Factsheet 14: Benefit Cap

What is the benefit cap?

From summer 2013 a limit will be put on the total amount of benefits that most people aged 16 to 64 can get. This is called a benefit cap. This aim of the benefit cap is to ensure that workless households do not receive more in benefit payments than the average earnings of a working household.

What benefits will get capped?

The cap will apply to the total amount that the people in your household get from the following benefits:

- Bereavement Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance (unless you get the support component)
- Guardian's Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Incapacity Benefit
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Maternity Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Widowed Parent's Allowance (or Widowed Mother's Allowance or Widows Pension you started getting before 9 April 2001)

Who won't be affected?

You won't be affected by the benefit cap if you qualify for Working Tax Credit (whether or not you claim it), or if you get any of the following benefits:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (from April 2013)
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Benefits (and equivalent payments as part of a war disablement pension or the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme)
- Employment and Support Allowance, if you get the support component
- War Widow's or War Widower's Pension

How much is the benefit cap?

The level of the cap will be:

- £500 a week for couples (with or without children living with them)
- £500 a week for single parents whose children live with them
- £350 a week for single adults who don't have children, or whose children don't live with them

How will I be affected?

You can use the calculator on the Government's Directgov website is available which can be used to get an estimate of how your Housing Benefit might be impacted.

The Department of Works and Pensions should be contacting you to check if you will be affected by the cap and explain the changes. Your local authorities Benefit department should also be getting in touch with you to offer you advice and assistance about managing the change.

What can I do?

- Contact a Personal Advisor at Jobcentre Plus to discuss what support you can get to help you find work

- If you are already working, speak to your employer to see if they can increase your hours so you can qualify for Working tax credits (you will need to work for a minimum of 16 hours per week if you are a lone parent, 24 hours a week for couples (with a minimum of 16 hours for one partner, 30 hours for single people over 25). If you lose your job through no fault of your own, you may be eligible for a nine month grace period before the cap will be applied on your income

- Apply for discretionary housing payment (DHP)

- Negotiate with your landlord to reduce the rent to a more affordable amount

- Move to cheaper accommodation

- Work out how much extra you will need to pay   towards your rent and consider getting some support with managing your money

Useful contacts numbers and websites

Visit the Government's Directgov website at www.direct.gov.uk/benefitcap. You can use the calculator there to help you work out if you will be affected by the cap

Shelter offers confidential housing, welfare benefits and debt advice. They have a free national Housing Advice helpline on 0808 800 4444, available Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm and Saturday and Sunday, 8am to 5pm. Or visit www.shelter.org.uk/

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a benefit cap helpline on 0845 6057064 or, for people with hearing or speech impairments, textphone 0845 6088551. The helpline is open from 8am to 6 pm Monday to Friday

Runnymede Borough Council: Housing Benefit
01932 425388 or visit www.runnymede.gov.uk

Runnymede Borough Council: Housing Advice
01932 425811 or visit www.runnymede.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus
0800 055 6688
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm
You can also go to your local Jobcentre Plus office

Runnymede and Spelthorne Citizens Advice Bureau
01932 842666