

# 13 FACT SHEET



## What is an overpayment of housing benefit?

- An overpayment happens when you have already been paid benefit (or we have received it on your behalf) for a certain period and the council decides later on that you should have been getting less benefit for that period.
- For example, imagine you were on Income Support and full Housing Benefit. You then come off Income Support to start part-time work, but the council are not aware of this and carry on paying full Housing Benefit. Six weeks later, the council find out and they work out that for those six weeks you should only have been getting half of full benefit. You would have been overpaid.
- If the council tell you there has been an overpayment you should read the letter they send you carefully: they have to show you how they worked out the overpayment, and you should check they are using all the correct figures for your income, etc. If you think it might be wrong you can appeal against their decision.
- When there has been an overpayment, the council will usually try to get the money back. They can get it from you, your partner, anyone acting on your behalf or Longhurst, if benefit was paid directly to us.
- They will usually get the money back from the person that actually caused the overpayment. So if your circumstances changed and you did not tell the council then you would have caused the overpayment and they would get the money back directly from you. It is very important that you tell the council about any changes straight away.
- If you are still entitled to some benefit they will get the money back by making deductions from your ongoing benefit. If it is paid directly to us it means you will need to increase the amount you need to pay us yourself.
- If you are not entitled to any benefit they will send you an invoice and you will need to make arrangements to pay them directly.
- If they get the money back from us then you will owe us the money instead and you will need to make an arrangement to pay it. However, under the current rules this does not happen very often.