

Changes in circumstances

You must notify the Council straight away if any of your circumstances change. You can lose money if you don't tell us at the time a change happened. You may also be overpaid and asked to pay money back. You must tell the Council about any change as failure to do so may result in a financial penalty or Court action being taken against you.

This leaflet gives general guidance only and should not be treated as a comprehensive and authoritative statement of the law.

If you need to contact us:

Enquiries in Person

If you wish to make enquiries in person our offices are:

TORQUAY - Connections

Town Hall, Torquay TQ1 3DR

Opening times

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 8.30am to 5.30pm

Wed..... 9.30am to 5.30pm

PAIGNTON - Connections

56 Palace Avenue, Paignton TQ3 3HZ

Opening times

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.00am to 4.15pm

Wed..... 9.30am to 4.15pm

BRIXHAM - Connections

New Road, Brixham TQ5 8TA

Opening times

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.00am to 4.15pm

Wed..... 9.30am to 4.15pm

Telephone Enquiries

01803 207201

The Benefit helplines are staffed during the following hours:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 8.30am to 5.30pm

Wed..... 9.30am to 5.30pm

Sat 8.30am to 12 noon

Further information about benefits may be found at: www.torbay.gov.uk/benefits

If you need to write to us

our address is:

**BENEFIT SECTION, TOWN HALL,
TORQUAY TQ1 3DS**

Email Enquiries

For Housing and Council Tax Benefit queries:

housing.benefit@torbay.gov.uk

For Council Tax queries:

council.tax@torbay.gov.uk

For Local Housing Allowance (LHA) queries:

lha@torbay.gov.uk



HOUSING & COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS

How the Council deals with your claim

This leaflet is designed to give you some information on how Torbay Council deals with your claim once you have completed Torbay Council's benefit application form.

Proofs and documents

The Council will ask you to provide proof of your income, savings, and rent and supply evidence of your own and your partner's identity. Details of all the information you need to provide is given on the claim form. You should read the form carefully to see what you need to send in with the application. There is a checklist on the application form to help you.

The Council will not be able to pay your benefit claim without all these proofs, so you should check that all sections of your application have been fully completed and it includes all of the information requested.

The Council can only accept original documents not photocopies. Documents can be photocopied and handed back to you immediately at any of the Council's "Connections" offices.

If you would like help completing your claim form please telephone 207201 to ask for an appointment.

Information

If you have not provided all of the information the Council needs to assess your benefit entitlement the Council will contact you again. If you have made a benefit claim and have not had any

contact from the Benefits Section after 14 days please contact us.

Torbay Council asks you for personal information to action your benefit claim. The Council is bound by the UK Data Protection Act, 1998 to use the information you give us fairly and lawfully. For a full explanation of why we need that information, how we use it and organisations we share it with, please make sure you read the "How we collect and use the information" section on your claim form, or visit the relevant pages on the Council's website.

What happens next?

The Council will write to you and tell you how much benefit has been awarded and the start date of the award. It will also explain how your benefit has been calculated. Please read these letters carefully.

What happens if I do not agree with the award?

You can ask the Council:

- to give you more information about the decision;
- to look at the decision again;
- to consider an appeal.

You will need to write to the Council within one calendar month of the date on your decision letter. More details about this can be found at www.torbay.gov.uk/benefits or request a leaflet on 207201.

Housing Benefit Payments

In most cases payment of LHA will be made direct to you and it will be your responsibility to pay the rent to your landlord. You will generally no longer have the option to have your housing benefit paid direct to your landlord. LHA will be paid direct into your bank account. This means you will need to open a suitable bank account, if you do not have one already and make arrangements to your rent to your landlord

Torbay Council is offering free advice for tenants through Torbay Pound on:

- which account(s) are best suited to enable you to pay your rent to your landlord;
- how to open an account;
- what evidence and documents you will need to open an account;
- money and budgetary advice;
- prioritisation of debt.

You can find out more information about Torbay Pound at www.devonpound.com or pick up a leaflet at any of the Council's Connections offices.

Council Tax Benefit

Council Tax benefit entitlement will be paid to your Council Tax account to reduce the amount of the bill. We will then send you a new Council Tax bill that will show you the amount you have to pay.