

# LHA Safeguard Policy

## Local Housing Allowance - Safeguard Policy

### Background

Local Housing Allowance is being introduced with effect from 7 April 2008. The six Gloucestershire Local Authorities are working together in partnership to prepare for the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) scheme.

LHA is a Housing Benefit scheme for people living in private rented sector accommodation, with some exceptions to the scheme including:

- Local Authority tenancies
- Housing Association tenancies
- Supported accommodation provided by Local Authorities, social landlords, charities or voluntary organisations
- Tenancies that started before 15 January 1989
- Tenancies in caravans, houseboats, mobile homes and hostels
- Tenancies with substantial board and attendance

LHA is usually paid to the tenant. Under LHA a tenant cannot simply request that payment is made to their landlord.

To protect vulnerable tenants the Local Authority will apply discretion to pay the landlord. This policy sets out the guidelines by which council officers will make decisions.

### Decision Making

If it is decided that:

- A tenant is vulnerable payment of LHA will be made to the landlord
- A tenant is not vulnerable payment of LHA will be made to the tenant

### Aims and Objectives

- To have robust procedures to ensure customers are treated fairly and in a consistent manner when moving between the Local Authorities within the county
- To provide a safeguard for the most vulnerable tenants and reassure them that their benefit will be paid direct to their landlord
- To help prevent rent arrears and tenants being put at risk of eviction

- To help sustain tenancies for vulnerable tenants
- To reassure landlords that their rent will be paid if they have vulnerable tenants or are approached by vulnerable tenants
- To help put tenants in touch with other agencies where necessary and allow people the opportunity and support to manage their own financial affairs
- To provide a framework enabling reasonable, fair and consistent decisions to be made
- To promote a transparent and simple process that is widely understood
- To treat each case individually and to avoid making assumptions about people's situations

The policy is not designed to:

- Supersede support that is being received by tenants and helping them to be responsible for their own income and expenditure
- Be a blanket policy for agencies providing support to private tenants
- Be used by landlords to circumvent the aims of LHA

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