

DISPUTES AND APPEALS FORM

Please return this form to:

Benefits Team
PO Box 4
Lancaster
LA1 1QR

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

From 1 April 2013 disputes about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support are dealt with differently. Please read the explanation below about the differences, complete pages 2 and 3 of this form and return it to the council.

HOUSING BENEFIT

If you think any part of our decision is wrong you can dispute it in three ways:

1. Ask for an explanation of the decision – this is known as a written statement of reasons
2. Ask us to look at the decision again
3. Appeal against the decision

We recommend that if you do not understand our decision that you ask for an explanation straight away. If you think the information used to make our decision is wrong or you have additional information that we were not aware of, then you should ask us to look at the decision again. If the information we have is correct and complete, but you think we have interpreted it incorrectly then you should appeal.

If you want us to look at the decision again or if you want to appeal against it, you should complete this form, giving your reasons in full, and return it to the Benefits Team at Lancaster City Council within one month of the date on the decision letter.

If you ask us to look at the decision again and you still disagree with our response then you have a further month to make an appeal. We refer Housing Benefit appeals to the independent Tribunal Services and a Judge decides whether or not the council's decision is correct.

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Written statement of reasons

If you are unsure how your Council Tax Support has been calculated, you can ask for a written statement of reasons. The request must be in writing to the Benefits Team at Lancaster City Council and should be made within one month of the date of our decision. We will generally send you a written statement of the reasons for our decision within 14 days.

What to do if you want to dispute the decision about your Council Tax Support

If you think any part of the decision is wrong you must first write to the council giving the reasons why you think the decision is wrong. You can do this at any time. We will then write to you to let you know if the decision has been changed or not. If you still think the council's decision is wrong you then have two months to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. You will need to fill in their appeal form and send this to the Valuation Tribunal yourself. The Valuation Tribunal prefer you to do this online at:

www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/Council_Tax/Forms.aspx

If you have not got access to the internet then you should write to them at:

VT Office
Hepworth House
2 Trafford Court
Doncaster
DN1 1PN

If we fail to respond to your original letter of dispute within two months of receipt then you have the right to appeal directly to the Valuation Tribunal.

ABOUT YOU

Your full name

Mr/ Mrs/ Miss/ Ms
(delete as appropriate)

Your address

Postcode

Your benefits reference number (if you know it)

Your national insurance number

Have you arranged for someone to help you with your dispute or appeal?

Yes

No

Their full name

Mr/ Mrs/ Miss/ Ms
(delete as appropriate)

Their address

Postcode

Their telephone number

Please sign here to authorise that person to act for you

ABOUT THE DECISION

Which Benefit(s) notification letter do you want to dispute?

Housing Benefit

Council Tax Support

Both

What is the date at the top of the notification letter that you want to dispute?

/ /

If you think our decision is wrong, you have 3 choices. Please tick the one(s) that apply to you:

- I would like a written explanation of your decision
- I would like you to look at your decision again
- I would like to make an appeal to the Tribunals Service - Housing Benefit only

now turn over the page

Fair Processing Notification

We will use the information you provide in this form and by other means to process your claim for benefit, in a manner compatible with the Data Protection Act.

We may check the information provided by you, or by someone else about you, against other details we already have. By law we may also ask other local authorities, agencies, organisations and government departments to give us information they have about you to:

- make sure the information is accurate
- prevent or detect fraud; and
- protect public funds.

Information given on this form may be passed to Experian, a credit agency, and used by our investigation team in order to check for undeclared co-habitors. The information that you give to the council will also be used to provide you with the services that you need. In this respect, your information may be shared with other council departments, but only the minimum necessary to achieve the objective, and only where you have given your consent or where the law allows.

Information shared in relation to the above will remain secure at all times, and will only be shared with those people who are responsible for providing you with the service or information that you require.

If you want to know more about the Councils approach to data protection please contact benefits@lancaster.gov.uk or telephone 01524 582965. Any benefit we provide will be based on the information you have given us. We will write to you with a decision about your claim. We will aim to do this within 14 days, or as soon as reasonably possible. The letter will tell you all the details we have used to work out your benefit. If you disagree with any of these details, you should tell us immediately. The letter also tells you how to appeal our decision.

Where to go for help and advice

You can contact the Benefits Team:

- By telephone on (01524) 582965 between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday
- By calling into the Customer Service Centres at Lancaster Town Hall or Morecambe Town Hall between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.
- By e-mail at benefits@lancaster.gov.uk
- Customers with hearing difficulties can contact us via Tynetalk on 18001 01524 582965.
- General information about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support is available on the Council's website at www.lancaster.gov.uk/benefits

You can obtain independent advice from the following organisations:

Name	Citizens Advice Bureau		Welfare Rights Service
Address	87 King Street Lancaster LA1 1RH	Oban House 87-89 Queen Street Morecambe LA4 5EN	White Cross South Road Lancaster LA1 4XQ
Tel. number	(01524) 400404		0845 053 0013
Email address	enquiries@northlancashirercab.org.uk		lancasterwrs@lancashire.gov.uk

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