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Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the difference it makes to Housing Benefit.

February 08

Dear Claimant

From 7 April 2008, the Housing Benefit system administered by Spelthorne Borough Council will change for the majority of new tenants who rent from the private sector. Their benefit claim will be determined under the new Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rules. It will also affect any current claimants who move or have a break in their benefit claim.

The changes affect how Housing Benefit is worked out and how it is paid. There are no changes to the entitlement rules - this will continue to be based on a person's income, savings and proof of a valid tenancy. Instead of your benefit being calculated using the rent amount, it will be based on a set band of rates particular to your household.

The key change to landlords is that LHA will be paid to the claimant and not to the landlord.

There are circumstances where payment can be made to the landlord, e.g. if the tenant is in serious arrears with the rent, or deemed to be vulnerable. By vulnerable we mean someone who may have difficulty managing their money. We do not mean someone who would rather pay their rent direct to their landlord.

Spelthorne Borough Council will have one band of rates and the Rent Service will set LHA rates based on average rents for one, two, three and four bedrooms. These will be published on our website and in the Council Offices so that landlords and prospective tenants will be clear about how much of their rent will be met by LHA.

Enclosed are frequently asked questions and answers.

If you have any queries regarding LHA, please contact the Council Benefit Office on the above number or email benefits@spelthorne.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

J.A. Singer, I.R.R.V.

