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«HB__Claimant_Name»
«HB__Full_Address»

18th August 2016

Dear «HB__Claimant_Name»

Benefit Cap Changes Affecting Housing Benefit Reference «HB__Claim_Ref»

Overall Benefit Cap

This letter is being sent to you because it appears that you are receiving Housing Benefit and may be affected by changes to the Overall Benefit Cap that are to be introduced from November 2016.

The Government is introducing a lower weekly limit for the total amount of all benefits that can be received by a household unless you are exempt. The current and new levels of cap are shown below for both inside and outside of the London area.

Benefit Cap Limits Per Week				
	Inside London		Outside London	
Situation	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Single	£350	£296.35	£350	£257.69
Single Parent	£500	£442.31	£500	£384.62
Couple	£500	£442.31	£500	£384.62
Couple with Children	£500	£442.31	£500	£384.62

The benefits that are counted in working out your weekly total are:

Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment & Support Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit, Maternity Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance, Widowed Mother's Allowance, Widow's Pension, Bereavement Allowance **and Housing Benefit.**

If you are not exempt and receive more weekly benefits than the cap permits, your Housing Benefit will be reduced to bring what you receive into line with the new cap level. This could leave you with a shortfall in your rent.

You will be exempt from the Overall Benefit Cap changes if you or your partner receive any of the following:

- Attendance Allowance;
- Disability Living Allowance;
- Personal Independence Payment;
- The support component of main phase Employment and Support Allowance;
- Industrial Injuries Benefit and equivalent payments as part of a War Disablement Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme;
- War Widow or War Widower's Pension;
- Carer's Allowance (from Autumn 2016)
- Guardian's Allowance (from Autumn 2016)

Some of the options that may be available to you if you are affected are:

- Find work to qualify for Working Tax Credit. You will need to work for at least 16 hours per week if you are a single parent, 24 hours per week between you if you are in a couple with one of you working at least 16 hours per week or 30 hours if you are a single person.
- Make up any shortfall in your rent from other money received;
- Find somewhere more affordable to live or try to negotiate a rent reduction with your landlord;
- Apply for one of the benefits that will exempt you from the cap.

If you think you may be affected by the benefit cap changes, please decide on the most appropriate option(s) for you to avoid the effects of the cap and take action now.

Other assistance available

Please regularly check the Brent Council website www.brent.gov.uk/benefits for updates and further information about the benefit cap including full details of the exemptions. There is also a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support calculator available that you can use to check your potential entitlement or how it might be affected by any wages you may receive if you start work or increase your hours of work. There are also details of assistance available in applying for jobs, improving your skills or receiving training to assist you in finding work as well as information about childcare including assistance in finding a registered childminder and / or support available for paying for them.

Yours sincerely



David Oates
Head of Service (Benefits and Customer Service)