

Changes to the temporary absence rules for housing benefit

A person can only claim housing benefit (HB) if the property at which they are claiming remains their sole, or main residence, even when they are absent – and they intend to return to that property. The rules for HB entitlement during absences are being changed for claimants leaving the country after 28 July 2016, to bring these rules into line with Universal Credit.

The old rules allowed continuing entitlement for absences which were up to **13 weeks** or **52 weeks** long, depending on the circumstances. This continues for absences within Great Britain (GB).

The new rules will allow continuing entitlement for absences which are **4 weeks**, **8 weeks** or **26 weeks** long outside of GB – which includes Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The new rules also introduce different periods of entitlement during temporary absences from GB for certain occupations or circumstances. These are set out in the table below.

Scenario	Max period of absence inside Great Britain	Max period of absence outside Great Britain
Resident in hospital or similar institution as a patient.	52 weeks	26 weeks
The claimant, partner or dependent child is undergoing medical treatment or medically approved convalescence or care in non-residential accommodation.	52 weeks	26 weeks
Accompanying a partner, child, or qualifying young person so that they can receive medical treatment.	52 weeks	26 weeks
Providing medically approved care for a person residing in the UK or elsewhere.	52 weeks	4 weeks
Caring for a child whose parent is temporarily absent for receiving medical treatment/medically approved care.	52 weeks	4 weeks
A person enters residential accommodation to determine whether it is suitable for their needs (a ' trial basis ').	13 weeks	4 weeks
Receiving temporary care in residential accommodation that is not on a trial basis.	52 weeks	4 weeks
Leaving their dwelling through fear or violence in that dwelling (i.e., domestic violence).	52 weeks	26 weeks
If the absence is in connection with the death of their partner, a child in their care, or a close relative of the claimant, partner or child they are responsible for.	13 weeks	4 weeks, can be extended up to 8 weeks if reasonable
On remand – detained in custody pending trial, pending sentence upon conviction, has bail requirements to live elsewhere, or needs to live in bail accommodation.	52 weeks	4 weeks
A student undertaking a period of study.	52 weeks	4 weeks
Absence in connection with being a share fisherman .	13 weeks	4 weeks
Absence in connection with being a mariner or	13 weeks	26 weeks

continental shelf worker.		
Absence in connection with being a Crown servant.	13 weeks	4 weeks
Members of her Majesty's Armed Forces who are posted overseas. Please note - this does not include nurses working alongside the armed forces to civilians doing allied or subsidiary work alongside the armed forces.	13 weeks	26 weeks
Undertaking a training course.	52 weeks	4 weeks
Temporary absence for any other reason.	13 weeks	4 weeks