel 01489 896 376

Examples of evidence that may be requested to aid our decision on vulnerability

GROUNDS	EVIDENCE	
LONG TERM		
Tenant has a learning disability that prevents them from managing on a daily basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care/Support workers • GP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP (evidence of benefits) • Adult social care
Tenant suffers from a medical condition that makes it hard for them to cope with routine tasks (e.g. schizophrenia, dementia, terminal illness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care/Support workers • GP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult social care • Hospital
Tenant has a physical disability that means that they are often housebound making it difficult for them to manage their affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care/Support workers • GP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult social care • Hospital
TEMPORARY/SHORT TERM		
Tenant has experienced recent changes that has meant they need additional support in managing their affairs (e.g. bereavement, violent relationship breakdown, period in hospital, leaving prison, leaving care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care/Support workers • GP • Adult social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital • Probation officers • Family/Friends
Tenant speaks/reads English only as a second language, presenting obstacles to them in opening and running bank accounts and reading and dealing with invoices and bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written evidence from support organisations that arrears/debts have occurred as a result of not understanding correspondence 	
Tenant is dealing with (or has a history of) addiction to drugs, alcohol, gambling and a substantial monetary payment to them would present a risk of relapsing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations • GP • Adult social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital • Care/support workers • Supporting People
Tenant has a history of homelessness and/or rough sleeping and is receiving help to sustain a tenancy in the private sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing advice • Advice/Welfare Agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness teams • Big Issue
FINANCIAL		
Tenant has severe debt problems (e.g. CCJ's, bad credit rating) that prevents them from opening bank accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creditors • Court orders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicitors • CAB • DWP Jobcentre Plus paying benefit direct to utilities companies