

# Rent Supplement

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. What is Rent Supplement?**

Rent Supplement is paid to people living in private rented accommodation who cannot afford the cost of their accommodation from their own resources.

### **2. Is Rent Supplement the same as Rent Allowance?**

While Rent Supplement is the correct name of the scheme it is commonly known as Rent Allowance. However it should be noted that there is another scheme called [Rent Allowance](#) which is payable to tenants of certain dwellings affected by the de-control of rents on 26 July 1982.

### **3. Can I get temporary Rent Supplement if I am already getting a social welfare payment?**

Yes, you can. The purpose of Rent Supplement is to help you meet your accommodation costs while you are receiving a social welfare payment. However you will not automatically qualify for Rent Supplement because you are receiving a Social Welfare payment as there are other conditions that you must meet.

### **4. What are the qualifying conditions for Rent Supplement?**

You may get Rent Supplement if you have been living for 6 months (183 days) out of the last 12 months in one, or a combination, of the following:

- Private rented accommodation (you must be able to show that you could afford the rent at the beginning of your tenancy and that you could have continued to pay rent but are unable to do so because of a change in your circumstances which occurred after you started renting)
- Accommodation for homeless people
- An institution, for example, a hospital, care home or place of detention

**Or**

- If you have been assessed by your local housing authority as being eligible for and in need of social housing in the last 12 months. (see question 6)

In addition to these requirements, the officer dealing with your claim must be satisfied that:

- your accommodation is suited to your needs.
- you are habitually resident in the State.
- the amount of rent you pay is within the [maximum rent limit](#) for your area and family size.

5. if your accommodation is provided through the [Capital Assistance Scheme](#), the amount of Rent Supplement payable does not exceed €55 per week for single people and €60 per week for couples.

## 6. Who does not qualify for Rent Supplement?

You will not qualify for Rent Supplement if:

- You work full-time (more than 29 hours per week) **unless** you have been deemed as eligible for the Rental Accommodation Scheme by the local housing authority. (see question 6)
- Your spouse or partner is engaged in full time employment.
- you are in full time education (some exceptions apply).
- you are involved in a trade dispute. However your dependant spouse and dependant children are not excluded from SWA for the period of the strike.
- you are living in accommodation provided by a local authority.
- you are living in accommodation provided by the Health Service Executive.
- you are living in accommodation provided by a body or organisation which provides services on behalf of, or similar to, or ancillary to the Health Service Executive, where that body uses residential care staff in providing such services and also receives a subvention payment from the Minister for Health in respect of you.
- you are living in accommodation provided by a voluntary housing body where that body receives a subsidy under the rental subsidy scheme.
- you are receiving a rent allowance from the Department of Social Protection due to being a tenant in decontrolled rented accommodation.
- you are admitted to an institution for a period of in excess of 13 weeks .
- you have been excluded from the local authority housing list .
- you have left local authority accommodation without satisfying the officer dealing with your claim there was good reason for doing so .
- you refuse two offers of social housing from a Local Authority within a 12 month period.
- you are not lawfully in the State.
- you have made an application for asylum under the Refugee Act, 1996 and your application is awaiting final decision by the Minister for Justice and Equality .
- you have made an application under the Aliens Act, 1935 to remain in the State and your application has not been determined.
- your landlord does not provide their Tax Reference Number or a valid reason for not having a Tax Reference Number.

The officer dealing with your claim may also decide that a Rent Supplement may not be paid where the housing authority has decided that the accommodation does not meet the relevant standards e.g. the accommodation is not in a proper state of structural repair or the quality of lighting, ventilation, water and sanitary services is inadequate. (The standards are prescribed in regulations made under [Section 18 of the Housing \(Miscellaneous Provisions Act\) 1992](#).)

## 7. What is a housing authority and what do they do?

The housing authority is the local authority (i.e. the County or City Council) in the area which you live. If you don't have a housing need assessment, you must go to the local authority to have your housing need assessed. The local authority must be in the area that you intend to live and claim Rent Supplement. Only when you are assessed as eligible for and in need of housing can you apply for Rent Supplement. Rent Supplement is not payable while the [local authority](#) is carrying out a housing needs assessment. Contact information for all local

authorities can be found on the [Department of Environment, Community and Local Government website](#).

## **8. How do I apply for Rent Supplement?**

To apply for Rent Supplement you should contact the Department of Social Protection's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) at your [local health centre](#). You must complete forms SWA1 and SWA3. Part of the SWA3 form must be completed by your landlord.

In some areas new Rent Supplement applications are processed by centralised Rent Units. To see if your area is dealt with by a central Rent Unit you can check [here](#)

If you live in one of these areas you can get a rent pack from your local health centre. This pack contains detailed information (including a list of documentation you will need) and all the relevant application forms. You should read the information in the pack carefully. If you are satisfied that you have all the necessary documents ready you can forward your application to the relevant Rent Unit. The processing of your application may be delayed if you do not supply all the information requested in the pack. The Unit will contact you if they need any further information.

## **9. What documents do I need when applying?**

You must usually produce evidence of the following:

- Identification e.g. birth certificate, passport, drivers licence or Garda National Immigration Bureau card.
- Income(s), savings, investments and property.
- Lease/tenancy agreement/rent book.

Other information and documents may be needed and the officer dealing with your claim will tell you what else is needed to process your application.

## **10. What happens at my first meeting when I meet the person processing my claim?**

The officer dealing with your claim may wish to meet with you. The purpose of the meeting is to allow the officer to gather and evaluate the information you provide. The officer may use the interview to:

- allow you to make your case, explain your situation and complete a formal application.
- assess your requirements.
- clarify any issues.
- advise you of any relevant services and agencies.
- advise you of your current entitlement.
- advise you of your payment arrangements.
- advise you of your right of appeal and the appeal process.
- advise you of your obligation to notify the officer when your circumstances change.

## **11. Can I get Rent Supplement if the rent for the property is higher than the limits set for the area?**

Rent Supplement is not normally payable if your rent is above the [rent limits for your area](#) and family size.

**12. Why is my Rent Supplement so low when my rent is higher and it's the same level of rent for all property in this area? Why do I have to pay so much myself along with the Rent Supplement?**

All recipients of Rent Supplement must make a minimum contribution towards their rent. The minimum contribution is currently €30 for single people (with or without children) and €35 for couples (with or without children). You may have to pay more than this if your income is greater than the appropriate Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your family size. Other household members with their own income are also liable to contribute towards the rent.

**13. When and how often is Rent Supplement paid?**

The officer dealing with your claim will tell you how and where you are to be paid and will also tell you what day you are to be paid on.

**14. Can I get my Rent Supplement paid into my bank account?**

Rent Supplement can be paid to a bank account if you request it and if the officer dealing with your claim agrees to it.

**15. What does my landlord have to do so that I can get Rent Supplement?**

Under the Rent Supplement scheme there is no direct relationship between the Department and your landlord. You (as the tenant) must make the application for Rent Supplement and the Department will process your application. Your landlord must complete a part of the application form which will include the provision of his/her PPSN or Tax Reference Number. Your landlord may opt to provide his/her PPSN or Tax Reference Number separately to the Department by completing the [SWA 3C form](#). Generally, rent supplement will not be provided until the Department has received the Landlord's PPSN or Tax Reference Number.

**16. Can the Rent Supplement be paid to Landlord directly?**

In most cases payment is made to you, the tenant. However payment of your Rent Supplement can be made to the landlord if you request it and if the officer dealing with your claims agrees to it. Even if your Rent Supplement is paid direct to your landlord, you will still have to pay your landlord a minimum of €30 (for single people) or €35 (for couples) per week.

**17. Can my Rent Supplement be stopped without notification?**

You will normally be notified if your Rent Supplement is to stop. However if the officer is aware that your circumstances have changed and you have not contacted him/her, they may suspend your Rent Supplement payment.

If your circumstances change you should contact the officer dealing with your claim immediately. You should not wait until your review as this may lead to an overpayment of Rent Supplement which you will have to repay.

**18. I have been told my Rent Supplement is being cut off can I appeal to PRTB?**

No, the PRTB (Private Residential Tenancies Board) have no role in Rent Supplement decisions. The PRTB is responsible for resolving disputes between landlords and tenants and operating a national tenancy registration system. Further information on the PRTB can be found [here](#).

If you are not satisfied with a decision made in relation to your Rent Supplement, you should first find out why the decision was made by asking the office dealing with your claim. You should provide any extra documentation to back up your case.

If the decision is not changed, you can appeal the decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office, D'Olier House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2. Include as much detail as possible in your appeal. Further information on the PRTB can be found [here](#).

**19. Will my Rent Supplement be cut if I refuse social housing?**

If you refuse two offers of social housing from a Local Authority within a 12 month period, your Rent Supplement will be stopped and you will not be allowed to claim Rent Supplement for 12 months.

**20. What happens in rent reviews?**

Your claim for Rent Supplement is reviewed regularly, usually every six months. You will have to complete a Rent Supplement Review Form and return it to the officer dealing with your claim. The officer will examine the form to ensure you are receiving the correct amount of Rent Supplement. You should return the form as soon as possible to the officer to ensure there is no delay to your payment.

If your circumstances change between reviews you should contact the officer dealing with your claim immediately. You should not wait until your review as this may lead to an overpayment of Rent Supplement which you will have to repay.

**21. Rent Supplement Review Form - where can I get one?**

If your Rent Supplement is being reviewed an officer will normally provide you with a form to be completed by you and your landlord. If you lose the form you can get a new one from your local office that administers the SWA scheme. If your claim is dealt by a Central Rents Unit you should contact them and they will send a new form to you.

**22. Will the Department need to inspect my accommodation before I can get Rent Supplement?**

Officers may view your accommodation before deciding on your application for Rent Supplement in order to confirm the tenancy and type of accommodation. However, a home visit is not always required as the officer may already be familiar with the accommodation. It is up to the officer to decide whether they visit your accommodation.

**23. What happens if my landlord refuses to provide me his/her Tax Reference Number/PPS Number?**

Your landlord must provide his tax reference number or PPS Number to the Department before Rent Supplement will be awarded to you. If your landlord does not want to provide his tax reference number or PPS Number on the application form he can complete the [SWA 3C](#) form and return the form directly to the officer dealing with your claim.

### **23. What happens my Rent Supplement if I go on holidays overseas or leave the country?**

Rent Supplement is not normally payable while you are outside the country. You should contact the officer dealing with your claim if you intend to leave the country, even for a short absence. Payment may be made in certain circumstances for short absences from the country, such as holidays etc., if the officer dealing with your claims agrees to it.

