

Changes in your circumstances

This information is for people getting Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.

You must tell the Housing Executive if your situation or needs change. It doesn't matter if you already told another benefits agency, you must tell the Housing Executive if you:

- start working
- claim a new benefit
- have a different income
- must pay a different rent
- have a different number of people in your household
- have a significant birthday that changes your entitlement to Housing Benefit

The Housing Executive will reassess your application and may change your benefit amount. If you don't tell the Housing Executive, you might:

- get less benefit than you should
- need to pay back money
- be prosecuted for fraud

Living in two homes

Usually, you can only get Universal Credit or Housing Benefit on one home that you're currently living in. There are some exceptions, and different circumstances can affect your Universal Credit claim.

You can get Universal Credit for two homes if you:

- have a large family, and your social landlord gave you two homes to live in
- left for certain reasons

Example of these reasons are, if you:

- left due to risk of violence in your home; you can keep claiming Universal Credit for up to 12 months
- left because your home is being repaired
- are [in custody](#) for six months or less
- leave Northern Ireland for more than one month (there are [some exceptions](#) to this rule)

You may be able to get Housing Benefit for two homes for up to 52 weeks if you:

- left your main home because of domestic violence, and
- are paying rent on another property but you still need to pay rent on your home, and
- intend to return to your home

You may be able to get Housing Benefit for up to four weeks if you become responsible for paying rent on two properties at once and this responsibility couldn't be avoided. For example, you're renting from a private landlord and get an offer for a social tenancy. Since you must give four weeks' notice, you may be able to get Housing Benefit to pay for both properties for the four-week period.

Away from your home

You may be able to keep getting the housing cost element of Universal Credit if you leave your home temporarily.

For example, if you:

- are away for six months or less, and
- plan on going back to your home

Leaving Northern Ireland

Your benefits will stop if you leave Northern Ireland for more than one month, unless:

- a close relative (such as a partner, child, or young person living in your home) died and it is unreasonable for you to return to Northern Ireland

within four weeks. You can continue your benefits for eight weeks.

- you or a close relative are getting medical treatment. You can continue your benefits for 26 weeks.
- you're a continental shelf worker, mariner or member of the armed forces posted overseas. You can continue your benefits for 26 weeks.

Unable to live in your home

You may be able to get Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks if you live in Northern Ireland but not in your home because you:

- were admitted to hospital
- are getting medical treatment
- are afraid to return home
- are on remand or in a bail hostel
- had a dependant getting medical treatment
- are in residential accommodation, and plan to return home

You may be able to get Housing Benefit for up to 13 weeks if you're in Northern Ireland but not living in your home because you're:

- on holiday
- in custody for up to 13 weeks
- staying in residential accommodation on a trial basis

Moving homes

You may be able to get Universal Credit to pay rent for up to one month before you move into a property, if you couldn't move in on time because:

- you were in hospital or other type of care home
- the home needs to be adapted for someone with a disability (meaning, they get the daily living component of PIP, the care component of DLA at middle or high rate, or Attendance Allowance)

More advice

- [Claiming Universal Credit](#)
- [Housing Benefit](#)

- [Deductions from your benefits](#)

Footnotes