

Housing & Council Tax Benefits Overpayments Strategy

Introduction

We aim to ensure that customers receive the benefits they are entitled to. However, sometimes people receive too much benefit, because they don't tell us about changes in their circumstances, they provide incorrect information or we make a mistake. This strategy sets out how we will deal with benefits overpayments. We recognise that each customer's personal circumstances are different, and our strategy takes this into account.

Priorities for dealing with overpayments

We will

- assess Housing and Council Tax Benefit entitlement promptly and accurately
- identify overpayments as soon as possible
- classify them correctly for subsidy purposes
- decide whether the overpayment is 'recoverable' under the benefits legislation
- notify the customer of our decision about their benefits as soon as possible, including their right of appeal
- collect the overpayment, where appropriate, efficiently and effectively

Where the overpayment has arisen as a result of a fraudulent claim or a deliberate failure to report a change of circumstances, it will normally be treated as recoverable.

We will use our discretion, in accordance with legislation, the Overpayments Policy and the Debt Recovery Strategy, when collecting an overpayment.

Our commitment

We will

- avoid discrimination when dealing with overpayments
- publish information about overpayments as widely and clearly as possible to make people aware of our approach
- deal with appeals and complaints fairly and effectively
- consider personal circumstances (including hardship) when recovering overpayments.