

Legal Responsibility – Tenant

In all cases of direct payment to you a signed undertaking will be required from you agreeing to repay any Housing Benefit subsequently overpaid. When signing the undertaking you are agreeing that any overpayment can be recovered from any future benefit paid direct to you. As you are not currently in receipt of Housing Benefit, the overpayment must be collected direct from you.

Legal Responsibility – Landlord

Where recovery is made from another tenants benefit (to whom the overpayment does not actually relate) that tenant is deemed to have paid rent to you to the value of that recovery. This applies where it is reasonable to expect you to repay the overpayment. For example, if a tenant leaves and does not actually inform the council and Housing Benefit continues to be paid to you.

CHARTER FOR THE COLLECTION OF DEBTS

We will:

- give clear and prompt information about overpaid Housing Benefit
- provide flexible and convenient methods of payment
- inform you of any possible entitlement to discounts;
- encourage you to contact us quickly if you have difficulty paying debts, and when appropriate, tell you where you can get independent advice
- treat you with courtesy and treat all information in absolute confidence.
- use court action, Direct Earning Attachment or a Debt Recovery Agency in certain circumstance if collection procedures fail.

WE WILL GIVE CLEAR AND PROMPT INFORMATION ABOUT OVERPAID HOUSING BENEFIT

The bill will show:

- what period it is for and the amount due
- who owes the money
- how to make the payment • how to contact us

WE WILL PROVIDE FLEXIBLE AND CONVENIENT METHODS OF PAYMENT

- full list of ways to pay are listed on the back of this leaflet

WE WILL ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTACT US QUICKLY IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY PAYING DEBTS, AND WHEN APPROPRIATE, TELL YOU WHERE YOU CAN GET INDEPENDENT ADVICE

The best way to prevent debts building up is for you to contact us as soon as you have any difficulties. We want to discuss the situation and arrange a repayment plan, rather than get full payment immediately. We will ask you to explain why you missed payments and we will look for ways to prevent further arrears.

We will:

- agree repayments based on your ability to pay.
- if appropriate, advise you to contact an independent advice agency
- write to you if you build up any arrears in repaying Housing Benefit overpayments. We will tell you about the availability of benefits such as Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.
- tell you where you can get more advice about a range of benefits.

WE CAN AGREE REPAYMENTS BASED ON YOUR ABILITY TO PAY

We will encourage you to seek independent advice if you have multiple debt problems.

WE WILL TREAT YOU WITH COURTESY AND IN ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE

We will be sensitive to your individual circumstances. If you owe money to other creditors, we recognise you are likely to be under financial stresses. We will collect debts courteously, sympathetically and efficiently.

WE WILL USE COURT ACTION IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES IF COLLECTION PROCEDURES FAIL

If we have followed our procedures and you still owe us money, we will pursue the debt through either a Debt Recovery Agent or the County Court. This might mean you incur additional debts for bailiffs fees or court costs and you may have a County Court Judgment (CCJ) against you.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE
CONTACT US AT:**

Benefits Team
East Hampshire District Council
Penns Place
Petersfield
Hants GU31 4EX
Tel: 01730 234161
Email: benefits@easthants.gov.uk

HOW TO PAY

Direct Debit – Direct Debit is the most convenient way to pay as you only need to set up one instruction with your bank, which remains in force until you decide to cancel it. Please contact the Overpayments Officer (01730 234161) to set up the Direct Debit.

Internet – You can pay by debit / credit card over the internet. Visit www.easthants.gov.uk/pay and follow the guidance, quoting your Invoice Number starting 91.

Dial and Pay by debit/credit card – Use the telephone to make a card payment direct to the Council. The facility is normally available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 01730 234413 and follow the guidance, quoting your Invoice Number starting 91.

Telephone / internet banking – Use the internet or telephone to make payment. Provide your bank or building society with the following information: Payment amount, Sort Code: 60-16-26 Account Number 66428777. Please quote your Invoice Number starting 91.

Bank Standing Order - Please use the following details to set up a Bank Standing Order, which will need to be set up by you and cancelled by you. National Westminster Bank Sort Code: 601626 Account: 66428777 Please quote your Invoice Number starting 91

At your bank – Complete a payment slip with the following information:
Payment amount, Sort Code: 60-16-26
Account Number 66428777 Please quote your Invoice Number starting 91.

Housing Benefit overpayments

***DO YOU OWE US MONEY
FOR
OVERPAID HOUSING
BENEFIT?***

***ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT
MAKING REPAYMENTS?***

IF **YES**, THIS LEAFLET CAN
HELP

**East
Hampshire**
DISTRICT COUNCIL