

# DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

Shropshire Council's policy with regard to the administration and  
award of Discretionary Housing Payments

## POLICY

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# Background

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Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are supported by the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (SI 2011 No.1167) and Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000.

Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of benefit. They are discretionary payments additional to any statutory provision by way of Housing Benefit or **Universal Credit**. They can be awarded when a local authority considers that a customer needs further financial assistance towards housing costs. The legislation allows broad discretion in considering DHP's however, local decision making staff are guided by procedures to ensure that consistency of approach and good principles of decision making are followed throughout. This ensures that we are acting fairly, reasonably and consistently.

Housing costs are not defined in the regulations. This gives the council broad discretion to interpret the term. In general, housing costs means rental liability; however, housing costs can be interpreted more widely to include:

- rent in advance;
- deposits; and
- other lump sum costs associated with a housing need (such as removal costs).

DHP payments are intended to alleviate severe hardship for those in financial difficulty providing certain criteria are met:

- The person is entitled to Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) if it includes a housing element towards rent liability
- There must be a shortfall between the Housing Benefit and the eligible rent that the person is unable to meet from their own means.
- The amount awarded can cover all or part of the rent shortfall but it cannot be more than the eligible rent for the property when added to the Housing Benefit award. Alternatively, the award can be used to assist with the cost of taking up a tenancy.

The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) guidance on DHP's is to the effect that they form part of a support mechanism of help for those most affected by the impact of welfare reforms. These are particularly around the introduction of the benefit cap; the introduction of size criteria for property in the social rented sector and reductions in the local housing allowance which determines private sector rent allowances. Additionally, DHP's can be made to compensate for other Housing Benefit **and Universal Credit** shortfalls including deductions made for non-dependents in the household, Rent Officer restrictions and shortfalls due to income tapers.

DHP's cannot be made in respect of the following:

- Ineligible service charges on a property

- Increases in rent due to assimilation of arrears
- Certain sanctions (penalties) or reductions imposed on a person's benefits
- To cover the recovery of Housing Benefit or other overpayments

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# Policy

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## Introduction

The DWP allocate a fund each year specifically for DHP awards, this is cash limited with any unspent funds being returned to DWP at the year end.

By working closely with our partner organisations, particularly the Housing Associations and support workers and by looking holistically at the range of solutions and alternatives available to residents we are confident that all of the fund will be used to help Shropshire's most vulnerable citizens often at very critical moments in their lives.

- The 2013/2014 allocation of funds to Shropshire Council was £277,475
- The 2014/2015 allocation of funds to Shropshire Council was £383,819
- The 2015/2016 allocation of funds to Shropshire Council is £325,939

The council cannot award any more DHP's if we have met our overall cash limit. The cash limit is two and a half times the government contribution. The legislation that specifies the overall limit on expenditure, is Article 7 of the Discretionary Housing Payment (Grants) Order 2001. Any unspent DHP funding will be returned to the DWP at the end of the financial year.

## Policy Aims

The Department for Work & Pensions define the policy aim of DHP's as being:

- To help secure and move to alternative accommodation (e.g. rent deposit)
- To help with short-term rental costs until the claimant is able to secure and move to alternative accommodation
- To help with short-term rental costs while the claimant seeks employment
- To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation
- To help with on-going rental costs for foster carer
- To help with short-term rental costs for any other reason

Shropshire Council's policy will contribute to the following corporate priorities and outcomes:

| PRIORITIES        |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Growing</b>    | Help to manage our environment (in a way that helps Shropshire to thrive)   |
| <b>Protecting</b> | Strive to keep people from harm (in a way that doesn't compromise their choices)  |
| <b>Helping</b>    | Help people, communities and businesses to help themselves (in a way that helps them to make the most of the choices available to them) |

| <b>OUTCOMES</b>         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Your Money</b>       | Feel financially secure and to believe in a positive future for myself and my family   |
| <b>Your Health</b>      | Live a long, enjoyable and healthy life  |
| <b>Your Life</b>        | Feel valued as an individual and to live my life, with my choices respected and with as few compromises as possible                              |
| <b>Your Environment</b> | Live in an attractive, vibrant and safe environment, in a place that is right for me   |
| <b>Your Council</b>     | Feel confident that the council is doing the right things with my money and that my needs are at the centre of any decisions taken about my life |

*(Shropshire Council Business Plan and Financial Strategy 2014-2017)*

The policy will contribute to these outcomes by providing help to the most vulnerable residents that will enable them, as part of a wider programme of support, to maintain themselves in affordable housing. We will deliver this within the limits of the available funding.

## **Policy objectives**

The DHP policy will be administered as part of a wider scheme of help and support with the express aim of contributing to:

- alleviating poverty
- encouraging and sustaining people in employment
- tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention
- safeguarding residents in their own homes
- helping those who are trying to help themselves
- keeping families together
- providing stability for children
- preventing homelessness for those at risk of losing their home
- supporting domestic violence victims who are trying to move to a place of safety
- supporting the vulnerable or the elderly in the local community
- helping claimants through personal and difficult events
- supporting young people in the transition to adult life, or
- promoting good educational outcomes for children and young people
- supporting the work of foster carers
- supporting disabled people remain in adapted properties
- supporting care leavers

*(Source: Gov.UK, Department for Work & Pensions DHP Guidance Manual April 2014.)*

For example, we may use a DHP award to assist a person with disabilities to remain in a suitable property or to allow a person experiencing challenging life issues to do likewise whilst they work with a wider range of support services to address these issues.

We may provide the deposit for housing that allows a homeless person the sound foundation from which to rebuild their future stability.

In some cases, time limited awards may be made with the expectation of the customer taking proactive steps to address their life issues and choices or to actively seek alternatives where these exist.

We will consider helping people who want to move but whose Housing Benefit or Universal Credit award has been restricted due to one the welfare reforms.

## The types of shortfall that DHPs can cover

- reductions in HB or UC where the benefit cap has been applied;
- reductions in HB or UC following the removal of spare room subsidy in the social rented sector;
- reductions in HB or UC as a result of local housing allowance restrictions;
- rent officer restrictions such as local reference rent or shared room rate;
- non-dependant deductions in HB or housing cost contributions in UC;
- rent shortfalls to prevent a household becoming homeless whilst the housing authority explores alternative options;
- reductions due to income tapers.

## Who can apply for a DHP

Primary entitlement to DHP's is governed by the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. The legislation states that DHP's are only available to those who are:

- entitled to Housing Benefit
- entitled to an award of Universal Credit that includes the Housing Element

In addition, Shropshire Council policy is that those applying are expected to be:

- Resident in Shropshire or
- Have a local connection

At our discretion we may in exceptional circumstances consider applications from people who are not resident in the County or otherwise connected.

## The claiming process

### Making an application for DHP

In order to be considered for an award of DHP, an application must be made to the Council. The application form is available on the council's website on <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/benefits/discretionary-housing-payments/>

A claim can be accepted from the person entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, but we will accept claims from someone acting on behalf of the person concerned where it appears reasonable to do so in the circumstances.

Applications may need to be supported by information from housing providers or other support workers to confirm that alternative housing options are not available / suitable. The claim must be supported by such information as is necessary to determine the claim, such as details of income, capital and expenditure. Requests for a discretionary payment can be made in the following ways:

- In writing
- By telephone
- Or by any other methods (such as electronic means)

Each claim will be considered individually based on the evidence provided to support the application. We will however expect to act with consistency whilst using our discretion to provide support to the most vulnerable citizens in Shropshire.

We will ask the customer whether they have a support worker to help them, if so we will liaise with the support worker to gather further information with which to consider the request for an award of DHP. This will allow us to make fully informed decisions that are fair and reasonable for the customer, especially where there are mental health considerations. All requests will be considered on an individual basis with due account given to the vulnerability and personal circumstances of each customer. An individual's personal circumstances, the amount requested and the importance of the need within the circumstances will form the basis for the prioritisation of awards.

### Evidence

Before we can grant a DHP we will request details from the customer to confirm the following: -

- The reason a DHP is required
- The current income and expenditure of the household. This may include:
  - Does the customer have other debt to pay?
  - Have they sought advice to clear their debt?
  - Can the customer renegotiate non priority debts?



- Entitlement to other benefits that are not being claimed or maximised
- Any income or capital that is disregarded (taking into account its intended use)
- Spending on non-essential items
- Could the rent be afforded when the customer first moved in?
- Is anyone else willing to pay the shortfall?
- Can any non-dependants make a contribution to the shortfall?
- Can they take steps to reduce their spending on non-essential items?
- Can the customer increase their hours or do any overtime?
- Any steps the customer has taken to try and resolve their financial situation? Such as:
  - Has the customer requested the landlord to reduce the rent and what was the landlord's response?
  - Could we speak to the landlord to negotiate a lower rent?
  - Did the customer enquire about the level of HB before they took the tenancy? If yes, what advice were they given?
  - Did customer have a pre-tenancy determination?
  - Has the customer taken long-term action to help their problems in meeting their housing costs
  - Reducing their spending on non-essential items
  - Has the customer managed to increase their hours or do any overtime?
  - Have they tried to re-negotiate or consolidate their debts?

## Medical circumstances

When considering the circumstances of a customer who has requested a DHP payment, it is important that the medical situation is taken into account. With this in mind we will ensure the following is considered on each application:

- Does the customer or a member of the household have health or support needs that require them to remain in a particular property because of adaptations or access to medical facilities?
- Does the customer or a member of the household have to have an extra room for health or support needs?
- Do the health needs of someone in the household mean that the choice of housing is restricted temporarily or permanently?
- Does the customer or a member of the household have health care related expenses such as medicine (non-prescription or otherwise) or therapeutic training?

## Rent deposits and rent in advance

Where requests are made for deposits or rent in advance for a prospective new property:

- the customer must be in receipt of Housing Benefit (or Universal Credit including a housing cost element) at their current address, and

- we will ask for proof of the amount they are requesting from the prospective landlord
- we will ask the customer must to confirm that they have been unable to source assistance from elsewhere first (namely Shropshire Housing Alliance or the council's Housing Options Team)
- we will consider whether the property the customer is moving to is affordable (whilst recognising that some people may have had to flee a home due to domestic violence so they may have had to seek a place of safety such as a refuge service)
- we will want to know whether the customer is due to have a deposit returned to them from their outgoing tenancy
- we will also want to know whether the customer has received assistance from another department within the LA towards a rent deposit (such as a rent deposit scheme or similar)
- we will need an application form for HB to be submitted at the same time as the DHP request so we can establish if there will be an entitlement to HB at the new address. For UC, we will need to establish that the customer will receive an element towards their housing costs when they move.
- we may consider making awards for deposits or rent in advance for properties outside our area if the customer is in receipt of HB or UC in our area.

When looking at requests, we will take into consideration the availability of suitable alternative accommodation, especially one bed accommodation.

### Treatment of income and expenditure

We will look at the income received by the claimant and partner when calculating awards. Where non-dependents don't make a contribution to the household, we assume that the claimant receives a weekly amount equivalent to the non-dependent deduction being applied to the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim.

We will consider what is reasonable when assessing declared expenditure. If we feel that declared expenses are unreasonably high, we will reduce them to an amount we deem reasonable in our calculation.

We will make a comparison of the income and expenditure to establish whether the customer has an excess weekly income after meeting all their expenses, including their rent shortfall.

### Treatment of the household

We will always take the income of the claimant and partner into account in our calculation. We won't take the income of other members of the household into account but we will assume that a contribution will be made to the household by any non-dependant. This will either be the figure quoted as 'keep' or the level of the non-dependant deduction on the

Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim. If there is no non-dependent deduction and they do not pay keep, we will consider whether an assumed contribution should be made, dependent on the non-dependent's income.

## The tenancy

- Can the landlord reduce the rent?
- Is the tenancy fixed term and when does it end?
- Are any agencies or services such as the Housing Options Team able to help negotiate a lower rent?
- Could they afford the tenancy before they took it on?
- Would awarding the DHP mean the property would be affordable for an interim period, allowing the tenant enough time to find alternative accommodation

## Amount and Duration

The amount of any DHP awarded will be in accordance with the limits set in legislation and in any case will not exceed the eligible amount for Housing Benefit or housing element for rent calculated within Universal Credit. The awards will usually be made to cover short term needs rather than provide a long term solution to shortfalls in rent. There will however, be circumstances where longer term awards will be provided.

Examples when longer awards may be made are:

- For people with a disability who have had substantial adaptations made to their home
- When it is considered unreasonable to expect the customer to move house, where appropriate, awards of DHP may be of a longer duration than usually expected.
- A disabled child who is not in receipt of the required rate of DLA, and who would normally be expected to share a bedroom under the rules governing the spare room subsidy, requires a separate room and provides evidence that this is the case.

In exceptional cases, an indefinite award may be considered, subject to a relevant change in their circumstances.

A DHP can be awarded on a weekly ongoing basis or as a lump sum payment in respect of removal costs.

Decisions on the level and duration of an award will need to take into account the customer's individual circumstances and what is affordable within the council's allocated budget. We will also consider the amount of time the customer will need to sort out their financial circumstances or housing circumstances, particularly if they are trying to find alternative accommodation.

## Making our decision

Before making our decision, we will consider the following:

- Does the household have to live in the area because of an existing support network?
- Is there a particular reason the person chose to live in the accommodation?
- Is there a more realistic prospect of work in the area they currently live in?
- Is the property the cheapest available for the customer's needs?
- Are the children at a critical point in their education or is a training scheme almost complete?
- Is one of the children near the edge of the threshold for an additional bedroom?
- Is the customer expecting a child and will she require her size of property when the child is born? (i.e. will the benefit size restriction end?)
- Is the customer fleeing Domestic Violence, meaning they cannot reasonably shop around for suitably priced accommodation?
- Is someone in the household undertaking care duties for relatives in the neighbourhood?
- Is someone temporarily living away from home and expected to return shortly?
- Is there a shortage of shared accommodation?
- Is the customer a care leaver who has a reduction in their LA rate after becoming 22 years old?
- Does the person need an additional room for a foster child or is the room being kept free for a foster child?
- Does the customer qualify for the 13 weeks or 52 weeks protection?
- Does the customer need an additional room for an overnight carer?
- Is there a requirement for a separate bedroom for each member of a couple due to medical reasons?
- The time needed for the customer to address any underlying issues.

We will inform customers of our decisions at the earliest opportunity.

Where we are unable to make an award, we will explain the reasons for this in writing so that the customer understands why. We will also provide suggestions for alternative support where these exist and will signpost customers to various useful agencies.

Where we can make an award, we will confirm the weekly award and the period of time we will pay it for. We will also provide a list of recommended actions that the customer must take to change their personal circumstances so they are more beneficial or to avoid them requiring further assistance from the DHP fund. We will expect them to take action on these recommendations in order to guarantee any further awards of DHP where the customer requests an award extension.

Our letter will inform customers that there is no formal right of appeal but will offer customers the opportunity to ask the council to look at the decision again, especially where

they think there has been an error or omission. Where the customer has consented, we may also inform the landlord of our decision. Where Housing Benefit or Universal Credit is being paid to a landlord and we subsequently make an award of DHP that we also pay to the landlord, we may contact the landlord to advise them of this.

Corroborative supporting information may be sought from third parties such as housing providers or support workers where this is felt reasonable in order to confirm that alternative solutions have been considered. Failure to provide supporting evidence without good reason may lead to the application being unsuccessful.

We will ask the customer whether they have a support worker to help them and will speak to that support worker to gather further information to support the request for an award of DHP. This will allow us to make fully informed decisions so that the decision we make a fair and reasonable decision for the customer, especially where there are mental health considerations.

Refusal to provide the necessary information for the team to make a decision will result in a refusal of award or as a withdrawal of application where there is loss of contact.

Where we are unable to make an award, we will explain the reasons for this in writing so that the applicant understands why. We will also provide suggestions for alternative support where these exist and will signpost applicants to various useful agencies.

## Payment of the award

Payments for rent shortfalls will be made at the same frequency as Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payments. They can be paid to someone other than the claimant if the council considers it reasonable to do so (e.g. an agent, appointee or landlord).

Payments for deposits and rent in advance will be paid directly to the landlord. We will advise tenants that landlords have a legal obligation to protect any deposit paid in a Government approved tenancy deposit scheme to help avoid future requests for deposits.

- Payments to private tenants and their landlords will be paid by BACS.
- Payments to housing association tenants and their landlords will be paid by BACS
- In the case of Rent Rebate, DHPs will be paid to the rent account by direct credit.

## Prevention of Homelessness

Homelessness has a major impact on customers in terms of health, education and employment prospects. It is vital that we use the DHP fund where appropriate to avoid homelessness by taking the following into account: -

- That an award of DHP may prevent evictions and prevent homelessness
- That the proximity of the household to education, employment and social networks means it may be helpful to pay DHP for resettling period from homelessness
- A DHP award could be central to the person being able to access employment, education or training and therefore less likely to become homeless
- Whether an award made to someone who has previously been homeless would increase the long-term sustainability of their tenancy
- Whether an award made to a care leaver who needs support would increase the long-term sustainability of their tenancy
- Closer working and good relationship building with internal services such as homelessness and external services such as Citizens Advice Bureau to act on early warning signs of potential homelessness and vulnerable cases

## DHPs and two homes

We can award DHPs on two homes if a customer is temporarily absent from their normal home, for example, because of domestic violence. If there is a rent shortfall in both properties, we will consider an award of two DHPs, subject to the normal limits.

If the customer is not liable to pay rent for the new address but has a shortfall in rent at the normal home, we can award a DHP for the normal home, again, subject to the normal limits.

## Backdated Awards

We will consider requests for backdated DHP's and will look at each case on its own merits. Whilst no blanket policies will be adopted, we will be consistent in our decision-making throughout. Although there are no rules regarding backdating, we will look to establish that 'good cause' for failing to make an earlier claim has been established. We will normally only backdate a DHP to the beginning of the current financial year. We will only consider backdating a DHP award to a date prior to the current financial year in exceptional circumstances. We will consider backdated benefit awards to assist customers with arrears due to welfare reforms who wish to move address. In every case we will consider the person's age, household make-up, health and individual circumstances.

## Appeals and Reconsiderations

Under the legislation governing DHP's, there is no right of appeal to an independent tribunal. Decisions are however, subject to requests for internal review and they should be treated under the Decision Making and Appeal procedures for this purpose.

Such requests for a review are dealt with through local arrangements.

The review process will have two stages:

- Stage 1 In the first instance, any request for a review will be considered by someone other than the officer who made the original decision unless new evidence is provided, when the same officer can consider the request. All requests to review a decision from an applicant or their representative to be considered and notified within one month of the date of decision.
- Stage2 If the applicant is still not satisfied with the outcome of the review, they may request a further review within one month of the date of the review outcome. The process will seek to ensure that stage 2 reviews are considered by a senior officer taking into account all the information and evidence included in the review and the reasonableness of the decision made. The decision will be notified in writing.

Any negative decisions will be clearly explained.

Decisions on DHPs cannot be appealed to a Social Security Tribunal as they are not empowered to deal with them. The route of judicial review is available, and the local government ombudsman if there is an allegation of maladministration.

## Changes in Circumstances

A person claiming a DHP is required by regulations to:

- Give the Local Authority such information as it may require
- Tell the Local Authority of any changes in circumstances that may be relevant.

## Revising Awards

Where an award of DHP has been made, the amount of the DHP will be regularly reviewed and possibly revised where there has been a change in circumstances to their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim.

## Repeat Awards for Rent Shortfalls

DHP's are not intended to be for an indefinite period. Individuals are expected to manage their day to day finances and take steps to budget and manage their household income. We will provide advice and guidance to people by signposting them to suitable support regarding this. Where customers request repeat awards, we will look to see whether they have acted on the recommendations made when their previous award was granted. If they have failed to do so, we may provide them with one month to act on these before considering a further award. If they fail to act on the recommendations within one month, we will not extend their DHP award.

We will not consider requests beyond the one month extension:

- Where advice has been ignored or not sought as advised
  - Where a previous request was unsuccessful (unless there has been a change in household circumstances)
  - Where the individual has not taken steps to remedy the situation
  - Where the circumstances could have been avoided or were as a result of reckless or deliberate behaviour
  - Where the individual has not co-operated with the Council or other public bodies
- The above list is not exhaustive and consideration will be given to repeat applications on an individual basis.

## Stopping DHPs

If the council decides that DHPs are being or have been made because of misrepresentation / failure to disclose information correctly or the Local Authority has paid in error, the payment can be stopped.

## Recovery of DHPs

We can recover DHP's if we decide that payment has been made as a result of misrepresentation or failure to disclose a material fact, either fraudulently or otherwise. We can also recover DHP's if we decide the customer has been paid as a result of an error made when the claim was determined.

We cannot recover DHP's from ongoing Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. This is unlike Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments where there is a regulatory provision to allow recovery from ongoing Housing Benefit. There is also no provision for recovery of overpaid DHP's from other prescribed benefits.

Overpaid DHP's will be requested from the customer via invoice. Customers will have the opportunity to repay their debt in full or make an arrangement to repay in instalments within a reasonable timeframe.

## Circumstances Where It Is Not Appropriate To Award A DHP

- **Ineligible charges:** a service charge that is not eligible for HB or UC cannot be covered by a DHP. These are as specified in Schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations and Schedule 4 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 2006. Nor can DHPs cover charges for water, sewerage, and environmental services – as defined and calculated under the HB provisions.
- **Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears:** Regulation 11(3) of the



Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Regulation 11(2) of the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006, **Schedule 4 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013** refer. This refers to those cases where a customer's rent is increased to incorporate outstanding arrears which are owed by the customer in respect of their current or former property.

- **Sanctions and reductions in benefit:** DHPs cannot meet these because to do so would undermine the effectiveness of the sanctions or reduction in benefit. These are:
  - Any reduction in Income Support (IS) or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)) due to a Reduced Benefit Direction (RBD) for failure to comply with the Child Support Agency in arranging maintenance. The RBD is a reduction in benefit of 40% of the personal allowance and only applies to IS or JSA(IB)
  - Any reduction in benefit as a result of non-attendance at a work-focused interview. This applies both where the person's HB or any other benefit the person is receiving is reduced subject to a sanction
  - Any reduction or loss of benefit due to a JSA employment sanction. JSA is not payable for the period of sanction if they have contributed towards their unemployed status, for example, by leaving employment voluntarily or failing to attend a prescribed training scheme. In such cases, it may be possible for a reduced rate of JSA to be paid under the JSA hardship provisions
  - Any reduction in benefit due to a JSA sanction for 16/17 year olds - for certain young people who receive JSA under a Severe Hardship Direction. JSA is not payable for the period of the sanction if they have contributed towards their unemployed status, for example, by leaving unemployment voluntarily or failing to attend a prescribed training scheme,
  - Or any restriction in benefit due to a breach of a community service order
  - Any reduction in UC due to a sanction as specified under regulation 100 of the UC Regulations 2013
  - Any restriction due to repayment of a social fund loan
- **Benefit suspensions:** - HB or UC can be suspended either because there is a general doubt about entitlement or because a customer has failed to supply information relevant to their claim. In such cases, it would not be permissible to pay DHPs instead. One of the intentions of the suspension provisions is to act as a lever to ensure that the customer takes the necessary steps to provide the authority with the

necessary information / evidence. Paying DHPs could reduce the effectiveness of this lever.

- **Shortfalls caused by HB overpayment recovery:** when recovery of an HB overpayment is taking place, such shortfalls should not be considered for a DHP
- Rent, when the person is getting Council Tax support but not HB or help towards housing costs in UC: so if someone is only getting local Council Tax support, we cannot award a DHP towards rental liability

**From Annexe B of Draft Department for Work and Pensions Good Practice Guide 2013**

## Future Applications

Where changes are anticipated, such as the introduction of size criteria in the social rented sector or introduction of the benefit cap, we will allow applications for DHP's from customers in advance to help alleviate uncertainty for some. We will advise customers of an award that will start from a future date, subject to any subsequent change in circumstances.

## Monitoring Arrangements

The government has provided councils with a single budget figure for the provision of DHP awards. The council then has to monitor this budget throughout the year to ensure that awards are targeted to those most in need whilst ensuring there is sufficient budget to provide necessary support throughout the year. The Welfare Reform and Support Team will undertake this monitoring.

The government asks councils to record if customers have been affected by one of the following:

- Benefit cap
- Removal of spare room subsidy in the social rented sector
- Local Housing Allowance restrictions
- Combination of reforms
- No impact

They also ask councils to record the intended outcome when making an award. These awards are broadly grouped into the areas that cover the policy intention of DHPs:

- To help secure and move to alternative accommodation (e.g. rent deposit)
- To help with short-term rental costs until the claimant is able to secure and move to alternative accommodation
- To help with short-term rental costs while the claimant seeks employment
- To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation
- To help with on-going rental costs for foster carer
- To help with short-term rental costs for any other reason

## Publicity

Shropshire Council will regularly publicise the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme by regularly promoting it via:

- The council's website,
- The council's hubs and customer service centres
- Local Registered Social Landlords
- The council's Housing Options Team
- Citizens Advice Shropshire
- Age UK
- A4U
- Local Landlord Forums
- Elected council Members
- Jobcentre Plus Universal Credit Advisers
- Other relevant organisations and support groups

## Support into work

The Scheme will support the government's Welfare Reform agenda by signposting people towards work opportunities where possible. This can include:

- Signposting people towards skills-based support and training by various agencies, such as challenging expectation, culture change, confidence building, training, help with skills, work clubs, help with CVs and job applications
- Signposting people to the Benefit Options Team in order that they can provide 'better-off in work' calculations
- Signposting people towards County Training who can signpost people to apprenticeships
- Providing people with clothing and travel for interviews where this cannot be provided by Jobcentre Plus.
- Signposting people towards Wheels to Work and Transport Solutions
- Providing people with help towards fuel for transport to new employment if they have not been paid yet and this cannot be provided by another source.

## Policy Review

The welfare reform agenda means that it is highly probable that changes to this document and the practical application of the scheme will need to be made throughout the year.