

**This factsheet looks at recent changes to rules on Housing Benefit.**

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## **Under 35s and the Shared Accommodation Rate**

If you rent from a private landlord, are under 35, single and childless the amount of help you can get with paying your rent is limited. You only qualify for the standard rate for a single bedroom in shared accommodation, regardless of whether you actually share with others or how many rooms you rent. This is known as the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR).

There are some exceptions. For example, the SAR does not apply if:

- you are under the age of 22 and have been in care since the age of 16
- you are severely disabled
- you need overnight care
- you have lived in a homeless hostel for 3 months and received resettlement or rehabilitation support
- you are an ex-offender and your housing has been arranged under a multi-agency (MAPPA) agreement.

## **The bedroom tax**

Council and housing association tenants who are of working age get less housing benefit if the council decides they have 'spare' bedrooms. This is commonly known as the bedroom tax.

If you have one spare bedroom, the eligible rent is reduced by 14%. If you have two or more spare bedrooms, the eligible rent is reduced by 25%.

If your housing benefit is reduced as a result of the bedroom tax, you have to pay your landlord the difference between the housing benefit and the rent.

## **The benefit cap**

The benefit cap puts a limit on the total amount of welfare benefits (including housing benefit) that can be paid to people of working age.

In Wales the maximum is:

- £384.62 per week for single parents and couples with children
- £257.69 per week for single people.

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Housing benefit will be reduced if your benefit income reaches the cap level.

Use the online [benefit cap calculator](#) to get an estimate of how much your benefit might be reduced.

### **Universal Credit : housing costs**

Universal credit (UC) is a monthly benefit for people of working age who are either out of work or on a low income.

It is slowly being introduced across the country and replaces a number of benefits including income-based jobseeker's allowance, income support and housing benefit.

Under UC, payments of housing benefit for new single claimants are replaced by a 'housing costs element' which is included in the UC award. It is your responsibility to pay the rent to your landlord from this award.

### **Universal Credit : young people**

If you are aged between 18 and 21 years, you may not be entitled to the 'housing costs element' in your UC unless you:

- are responsible for one or more children;
- fall into certain 'vulnerable groups', for example, you receive certain disability benefits; are in temporary homelessness accommodation provided by the council, or have been a victim of domestic violence; or
- have been assessed as expected to work less than 35 hours per week

due to caring responsibilities or ill health.

### **Universal Credit : families with more than 2 children**

UC is limited to 2 children. This means that if you are already claiming UC and have 2 children you will not get any extra money for any subsequent children born on or after 6 April. If you are claiming UC for the first time after 6 April and have more than 2 children, you will be told to claim tax credits and housing benefit instead.

### **What can I do?**

Many tenants are struggling as a result of these changes. It might be difficult to make up the shortfall between the reduced amount of benefit you receive, and the rent you have to pay. If you are in this situation:

- talk to your landlord
- apply for a discretionary housing payment (DHP) to help make up the shortfall
- ask non-dependants to increase their contributions to the rent
- get advice.

### **Further advice**

send us an email at

<https://sheltercymru.org.uk/email-advice/>

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