

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

The Housing Assistance Payment was set up to help people who have been assessed as being in long term housing need to secure accommodation. It is intended that all social housing supports will come to be assessed through one governing body in the future. HAP is administered by the county and city councils and is in operation across the country.

How does the HAP scheme work?

Under the HAP scheme your local county council will pay the rent directly to your landlord. You are then required to pay an agreed contribution, based on your weekly means, directly to the county council housing. The amount you contribute will be calculated based on your income and ability to pay. Income and rent limits will vary depending on your location so you will need to check with your local county council before you seek housing.

How do I know if I qualify for HAP?

In order to qualify for HAP you will have to have been assessed and found to have been in housing need, by your local county council. If you meet the criteria you will be placed on the housing list. Generally this will mean that you need to be living in the area covered by the council or have a connection to the area and your income does not exceed the threshold given. If you earn below the amount set out for your family type, then you may qualify for the HAP scheme.

How do I get assessed to see if I qualify to be placed on the housing list?

To be assessed as being in housing need you will need to contact your local county council housing department. They will determine your eligibility based on your personal circumstances, income level and housing needs. This usually entails completing a detailed application form and you will be asked to include certain documents with your application. If you are considered eligible for social housing then you will be placed on the housing list.

Can I transfer to HAP if I am receiving Rent Supplement?

No. If you are already in receipt of Rent Supplement then in time you can expect to be contacted by the county council you are registered with regarding social housing support, such as the HAP scheme.

Will the housing authority find suitable accommodation for me?

No. Under the HAP scheme you will have to find your own accommodation and it will have to be suitable for you. You will need to ensure that your landlord is willing to go on to the Housing Assistance Payment scheme as they will be entering into an agreement with the local housing authority directly.

Are there any benefits to my landlord for joining the HAP scheme?

Yes. The rent will be paid into their account usually on the last Wednesday of each month making the scheme hassle free as the payment is consistent. Landlords can also claim 100% on their mortgage interest, as an expense against rental income.

What relationship will I have with my landlord?

Your relationship with your landlord is the same as any other tenancy agreement. The only difference is that you will pay your rent contribution directly to your local authority (not your landlord). You will however have a tenancy agreement in place with your landlord. Both you and your landlord will have responsibilities to each other as set out by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) requirements and your tenancy agreement. For example, your landlord has responsibilities to maintain the property in good condition, internally and externally and to attend to repairs within a reasonable timeframe.

How much rent will I pay?

The amount of rent that you pay will depend on your income and the rate will be assessed based on the Differential Rent Scheme of your local authority. This assessment is the same scheme as tenants of local authority housing. If your income is low then your rent contribution will be low; the more you earn the more rent you pay.

What happens if I don't pay my rent contribution?

Failure to pay your contribution will result in your landlord not receiving payment putting you at risk of losing your accommodation.

Further information is available from www.hap.ie

From 1st January 2016 a landlord cannot discriminate against a person in receipt of Rent Supplement, housing assistance or any payment under the Social Welfare Acts.

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