

Citizens Advice Knowsley

53 Week Rent Year



What is a 53 Week Rent Year?

This is a leap year which means that in 2024/5 there will be 53 Mondays. It is a quirk of our calendar system that every 5-6 years there is a year with 53 Mondays.

For those who pay their rent weekly, that means they have to pay an extra week's rent that has accumulated - and it will not be covered by Universal Credit.

Who does this affect?

If you're in receipt of Housing Benefit you will be unaffected, because Housing Benefit is paid weekly.

The problem arises for those on the housing element of Universal Credit (UC), as UC calculates rent monthly, not weekly, meaning that someone on UC will be given 52 weeks of rent but must meet the cost of 53.

What will the impact be?

The additional week of rent becomes due in April 2024 for thousands who are in receipt of the housing element of Universal Credit.

Our advisers have seen clients who's rental costs have always been covered in full by Universal Credit now in arrears, and unsure of the reasons why.

In some instances, landlords have started possessions proceedings due to rent arrears against tenants, which has led to stress and anxiety as they have not known where the arrears have arisen from, or how.

Danny Evans

Advice Services Manager



What have Ministers said?

Ministers have confirmed that residents may be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) where they are affected.

What do we think?

Citizens Advice Knowsley is very concerned about this and believes this is administratively unjust. There are thousands of residents affected by this and they tend to be those on the lowest incomes. In addition, lots of people seem to be unsure of their rights in relation to this matter due to a lack of information.

Decisions on DHPs are discretionary and therefore are not guaranteed to be awarded. This will also affect the DHP budget for 2024/5 which is limited in any case to protect people from potential homelessness. This has been raised as a problem and the Department for Work and Pensions are aware but at present, no changes have been made.



Is there a solution?

Citizens Advice Knowsley joins other Citizens Advice organisations and is calling for the Universal Credit system to be altered in 2024 by way of a payment adjustment and that a change is made so that this does not arise again in subsequent 53 week years. We ask that the DWP amends their calculation of the housing costs element for weekly payers to ensure that residents claiming Universal Credit receive their full entitlement based on the rent charged.



If this affects me or someone I know?

Contact Citizens Advice Knowsley as we can advise you on your rights regarding your tenancy and any debt that may have arisen.

Next Steps

We will continue to raise awareness so Knowsley residents are aware and know where to seek support, and we intend to raise further awareness in order to support our clients.