

Social Rented Sector: Guidance

Contents

Social Rented Sector
Value of the additional amount for housing
Removal of the spare room subsidy
Verification of housing costs
Rent to buy
Sanctuary Scheme

Social Rented Sector

The Social Rented Sector (SRS) covers all accommodation which is classed as social housing. Social housing is defined as low-cost rental accommodation made available to rent to those on a Local Authority Housing Register.

Any other accommodation which does not meet this definition is classed as Private Rented Sector (PRS).

Social Rented Sector tenants will have a tenancy agreement but they may also have less formal arrangements such as a use and occupation agreement.

A claimant will report that they live in SRS housing on their Universal Credit claim.

Value of the additional amount for housing

Universal Credit claimants in SRS housing normally have their rent and any eligible service charges included in their housing costs calculation.

Removal of the spare room subsidy

If the accommodation is under-occupied according to the size criteria, a standard percentage-rate deduction is applied. The deduction depends on whether the property is under-occupied by either 1 bedroom or 2 or more bedrooms.

If there are spare bedrooms, the eligible housing costs are reduced by either:

- 14% if there is 1 bedroom in the property more than required
- 25% if there are 2 or more bedrooms in the property more than required.

This reduction does not apply if the claimant is:

- a joint tenant (unless the other tenant is part of that claimant's benefit unit)
- a homeowner or in a shared ownership property where rental costs are due
- living in a property adapted under a Sanctuary Scheme (see Sanctuary Scheme for full details)

Some non-dependants are expected to contribute towards the rent when they live with a claimant who is not subject to an exemption.

This may affect the claimant's additional amount for housing as the eligible costs will be reduced by a Housing Costs Contribution. See Housing costs from non-dependants.

Verification of housing costs

Social Rental Sector housing costs are verified directly with the social landlord, either via the Landlord Portal or SRS email process.

Social landlords will confirm the value of the rent and eligible service charges, the number of bedrooms in the accommodation and confirm that the claimant occupies the property.

The claimant does not need to provide separate evidence of their housing costs but if the landlord provides a different amount to that declared by the claimant, it is the claimant's responsibility to confirm the correct amount.

Rent to Buy

Rent to Buy is a type of Social Rented Sector tenancy where rents are set below market rate (80% of market rent the same as affordable tenancies) and are treated in the same way as any other SRS tenancy until such time the claimant purchases the property.

Sanctuary Scheme

The Sanctuary Scheme is operated by a provider of social housing. It aims to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their homes by installing additional security to the property or the perimeter of the property where the victim lives.

From 1 October 2021, there is a Sanctuary Scheme exemption from the removal of the spare room subsidy so that those who qualify will not have a deduction applied if they under-occupy a Social Rented Sector tenancy. A claimant will qualify if:

- their property has had additional security installed under a Sanctuary Scheme as a result of domestic abuse having been inflicted upon or threatened against the claimant or a member of their household
- the perpetrator of the abuse does not live at the property (except where they are a qualifying young person dependant of a member of the household)

See also Domestic abuse: Guidance.

Providing evidence

Claimants must provide written evidence from a person acting in an official capacity confirming that they are living in a property adapted under a Sanctuary Scheme and that:

- the victim's circumstances are consistent with those of a person who has had domestic abuse inflicted or threatened upon them, and
- the victim has contacted the person acting in an official capacity to tell them about such an incident

A 'person acting in an official capacity' is:

- a health care professional
- a police officer
- a registered social worker
- the claimant's employer
- a representative of the claimant's trade union
- any public, voluntary or charitable body which has had direct contact with the claimant in connection with domestic abuse

Qualification for the Sanctuary Scheme exemption applies from the first day of the assessment period which falls on or following the date the exemption is agreed. It cannot be applied to assessment periods starting before 1 October 2021.