

Social Security Policy and
Legislation Division



Consultee

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15 December 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

SUPPORTING PEOPLE INTO WORK: THE NEXT STAGE OF HOUSING BENEFIT REFORM

The Department for Work and Pensions issued a Consultation Paper "Supporting people into work: the next stage of Housing Benefit reform" on 15 December 2009.

The paper considers how Housing Benefit should be reformed to deliver a simpler and fairer system of housing support which supports work incentives and pays a fair rate of benefit while also protecting the taxpayer. It also sets out the long-term ambition for Housing Benefit reform.

Although we are currently considering the implications of the proposals for Northern Ireland, we wanted to issue the Department for Work and Pensions' paper now, to give organisations and individuals in Northern Ireland an opportunity to submit views and comments on the proposals.

There are some significant differences between Housing Benefit in Great Britain and Northern Ireland which should be borne in mind when considering the Department for Work and Pensions' document. In Great Britain, Housing Benefit relates to rent and, in Northern Ireland, it relates to rent and also rates (as Northern Ireland retained domestic rates and did not introduce Council Tax, for which there is a separate benefit in Great Britain). In Great Britain, Housing Benefit is administered by approximately 400 separate Local Authorities while, in Northern Ireland, Housing Benefit for tenants is administered by one body (the Northern Ireland Housing Executive). Under Local Housing Allowance arrangements, Housing Benefit in Great Britain is paid to the tenant as the norm, while in Northern Ireland the tenant normally has the choice of receiving the benefit or having it paid direct to the landlord.

As the structure of the Northern Ireland Housing Benefit Scheme largely mirrors the Great Britain Scheme, any views or comments put forward by respondents in

Northern Ireland will be passed to the Department for Work and Pensions for consideration.

There is no direct read across from Great Britain to Northern Ireland on the relationship between housing and Housing Benefit. The proposals relating to the management of accommodation within the private rented sector and the way in which Housing Benefit can support this reflect the situation in Great Britain. We are not, therefore, seeking comments on the proposals for Great Britain, but we should welcome your comments on the relationship between housing and Housing Benefit as they relate to Northern Ireland.

An electronic version of the document is available at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/> or <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations.htm> and it can also be made available in alternative formats. Please contact us if this format does not meet your needs.

Please send your comments to:

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The closing date for receipt of comments is **22 February 2010**.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne McCleary'.

Anne McCleary (Miss)
Director of Social Security Policy and Legislation