Quick Guide

Guide to Responding to Service Overcharging

Applicable to Housing Benefit Recipients

Introduction

With tenants and residents regularly overcharged for services, addressing the 'error' can be difficult, stressful, and time-consuming. Even where the landlord admits the overcharging, it can be some time until the overpayment is refunded.

 If the council pays you Housing Benefit, letting the local authority know may be a quicker path to resolving the issue than the landlord's complaint process. However, you should always raise the issue with your landlord first, and give them at least a fortnight in which to respond. We only recommend letting the council know if the landlord fails to act after a reasonable time.

This guide provides a template text for a letter or email, asking the council to suspend the service charge payment until they are satisfied that the charges are accurate.

Template Letter or Email

Your council should have a specific email address for Housing Benefit queries.

To whom it may concern:

I am a resident of [Borough Name] living in a [Housing Association Name] property, for which [Council Name] pays Housing Benefit.

My details are as follows:

- Full name: [Full Name]

- Housing Benefit reference number: [Reference]

- Address: [House Number, Street, Postcode]

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My landlord has advised me that it is charging me £X to provide [Description of Charge Item]. However, I am not receiving this service from them.

I contacted them to challenge the charge on [Date] but to date have not received any response.

I would therefore be grateful if you could withhold payment of the service charge element of my Housing Benefit to [Housing Association Name], explaining the reason for the suspension, until such time as my query is resolved. I am anxious to make sure that the council's funding is not being erroneously claimed by the landlord.

Please confirm once this is being done.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

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