

The Under Occupancy Charge or Bedroom Tax

Takes effect from April 2013

Who Will Be Affected?

- Council or Housing Association Tenants who have one spare bedroom will lose 14% of their Housing benefit. If you have two or more spare bedrooms you will lose 25% of your Housing Benefit.
- The number of bedrooms in your property will be as defined on your tenancy agreement. There appears to be no set minimum size.
- One bedroom is allowed for each:
 - Single adult aged 16 or over.
 - Each adult couple
 - Any two children of the same gender aged under 16
 - Any two children of different gender aged under 10
 - Any other child whose main home is with you.
 - A carer who provides overnight care, but does not live with you (you need to prove to the council that you need a carer).
 - Anybody over the minimum age for Pension Credit is exempt. This is currently about 61 ½.

What can I do?

- Some people will need to consider moving home, which is obviously a big change and may cause a lot of worry.
- You may want to consider if you can budget for the loss in benefit and cope by changing your spending patterns.
- Taking in lodgers is not something to rush at as the extra income can reduce your Housing Benefit still further, but may be a possibility. You also lose your privacy, and may be at risk of exploitation. It is a possibility for some people.
- You may be able to find a job or increase your working hours. Do consider carefully if this is a realistic option if you have health issues.
- You may be under claiming other benefits and could seek advice about making sure you claim all you are entitled to.
- Some people will be eligible for a top up in Housing Benefit called a Discretionary Housing Payment. It is worth seeking advice on this.

If you are not sure if you will be affected or how to manage, you should ask for advice.

The Mind in Croydon Welfare Benefits Advice Line 0208 763 2037

Our Advice Line is answered on Tuesday 10am – 1pm and Thursday 2pm – 5pm