



Íocaíocht Cúnaimh Tithíochta
Housing Assistance Payment

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

Tenant Information Booklet

Your questions answered

www.hap.ie



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Housing Assistance Payment

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About this booklet

This booklet aims to answer questions that you, as a tenant, might have about the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme. You may also wish to visit www.hap.ie

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Tenant Information Booklet

Your questions answered



1 What is the Housing Assistance Payment scheme (HAP)?

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities. Under HAP, local authorities can provide housing assistance to households with a long-term housing need, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients.

HAP simplifies the current system of housing supports. It also allows households that get full-time work to remain in the scheme. If you are eligible and approved for HAP, your local authority will make a monthly payment to your landlord, subject to rent limits and conditions, on your behalf. In return, you pay a contribution towards your rent to the local authority. This 'rent contribution' is based on your household income. It is calculated in the same way as the rent paid by a tenant of a local authority owned property.

2 How will HAP benefit me?

HAP will:

- Allow recipients to work full-time, while still receiving housing support.
- The rent contribution payable by the HAP recipient will be based on the 'differential rent scheme' for their local authority. This scheme links the rent contribution a household must pay to the household income and the ability to pay.
- Help to improve standards of accommodation and to regulate the private rental sector. Local authorities will inspect the rental property to make sure that they meet the required standards.
- Allow HAP recipients to avail of other social housing supports and options, if they so choose.
- Mean that local authorities will be the single point of contact for all social housing supports.



3 How does HAP work?

- a) HAP recipients find their own accommodation in the private rented market. This accommodation should be within the HAP rent limits. These limits are based on the size of your household and the rental market in your area. Your local authority will let you know what the rent limits are.
- b) Your local authority will make a HAP payment directly to your landlord, on the last Wednesday of each month.
- c) Payment of HAP to your landlord is subject to certain terms and conditions. For example, you, as a HAP tenant, must pay your rent contribution to your local authority or HAP payments may be suspended and ultimately stopped.
- d) The earliest date from which your local authority will make HAP payments to your landlord is the date they receive a complete and valid HAP application form from you and your landlord. If you move into a property before this date, you will have to pay any rent due yourself. After agreeing a tenancy with your landlord, you need to return the valid and complete HAP application form to your local authority as soon as possible.
- e) Your local authority decides what level of differential rent you will be asked to pay and what level of HAP payment will be made to your landlord on your behalf. All local authorities use the services of the HAP Shared Services Centre, which is based in Limerick, to collect all differential rents from HAP tenants and to make all HAP rental payments to landlords.
- f) Your tenancy will be covered under the terms of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (RTA) (as amended). This means that the tenancy agreement is, or will be, between you and your landlord. The local authority is not your landlord. Your landlord is the person you made the rental agreement with and who the local authority pays the HAP payment to. You can find further information about this on the RTB website www.rtb.ie



- g) Under HAP, you are allowed to work full time and continue to benefit from HAP. Payments to your landlord will continue. As your income increases, your rent contribution to the local authority will also increase. This occurs in the same way for local authority owned properties. You must notify the local authority immediately of any changes in your income.
- h) Your rent contribution will be paid by electronic means. If you are receiving social welfare payments paid through the post office, you will pay your rent contribution through the Household Budget Scheme. This will help you to make sure that your rent contribution is up to date.
- i) Your local authority will arrange to inspect your accommodation within eight months of the first HAP payment made to your landlord. This is to make sure that your accommodation meets the rental housing standards that apply to all privately rented properties.
- j) Once approved for HAP, the local authority will expect you to stay in the same property for at least two years. However, you may be able to apply to your local authority for a new HAP payment for another property sooner if your circumstances change. For example, if you receive a job offer in another area, or if your family changes in size and the property is no longer big enough. Your relationship as a tenant with your landlord, as provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act, is unaffected by this arrangement.

4 Can I transfer to another housing support?

Yes. Any HAP recipient who wants to access other social housing supports, not through the current waiting list system, but through the transfer system operated by local authorities, can do so. Once in receipt of HAP, you can apply to transfer from HAP to other forms of social housing support such as local authority housing.

As a HAP recipient, your likelihood of getting a different form of Social Housing Support is not affected by accepting HAP.



5 Are there limits on HAP payments?

Yes. Under HAP legislation, limits for HAP payments are based on the number of people in a household and the rental market in the locality. However, local authorities have limited additional flexibility to exceed rent limits on a case-by-case basis. You can get further information on the limits that apply to accommodation suited to your household from your local authority.

6 Who is eligible for HAP?

To be eligible for HAP, you must first apply for and be approved for social housing support by your local authority. If your household is already on your local authority's housing list, you will be eligible for HAP. If you are on your local authority's housing list and currently in receipt of Rent Supplement, you will be eligible for HAP.

Rent Supplement will still be available from the Department of Social Protection for people who don't qualify for Social Housing Support – for example, someone who is temporarily unemployed. Normally, to get Rent Supplement, you need to show that you have been renting in the private sector for at least six months of the previous year and that you could afford your rent at the beginning of the tenancy. You may also qualify if you have received Rent Supplement at any time during the 12 months before applying.

7 What conditions must be met for HAP?

For a local authority to make a HAP payment directly to your landlord on your behalf, you must meet the following conditions:

- a) You must pay your weekly rent contribution to the local authority. If you don't pay this rent contribution, HAP payments to your landlord will be suspended or stopped.



- b) You, or any member of your household, must not engage in antisocial behaviour.
- c) Your accommodation must meet the standards for rented accommodation. Your local authority will carry out an inspection to make sure the property meets these standards. This inspection will be arranged within eight months from the time the first HAP payment is made to your landlord.
- d) Your landlord must be tax compliant – this means that the landlord’s tax affairs must be in order and they must be able to supply evidence of tax compliance to the local authority.

Your local authority may not approve a HAP application if the accommodation is not suitable for your household’s needs. You should also note that your local authority can decide not to make HAP payments in certain circumstances – for example, they could stop payments if a member of your household is engaged in antisocial behaviour.

8 How do I apply for HAP?

Once you are qualified for social housing support, you are eligible to apply for HAP.

If you are already on your local authority’s housing list, you can ask for the HAP application form and find your own accommodation. The HAP application form only needs to be filled in **after** you have found accommodation that suits you. This could be your existing accommodation if you are in receipt of Rent Supplement. If this is the case, you need to talk to your landlord as they need to agree to the terms and conditions of the HAP scheme.

If you have been receiving Rent Supplement for a significant period of time, the Department of Social Protection may ask you to contact your local authority about your social housing support qualification, and applying for HAP.



9 What documents do I need when applying for HAP?

If you are a new applicant for social housing support, you first need to fill out the Social Housing Support application form. You then need to send your completed form to your local authority along with all of the documents needed to assess your case. You will get a list of these documents on your local authority's Social Housing Support application form.

If you're approved for social housing support, or if you are already on your local authority's housing list, you will need to fill in the HAP application form. Both you and your landlord **must** sign this form. Most of the information on this form is about the accommodation, and the form also includes sections that your landlord needs to complete. The accommodation may be the property you are already living in if you are an existing Rent Supplement recipient, and your existing landlord agrees to enter the HAP scheme. A landlord may return their part of the HAP Application Form (Part B) with the relevant information separately to the local authority.

If your application is approved, you will sign a Rent Contribution Agreement with your local authority in the same way as others receiving social housing support. You may also be asked to provide a copy of the tenancy agreement with your landlord. Your landlord may also be asked to provide additional information – for example, evidence of their tax compliance.

10 How often is HAP paid?

Normally, a HAP payment will be made to your landlord on the last Wednesday of each month. This payment covers your stay in the property for that calendar month. The payment is subject to terms and conditions including rent limits, and that you pay your weekly rent contribution to your local authority.



11 Will my landlord know about HAP?

Many landlords will be aware of HAP, but if you would like to provide your landlord with more information about HAP, your local authority will give you an information booklet which you can give to your landlord. The booklet will explain how HAP works for landlords and outline the advantages of the scheme for them. These booklets and more general information on the scheme are available online at www.hap.ie

12 Do I have to pay the deposit?

Yes. Under HAP, the local authority will not pay a deposit to your landlord. You will be responsible for paying the deposit yourself. In some circumstances, you may be eligible to apply for assistance from the Department of Social Protection to help with paying a deposit. This is subject to approval by the Department of Social Protection.

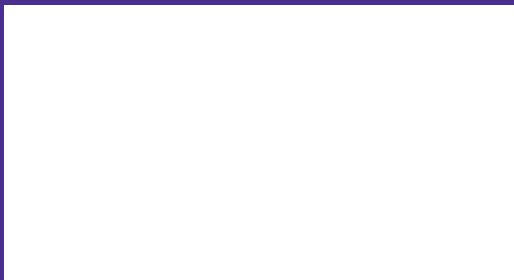
13 What happens to my Rent Supplement if I move to HAP?

If you enter the HAP scheme, your Rent Supplement payments will stop once your application for HAP has been approved. Both you, as tenant, and your landlord will be written to at this point to clearly explain the process.

The Department of Social Protection will continue to pay Rent Supplement to tenants who don't qualify for social housing support - for example, someone who loses income through temporary unemployment. When they return to work, there is no longer a need for support.

14 Where can I find more information on HAP?

Contact the Housing Section of your local authority.



For further information about HAP, visit www.hap.ie or

The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government website: www.housing.gov.ie

or Citizen's Information website: www.citizensinformation.ie



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