

**Privacy Notice: Benefits**

This notice, in conjunction with Reading Borough Council’s overarching privacy statement, explains when we collect personal information, what we use your data for, who has access, who we share it with, and what your rights are.

**Who are we?**

Benefits Team
Reading Borough Council
Civic Centre
Reading
RG1 7LU

**What is the lawful basis for processing the information?**

The lawful basis for processing your information is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation, as specified by the following legislation governing Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and Universal Credit:

* The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992
* The Social Security Administration Act 1992
* The Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000
* The Welfare Reform Act 2012
* The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
* The Local Government Finance Act 2012
* The Council Tax Reduction Schemes Regulations 2013
* Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Tax Billing, Collection and Enforcement Functions) Order 2013
* Valuation Tribunal for England Regulations 2013
* Local Government Finance Act 1992
* Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 as amended
* Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulation 1989 as amended

**How do we collect information from you?**

Information is collected from you as the service user via online web forms, hard copy documents,
e-mail, by telephone or through face-to-face discussion. This information will be collected from either you directly as the data subject, or from a representative acting on your behalf, for example, a solicitor or Citizens Advice.

Information may also be collected from data that you supplied to:

* The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)
* Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
* Tell Us Once death notifications
* Valuation Office Agency
* Debt Advice Team
* Housing and Homelessness teams
* Council’s Right to Buy team
* Council Tax Billing & Recovery teams
* Financial Assessment and Benefit (FAB) Team
* Information may also be shared with a Council you have moved from or moving to

With the right permissions in place, information may be shared with landlords and people acting on your behalf

**What type of information is collected from you?**

To work out what you are entitled to, the Benefits Team collects and processes a range of information about people other than the person who has applied for a benefit.

For example, where a person makes a claim for Housing Benefit, we need information about other people in the same household, including non-dependants (grown-up children).

We will collect the following information:

* Title and full name
* Dates of birth
* Address and postcode
* Occupation date
* E-mail address
* Phone number
* Previous address and postcode
* Marital status
* Sex
* National Insurance number
* Nationality
* Immigration status
* whether you’ve lived in the UK for the whole of the last 2 years
* Relationship to other people in the household
* Disability
* Income from employment and self-employment
* Unearned income, including DWP benefits
* Capital
* Ownership of property
* Student status
* Rent amount and payment frequency
* Tenancy start date
* Names of any joint tenant
* Amount of rent arrears
* Landlord’s name and address
* Type of accommodation being rented
* Number and type of rooms in the property
* Details of any care, support or supervision provided
* Account details to pay Housing Benefit into
* Whether you give us permission to discuss your Housing Benefit claim with someone else

You will be informed of any other data we collect, that is not listed above, orally or through email at the time of collection of the data.

**How do we use the information you have provided?**

All information provided is used by Reading Borough Council to calculate your entitlement to:

* Housing Benefit
* Council Tax Support
* Discretionary Council Tax Support
* Discretionary Housing Payment
* Local Welfare Provision

The information provided is also used for:

* Benefit “take-up” exercises to maximise income
* The detection and prevention of fraud
* Responding to enquiries and other matters
* Providing you with updates about our services
* Analysing statistical data for service development purposes (anonymised)

**Who has access to the information about you?**

Your information is managed by staff employed in the Benefits team. The information may also be shared with officers from other service areas for assistance with these matters.

All personal data is stored securely; we have in place security which are intended to ensure, as far as possible, the security and integrity of all personally identifiable information.

All staff are required to complete mandatory Information Governance and Cyber Security Training annually.

Your data is stored securely on our systems and accessed only by authorised officers of Reading Borough Council by using their own Username and Password all created in-line with pre-defined user credentials.

Personal data is also held in electronic files on the Council’s network drives. These are only accessible through personal logon credentials and access privileges to specific drives.

Once we have received your information, we will use strict procedures and security features to try to prevent unauthorised access, and any exchanges of information carried out once we are in receipt of your data will be done securely.

Any personal data held in paper format is held in lockable filing storage, and accessed only by authorised officers, as is data held on audio or CD/DVD media. Data may be stored in paper form and is always secured in lockable cabinets when not in use. Access to Council sites is also secure requiring a person electronic pass to access staff only areas.

Unwanted paper records are placed in secure storage before being shredded on-site.

**Who may we share your information with?**

When contacting the Benefits Team, your information will be shared with other Council staff to the extent required to provide you with the service you have requested.

The Council will may also share your information with:

* Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
* Her Majesty’s Revenues and Customs (HMRC)
* Home Office
* Law enforcement agencies
* Fraud
* HM Court & Tribunals Service (HMCTS)
* Internal and external auditors

Where the Council engages third parties to process personal data on its behalf, they do so based on written instructions, are under a duty of confidentiality, and are obliged to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure the security of data.

To ensure that information is held continued to be held securely and that accuracy is maintained, there will also be instances where our system suppliers will need to access individuals’ personal information. This will be on a strict need to know basis and all contracts have confidentiality clauses built in.

The Council will not transfer your information to countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) unless this is necessary, and only to countries which have sufficient safeguards in place to protect information.

Information will be shared internally if required for better performance and efficiency of Council services and the welfare of individuals. Reading Borough Council may also share personal information with the police and other local authorities under Article 23 of the General Data Protection Regulations to prevent or detect crime.

**How long do we store your information?**

The duration that the Council will hold information governed on a case-by-case basis in line with legislation, under the previously mentioned Acts (see Lawful Basis statement). In general, information around benefits is retained for a period of 6 years and when it no longer required it is securely destroyed.

**Does the service utilise automated decision-making?**

Entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support is automatically reassessed when the Department for Work and Pensions sends electronic files in respect of benefits, State Pension,
Tax Credits and Universal Credit.

**Your Rights**

Under data protection law, you have rights including:

Your right of access - You have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information.

Your right to rectification - You have the right to ask us to rectify personal information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete.

Your right to erasure - You have the right to ask us to erase your personal information in certain circumstances.

Your right to restriction of processing - You have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.

Your right to object to processing - You have the right to object to the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.

Your right to data portability - You have the right to ask that we transfer the personal information you gave us to another organisation, or to you, in certain circumstances.

You are not required to pay any charge for exercising your rights. If you make a Subject Access Request, we have one month to respond to you.

Please contact The Data Protection Officer (DPO), Nayana George at IGTeam@reading.gov.uk if you wish to make a request, or write to:

**The Information Governance Team**

Reading Borough Council

Civic Offices

Bridge Street

Reading

RG1 2LU

**Your right to complain**

If you wish to complain about the way that your personal data has been handled by Reading Borough Council, you should write to the Data Protection Officer at IGTeam@reading.gov.uk.

If you remain dissatisfied with the way your personal data has been handled, you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) or in writing to:

Information Commissioner’s Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF