



What is the history of specified accommodation?

Basic info

Specified accommodation dates from April 2014. The government recognised that the definition of “exempt accommodation” did not capture many perfectly reputable supported accommodation schemes in the social and voluntary sectors, for two main reasons:

- Exempt accommodation does not include accommodation provided by the local authority responsible for administering Housing Benefit
 - Except, possibly, for certain English unitary councils: see “What is a non-metropolitan county council in England?”
- Exempt accommodation does not include accommodation where care, support or supervision is provided only by or on behalf of someone other than the landlord.

Before April 2013 this was not really a problem for accommodation provided directly by the HB-administering local authority because there was no limit on HB paid in such cases; and there was very rarely any limit on HB paid in respect of registered housing association tenants or licensees. But following the introduction of the benefit cap and the maximum rent (social sector) (or “bedroom tax”) from April 2013 there was growing pressure for a greater variety of supported accommodation schemes to be protected from benefit restrictions.

The introduction of specified accommodation was a partial concession by the government: Category 1 (exempt accommodation) remains exempt from all of the limits that normally apply to HB in both the social and private sectors (see “What are the benefit limits from which specified accommodation is exempt?”) but Categories 2, 3 and 4 are only protected from the benefit cap as well as remaining part of the Housing Benefit scheme rather than the Universal Credit scheme.