

Under Occupation in Social Housing (sometimes referred to as ‘bedroom tax’ or ‘spare room subsidy’)

Welfare reforms will cut the amount of benefit that people can get if they are deemed to have a spare bedroom in their council or housing association home – find out how this will affect people.

The Government has said that it will introduce new size criteria for housing benefit claims in social housing. This will apply from April 2013 to tenants of working age.

The power to do this is contained in the Welfare Reform Act, which received Royal Assent on 8th March 2012.

What do the changes mean?

The size criteria in the social rented sector will restrict housing benefit to allow for one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household, with the following exceptions:

- Children under 16 of same gender expected to share
- Children under 10 expected to share regardless of gender
- Disabled tenant or partner who needs non resident overnight carer will be allowed an extra bedroom

Who will be affected?

All claimants who are deemed to have at least one spare bedroom will be affected. This includes:

- Separated parents who share the care of their children and who may have been allocated an extra bedroom to reflect this. Benefit rules mean that there must be a designated ‘main carer’ for children (who receives the extra benefit)
- Couples who use their ‘spare’ bedroom when recovering from an illness or operation
- Foster carers because foster children are not counted as part of the household for benefit purposes
- Parents whose children visit but are not part of the household
- Families with disabled children
- Disabled people including people living in adapted or specially designed properties.

How much will people lose?

The cut will be a fixed percentage of the Housing Benefit eligible rent. The Government has said that this will be set at 14% for one extra bedroom and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms.