



**Standards of evidence for
housing benefit and
council tax reduction scheme
claims**

November 2018

Electronic evidence is acceptable for everything, except for evidence of identity on a brand new claim. If you have never claimed with Hart District Council before, and you are not receiving any state benefits (for example, pensions, tax credits) then we may have to ask you to provide original documents to verify your identity and national insurance number. Original documents can be brought in to the Council Offices in Fleet to be evidenced.

By **electronic evidence** we mean scanned or photographed documents; we will also accept electronic/on-line wage slips and bank statements. The preferred method of receiving electronic evidence is by upload. When completing an online form you will be advised how to upload your evidence. If you do not have an upload link, electronic evidence can be e-mailed to hart.benefits@secure.capita.co.uk

If you do not have your evidence electronically it can be sent to: The Benefits Service, Hart District Council, PO Box 227, Erith, DA8 9GX or brought into the Council Offices.

We may occasionally need to ask you further questions about the evidence you provide.

Evidence of identity

If we ask you to provide evidence of identity we will accept any two of the following, but they must be original documents:-

- passport
- national ID card
- any Home Office document that includes a photo
- full driving license with photo card
- letter from a solicitor, or social worker or probation officer confirming how long they have known you, or your partner.
- valid UK residence permit
- birth adoption or marriage certificate
- utility bills at the address the claim is for

If you are unable to provide two of the above, then you should provide any official documentation, such as tax or pension statements, that can show that you, and your partner, are who you claim to be

National Insurance number

We may need to ask for evidence of your national insurance number. Generally, this will have been provided to us as part of proof of state benefits, or earnings, so you may not need to provide it separately.

If we ask you, or your partner, to provide evidence of your national insurance number then you should provide something which shows your national insurance number, linked to your name, for example:-

- tax documents
- income proof from previous employment such as a P45 or P60
- your NINo card

Household members

Children in your household

In most cases we will not need specific evidence of the make-up of your household; generally this will only be needed where the number of children you have is going to affect your benefit award, for example:-

- where you are not receiving a “passported” benefit, such as income-related JSA and ESA
- where the number of children you have affects the number of bedrooms you are allowed for housing benefit.

If we ask you to provide evidence of the children in your household, then one of the following is acceptable:-

- child benefit award notice
- child’s birth certificate
- bank statements showing child benefit payments
- tax credit award notice

Sub-tenants and boarders

If you sub-let part of your accommodation, or have a lodger or boarder, the following evidence is required:-

- tenancy agreement between you and your sub-tenant(s)/boarder(s); or
- a letter from you

Both of the above must state all of the following:-

- the amount of the rent
- whether the rent is weekly, monthly or for some other period
- what services are included in the rent

Income

Earnings

If we ask you to provide evidence of your earnings, then any one of the following is acceptable:-

- 5 recent consecutive weekly wage slips
- 3 recent consecutive fortnightly wage slips
- 2 recent consecutive monthly wage slips

If you don't have consecutive wage slips, we may be able to use non-consecutive ones. If you have only recently started in your current employment, we can use fewer wage slips, or a contract of employment, as long as it confirms the start date, number of hours worked and rate of pay.

If you do not receive wage slips, then we have a certificate of earnings that your employer can complete.

Earnings from self-employment

If you are self-employed, please provide your most recent business profit and loss accounts, along with current business bank statements. These do not have to be audited accounts.

If you do not have accounts, or have recently become self-employed, then we will send you a questionnaire to complete.

Childcare Payments

The following are acceptable as evidence of childcare costs:-

- a letter from the childcare provider; or
- receipts for childcare payments; or
- if you have neither of the above, a current tax credits award notice recording the childcare costs that HM Revenues and Customs have taken into consideration

State benefits, tax credits and pension credit

We can check receipt of most state benefits direct with the department for work and pensions (DWP). However, there are times when we are not able to do this.

If we do have to ask you for evidence of state benefits that you receive, the following are acceptable:-

- award letter from the issuing department
- if you have only recently claimed for a state benefit, then we may ask you to provide details of how you are currently meeting your day to day living expenses, so that we can make a decision on your claim while we wait for your state benefit to be awarded.

Private and occupational pensions

The following are acceptable as evidence:-

- a private pension payment advice slip showing the rate of pension you currently receive
- a letter from the pension provider confirming the rate of pension you currently receive
- if you do not have either of the above, we will accept a bank statement showing payments going in

Students

You will be asked to provide the following:-

- all term dates
- a full breakdown of your student award

If you have no student finance then we will need to know how you are meeting your day-to-day expenses. If you have not yet received your finance letter for the current academic year, then we may be able to make a payment on account based on a previous year's finance award.

Other income

If you, or your partner, receive any income that is not earnings, benefits or pensions, you must provide evidence of it. If someone is paying you an income, then we can usually accept a letter from them confirming the amount and frequency of the payment.

Bank accounts, savings and investments

You are required to declare all capital held by you, and your partner. This includes overdrawn accounts, unused accounts and any other account where you are a named party.

We can accept as evidence:-

- a recent bank or building society statement (recent means immediately before the date of claim or change)
- a savings book, showing that the balance has been updated within the 2 months immediately before the date of claim or the change in your circumstances
- certificates of any bonds, unit trusts and shares

If you are making your first claim, we cannot accept mini-statements from cash machines for new claims as they may not include sufficient information for us. However, if you have previously provided evidence of an account to us, then we can accept a mini-statement, although we would prefer to see a full statement.

Property

If you, or your partner, own any property (other than the one in which you currently live) or land in this country or abroad, we need evidence of the value of the second property or land and evidence of any outstanding mortgage.

Income of other people living with you

If you have anyone living in your household who is an adult (someone for whom you do not receive child benefit) and is not a sub-tenant or lodger, we will need to see evidence of their income.

This evidence will follow the same standards stated earlier in this leaflet.

Rent

One of the following must be provided as evidence of rent liability:-

- current tenancy agreement; or
- a letter from your landlord if you have not been issued with a tenancy agreement

Evidence of rent must be signed by the landlord, or agent. If it is signed by an agent, then we also need to see evidence that the agent has been appointed to act on the landlord's behalf. This is usually stated on the tenancy agreement. Electronic signatures are acceptable.

The proof must state the following:-

- the amount of the rent
- whether the rent is weekly, monthly or for some other period
- what services are included in the rent
- the date the agreement began
- the name of the landlord, and
- the name and address of the person who collects the rent (which can be the landlord or a managing agent).

If you share part of your home with your landlord, we may need to ask you some additional questions.

If you are related to your landlord, we may need to ask you some additional questions.

Payment of your benefit

If you are receiving housing benefit, then this will be made by BACS transfer to your bank account. We will need to see confirmation of the bank details to be used: the name of the bank, the name on the account, the sort code and account

number. This information is all contained on a bank statement.

If we do not have this information, payment can be made by cheque.

If you are in arrears with your rent we may have to pay benefit to your landlord. We may require evidence of your arrears, which can be:-

- rent book
- receipts signed by the landlord (for hotels it must cover the full period of your stay and include the room number)
- letter from your landlord or managing agent
- details of standing order payments
- bank paying-in book with receipts showing the landlord's name