What to do if you think your benefit decision is wrong

Do you understand your Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support decision?
When we have dealt with your claim for either Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support, we will send you a decision letter that shows the information we have used to work out your entitlement. You should check this information carefully.

If you do not understand our decision, you should get in touch with us and ask us to explain the decision. You can get in touch by phone or by letter, or you can call in to our office. You can ask us to explain in writing how we have worked out your entitlement. This is called a ‘Statement of Reasons’ and you must ask for the written explanation within one calendar month of your decision letter.

If you ask us for more information after one calendar month, we will still explain the decision to you verbally but we may not be able to look at the decision again if you think it is wrong.

What should I do if I think my Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support decision is wrong?
If we have explained our decision to you and you think it is wrong, you can ask us to:

- Look at the decision again; or
- Pass your case to an independent tribunal run by the Tribunals Service.

You must complete the dispute form or write and tell us why you think your benefit is wrong. You must also tell us whether you want us to look at the decision again or pass your case to the Tribunals Service. We must get your dispute form or letter within one calendar month of the date on your decision letter. The one-month time limit does not include any time it takes us to send you a ‘Statement of Reasons’.

For example, if the date of your decision is 1 August, you can dispute the decision up to 1 September. But, if you ask us for a statement of reasons on 6 August and we send it to you on 10 August, you would have an extra five days to dispute the decision. The time limit would end on 6 September.

Information can be made available in other languages, or other formats such as Braille or Audio Tape, on request. Please ask a member of our staff for more information, or if you need any other help or advice. They can arrange to speak to you in your own language if you need them to.

www.doncaster.gov.uk
What happens if I ask you to look at the decision again?

A senior officer who is responsible for making decisions will look at your case. They will check your benefit claim thoroughly and take account of any information you have given in your letter. They could then:

- Decide not to change the decision;
- Change the decision and pay you more; or
- Change the decision and pay you less

We will write and tell you what we have decided.

What if I am still not satisfied?

If you have asked us to look at your case again and you are still not happy with our decision, you can ask us to pass your case to the Tribunals Service. This is known as an appeal. You must do this by completing the dispute form or writing to us within one calendar month of the date on our decision letter.

In exceptional circumstances the time limit for requesting an appeal can be extended. The written request must include the reasons for not appealing at the appropriate time, as well as why you think your Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support is wrong. A request for an extension of the time limit will not be considered if it is made 13 months after the benefit decision letter was issued.

If we have not changed our decision, or if we have decided to pay you less and you have already asked us to pass your case to the Tribunals Service, we will do this automatically.

What happens if you pass my case to the Tribunals Service?

If your case is passed to the Tribunals Service you will be sent a copy of the council’s case and a form asking whether you wish your appeal to be dealt with in writing or by attending in person.

If you choose not to go to the hearing, the tribunal will look at your case papers, including any information you have given them, to decide your appeal.

If you choose to go to the hearing, you can take someone with you to represent you, such as a member of an advice service. The members of the tribunal may ask you questions about your case and you can ask them questions. Normally, one of our officers will also be at the hearing and they can ask you and the tribunal questions.
The Tribunals Service will write and tell you their decision. They will also write and tell us.

More help and advice

If you need more help and advice about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, please see our other fact sheets or get in touch with us.

Phone us: 01302 735336

Write to us: Doncaster Council, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Section, Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster, DN1 3BU

In person: Our counter at the Civic Office is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5pm.

Fax: 01302 735134

Email: housing.benefit@doncaster.gov.uk (For general enquiries)

You can also hand in forms and documents at any of the neighbourhood Customer Service Centres or St Leger Homes Area Housing offices.

You can get independent advice about your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support from the Citizens Advice Bureau.