

The 'Size Criteria'

If you are bidding on properties that would provide a spare bedroom then please be aware that from April 2013, any working-age household deemed to be under-occupying their home will lose part of their housing benefit.

Will this affect me?

It will affect you if :

- You are claiming housing benefit

and

- You are of working age (Working age is defined as those below the pension credit age, the Pension Credit age is expected to be over 61 at the time the criteria comes into effect in April 2013)

and

- You are under-occupying a Council or housing association property (meaning your property has more bedrooms than your household will now be entitled to claim housing benefit for)

How do I know if I am under-occupying my property?

When assessing if you are under-occupying the property you are claiming housing benefit for, the following rules will apply:

- One bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household
- Children under 16 of same gender are expected to share regardless of disability
- Any two children under 10 are expected to share
- Disabled tenant or partner who needs non resident overnight carer will be allowed an extra room.

NB: The housing benefit size criteria is not the same as the bedroom entitlement criteria in the HomeChoice Bristol Allocation policy

How much Housing Benefit could I lose?

The cut will be a fixed percentage of the Housing Benefit-eligible rent. This will be set initially at a 14% cut for one extra bedroom and a 25% cut for two or more extra bedrooms. Therefore the higher the rent the higher the amount of money will be deducted from Housing Benefit each week.

The Government has said those with one 'spare' bedroom will lose on average £12 per week (£624 per year) and those with two or more 'spare' bedrooms will lose on average £22 per week (£1,144 per year).

I work and claim housing benefit, will I be affected by these changes?

Yes – and working people will lose the same amount as nonworking households. This is because any deduction will be calculated as a percentage of Housing Benefit-eligible rent – not the actual amount of Housing Benefit received. This means, for example, that a worker who may be receiving a small amount of Housing Benefit could stand to lose their entire support.

What can I do?

- Contact homechoice Bristol and have the the number of bedrooms you require on your application reduced so you can bid on properties without a spare room.
- Ask adult members of the household to contribute more towards the higher rent.
- If you still want the extra space then you will need to budget for a larger housing costs as well as your usual household expenses.