

# Housing Benefit Changes

## The Overall Benefit Cap

# Current Overall Benefit Cap (OBC)

- Introduced nationally and applied in Brent - August / September 2013.
- Applies to working-age claimants unless **exempt**.
- Limits total amount of welfare benefits received by a household to £26,000 per annum.



# Reduced Overall Benefit Cap

- £23,000 in London (from Autumn 2016)
  - £442.31 per week (£296.35 single claimants no dependants)

Benefit Cap Limits—per week				
	Outside Greater London		In Greater London	
Situation	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Single	£350	£257.69	£350	£296.35
Lone Parent	£500	£384.62	£500	£442.31
Couple	£500	£384.62	£500	£442.31
Couple with children	£500	£384.62	£500	£442.31

# What Benefits Count Towards the Cap?

- Includes 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.**
- The capped amount is taken off Housing Benefit entitlement.
- For example, if a couple receive £542.31 per week from any of the above benefits and the overall cap is £442.31, they will have a reduction in the Housing Benefit paid to them of £100 per week.

# Exemptions from the Cap

- Current exemptions will continue to apply if the following are received –
  - Attendance allowance
  - Disability living allowance
  - Personal independence payment
  - Employment and support allowance (support component)
  - Industrial injuries benefits
  - War widow or war widower's pension
  - Government plans to include Guardian's Allowance and Carer's Allowance in the exemptions from the Autumn.

# Exemptions from the Cap

- If the claimant qualifies for Working Tax Credit because they work for at least 16 hours per week if they are a single parent, 24 hours per week between them if they are a couple with one of them working at least 16 hours per week or 30 hours if they are a single person.
- If they are responsible for a child or young person getting Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, or an Armed Forces Injuries Payment
- The cap will not apply for 39 weeks if the claimant or a partner as appropriate has ceased paid work that lasted for at least 50 of the 52 weeks immediately prior to leaving and in the final week, they worked at least 16 hours.

# The Options Available If Affected

- Find work to qualify for Working Tax Credit.
- Make up any shortfall in rent from other money received
- Find somewhere more affordable to live or negotiate a rent reduction with their landlord
- Apply for one of the benefits that will exempt them from the cap
- Discretionary Housing Payment (short term discretionary payment)

# Brent Council Website

- [www.brent.gov.uk/benefitchanges](http://www.brent.gov.uk/benefitchanges)
- Contains information about the Overall Benefit Cap changes
- Includes Overall Benefit Cap questions and answers
- Provides access to relevant documents and toolkit
- Translation features, BrowseAloud, SignVideo BSL Live, interpreter services.



# Other Relevant Information

- Data sharing arrangements in place with Registered Social Landlords that have signed up to the Brent Council data sharing agreement
- Benefit calculator available for working out entitlement to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Universal Credit is accessible via the Brent Council website
- Communications Plan in place for informing residents and stakeholders of the changes

# Benefit Changes Health Check

- Is operated in the CSC to identify residents that may be applying for, or in receipt of HB that require further support and assistance particularly in relation to forthcoming welfare reforms.
- Intended to assist in mitigating against the effects of some of the changes.