

# BEDROOM TAX



## ... AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you rent from the council or a Housing Association, you may have had a letter or a visit from a housing officer to say you have to pay more rent. It only affects people on low incomes who get housing benefit and it only affects working age people.

**Sheffield Green Party**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, you are allowed:

- One room for a couple
- One room for a person who is 16 or over
- One room for two children of the same sex;
- One room for two children under 10
- One room for a child not in the categories above,
- an extra room if you or your partner need an overnight carer.
- an extra room if you or your partner are foster carers (or registered as foster carers)
- an extra room if it is for an adult son or daughter who is away in the armed forces.

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If you have more bedrooms than this, your housing benefit will be reduced:

- by 14% of your eligible rent (rent minus water rates) if you have one bedroom 'spare'
- by 25% if you have more than one bedroom 'spare'

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You are exempt if:

- a) you or your partner are pensioners.
- b) you didn't claim housing benefit when you first moved in to your home and haven't claimed in the 52 weeks before your current claim – exempt for 13 weeks.
- c) anyone in your household has died - exempt for 12 months
- d) You have a shared ownership scheme (even if you own only 1% of the property)
- e) You are homeless and in a B&B

# WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THE BEDROOM TAX

1. Check the letters. Make sure the council knows how many people live in your house. Sometimes, they don't know about younger children.
2. Tell the council if you or your partner need overnight care. You are entitled to have a bedroom for this.
3. Tell the council if you or your partner are foster carers or are registered to foster. You are entitled to have a bedroom for this.
4. Tell the council if you have children who cannot share a bedroom because of a disability. If it is not appropriate for them to share, the council should allow extra housing benefit for a bedroom to avoid breaches of human rights protection.
5. Check if you are entitled to any other benefits, especially if anyone in your family has a disability.
6. Tell the council if you could afford the rent when you first moved in and if you had 52 weeks without claiming housing benefit.
7. Tell the council if you have had a family death in the last 12 months.
8. If one of the bedrooms is very small (e.g. less than 7 square metres or if you can't fit a bed in and close the door), tell the Council if you think it shouldn't really count as a bedroom at all. It will help if your landlord agrees but it is not essential.
9. Appeal to an independent tribunal if you're not happy.
10. Think about moving to a smaller housing – ask the Council for priority.
11. Move to a private rented property, even if it is larger or more expensive – you can receive up to the “Local Housing Allowance” rates to pay a private landlord (currently £395 pcm if you are entitled to a one-bed, £460 pcm for a two-bed, £495 a month for a three-bed and £650 a month for a four-bed)
12. Apply for a discretionary housing payment (DHP). Ring 273 6983 or e-mail [benefits@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@sheffield.gov.uk). The forms are quite difficult and ask for a weekly budget. Ask your housing officer to help you fill them in.
13. Above all, talk to someone about it. Legal aid for benefits problems is being cut from 1<sup>st</sup> April too but advice centres will still offer help. Ring 205 5055 to book an appointment.
14. Contact your local councillor: details at [councillors.sheffield.gov.uk/](http://councillors.sheffield.gov.uk/) or ring 273 4096 to find out.

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