

# Supporting People

A question and answer guide to tell you about the changes in the way your Sheltered Housing Service will be paid for from 7th April 2003.



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**What services will it cover?**

Supporting People will cover the support services you receive from the Sheltered Scheme Manager and the Linkline Community alarm service. It will also pay for the weekly cleaning service to individual flats provided by Carewatch that some of you have requested.

Supporting people won't affect the Home Care services. You will go on paying for them, or having them paid for, in the same way as before.

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**How are the support services paid for now?**

At present part of your rent pays for your support services. This part is called the support charge.

At the moment all Hounslow Homes sheltered tenants pay their support charge as part of their rent.

If you get housing benefit, the benefit may be covering some or all of your support charge.

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From April, your support charge will be separated from your rent. All existing tenants in sheltered housing **WILL NOT HAVE TO PAY THE SUPPORT CHARGE**. All existing tenants will be protected from this support charge whatever their income.

**What will change?**

The rent card you have received will show the two separate amounts that are being charged - the rent and the support charge, however you do not have to pay the support charge. If you are getting some housing benefit and are paying some of the rent yourself, the amount you pay will stay the same.

Each Council will have a Supporting People fund. If you are an existing sheltered tenant, the Council will pay direct to Hounslow Homes your support charge out of the Supporting People fund instead of from housing benefit.

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**Will I have to pay more for my support services because of this change?**

No. You will not have to pay more than you pay now. Supporting people will not cost you any extra.

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**Will I still get housing benefit?**

Yes, you will still get housing benefit to help you pay your rent.

Are you sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to? Ask a Sheltered Scheme Manager if you think you might be able to claim more benefit.

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**What if I don't get any housing benefit?**

If you now pay all your rent yourself and do not get any housing benefit you will not have to pay the support charge because of the protection offered to existing sheltered tenants.

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New tenants who move into your sheltered scheme after April 2003 can apply for housing benefits to pay their rent. If they get housing benefit (even if it's a small amount) the Supporting People fund will automatically pay all their support charge.

If they do not qualify for housing benefit they should apply to the Council for a financial assessment to see how much of the support charge they have to pay themselves and how much supporting people will pay.

This means that after April 2003 new tenants may be paying a different amount for their support than you are.

**What about new tenants who move in after April 2003?**

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**Why the change?**

The Government says that in future housing benefit must only be used for basic housing costs not for support services.

Support services must be funded separately under the control of each Council. This is to make sure that the services are:

- The type of support that local people actually want
- In places where people really need them
- Of a high quality

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**Will there be any other changes under Supporting People?**

The Council has a contract with Hounslow Homes for the support services provided in the sheltered schemes. The Supporting People team will review every contract before deciding whether to renew it. In this way they will make sure you get a high quality, cost-effective support service that meets your needs.

They will listen to your views as a user of the support service when they review the service.

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One of the aims of Supporting People is to give tenants more influence over their support services, so that in the long term, they will be better able to meet peoples needs. This means that Hounslow Homes must involve tenants like you. We want you to tell us:

### **How can I get more involved in Supporting People?**

- What type and level of support you need.
- How effective current services are.
- How good is the quality of the services.
- How can services be improved.

So, by telling us what you think, you can play an important part in planning your support services. Please ask your Sheltered Scheme Manager how you can get involved.

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