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Qualifying conditions for our schemes change from time to time. Always check with your local Social Welfare Office or with Information Services to see if qualifying conditions have changed (see page 15 for contact details).

The information in this booklet is correct at the time of publication. This booklet is intended as a guide only, and is not a legal interpretation.

1. What allowances are in the Household Benefits Package?

There are three allowances in the Household Benefits Package.

Allowance 1

- Electricity Allowance
- or**
- Natural Gas Allowance
- or**
- Group Account Allowance
- or**
- Bottled Gas Allowance

Allowance 2

- Telephone Allowance

Allowance 3

- Free Television Licence

Allowance 1

This allowance is an Electricity or Natural Gas Allowance and is made up of 4 different options. If you have an electricity and natural gas supply, you must select the Electricity Allowance or Natural Gas Allowance. The Group Account Allowance is only available if you have a slot meter for gas or electricity or if the registered consumer is a landlord. The Bottled Gas Allowance is only available to you if you don't have an electricity or natural gas supply.

A. Electricity Allowance

The Electricity Allowance covers normal standing charges and up to 1,800 units of electricity each year, (see pages 9 and 10).

B. Natural Gas Allowance

The Natural Gas Allowance is an alternative to the Electricity Allowance if your home is connected to a natural gas supply. It covers normal standing or supply charges and a certain amount of natural gas kilowatt hours each year. You may get this allowance if you are a gascard customer, (see pages 10 and 11).

C. Group Account Allowance

If you live in self-contained accommodation (a flat or an apartment) and you have a slot meter or the registered consumer of gas or electricity at your address is a landlord, you may qualify for a Group Account Allowance. This is paid as a monthly payment to your nominated financial account or post office, (see page 11 and 12).

D. Bottled Gas Allowance

If your home is **not** connected to an electricity or natural gas supply but you otherwise satisfy the conditions of the scheme, you may get the Bottled Gas Allowance. This is paid as a monthly payment to your nominated financial account or post office, (see page 12).

Allowance 2

Telephone Allowance

The Telephone Allowance provides a payment towards your telephone bill. The allowance may be paid in respect of either a landline or a mobile phone, (see page 13).

Allowance 3

Free Television Licence

Once you qualify for the Household Benefits Package you may get a Free Television Licence from the next renewal date of your television licence.

2. How do I qualify

You may qualify if:

- you are aged 70 or over,
or
- you are getting a Carer's Allowance,
or
- you are caring for a person who gets Prescribed Relative's Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance,
or
- you are under age 70, are getting a qualifying payment (see page 6) **and** live alone or only with certain excepted people (see page 7),
or
- you are aged between 66 and 69, satisfy a means test (see Appendix 1) **and** live alone or only with certain excepted people (see page 7).

As well as the above conditions, you must **also** satisfy the following three conditions.

1. You must be permanently living in the state. In general, the allowances do not apply if you live in a Nursing or Retirement Home if the accommodation is not fully self-contained. However, if you are aged 70 or over and you live in such a Nursing or Retirement Home and have your own telephone, you may get a Telephone Allowance.
2. You must be the only person in your household who gets the allowances.
3. You must be the registered consumer of electricity or gas if you are applying for an Electricity or Natural Gas Allowance. If you are applying for an allowance on a landline telephone, you must be the registered account holder.

Qualifying payments if you are aged between 66 and 70

- State Pension (Contributory)
- State Pension (Non-Contributory)
- Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner (Contributory) Pension
- Deserted Wife's Benefit
- an **ordinary** Garda Widow's Pension from the Department of Justice and Law Reform (please forward documentation)
- an equivalent Social Security pension or benefit from a country covered by EC Regulations, or from a country with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement (see Appendix 2, page 18) (please forward documentation).

Qualifying payments for persons aged under 66

- Invalidity Pension
- Blind Pension
- Incapacity Supplement or Workmen's Compensation with Disablement Pension (for at least 12 months)
- Disability Allowance
- an equivalent Social Security Pension or benefit from a country covered by EC Regulations, or from a country with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement (see Appendix 2, page 18) for at least 12 months (please forward documentation).

List of excepted people:

In certain cases (see page 5), you may live with the following people and still qualify:

- a qualified adult.
Your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant is a qualified adult if you are getting an increase for them with your social welfare payment

or

you would receive an increase for a qualified adult for them with your payment but for the fact that they are getting a social welfare payment in their own right.

Note

If your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant works and earns less than €310 per week, you may be entitled to an increase on your main social welfare payment for them. For more information, log on to www.welfare.ie.

- a dependent child(ren) under age 18 or up to age 22 if in full-time education (you must supply a certificate from the school or college for any child aged 18 or over)
- a person who is so incapacitated that they need constant care and attention for at least 12 months (you may need to supply medical certification)
- a person who would qualify for the allowances in their own right (for example, a person getting a State Pension)
- a person who is providing you, or someone else in your household, with constant care and attention, if you or that other person in the household is so incapacitated that you or they need constant care and attention for at least 12 months (you may need to supply medical certification). If the person is in employment for more than 15 hours per week or they are getting Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance they cannot be accepted as providing constant full-time care and attention.

3. Do special conditions apply if I am widowed or a surviving civil partner and aged 60 to 65?

If you are a widow, widower or surviving civil partner, aged 60 to 65 inclusive, and your late spouse or civil partner was getting any Household Benefits allowance from this Department and at the time of their death you were permanently living together, you may now apply for the allowances in the Household Benefits Package.

You must get one of the following payments and satisfy the qualifying conditions on page 5:

- State Pension (Transition) (payable at age 65)
- Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner (Contributory) Pension
- Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner (Non-Contributory) Pension
- One-Parent Family Payment (Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner)
- Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner Pension under the Occupational Injuries Benefits Scheme

from the
Department
of Social
Protection

or

- an equivalent social security pension or benefit from a country covered by EC Regulations or from a country with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement

or

- an **ordinary** Garda Widow's Pension from the Department of Justice and Law Reform.

4. Do special conditions apply if I am getting Invalidation Pension, Disability Allowance or Blind Pension?

If you are getting Invalidation Pension, Disability Allowance or Blind Pension and you are getting any of the allowance(s) under the Household Benefits Package, you may keep the allowance(s) if you transfer to certain other payments from this Department. You may **not** keep the allowance(s) if you transfer to Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance, Illness Benefit, Pre-Retirement Allowance, One-Parent Family Payment or Carer's Benefit.

5. How are the allowances paid and what do they cover?

Electricity Allowance

How it is paid

If you qualify for an Electricity Allowance, depending on your supplier it will be paid as a credit on your electricity bill or on the 1st Tuesday of each month to an account in a nominated financial institution or a nominated post office.

Note

If you are being paid through a post office, using a social services card, you must collect your allowance before the next monthly payment is due.

If you require a social services card, please contact Household Benefits Section, LoCall 1890 500 000.

What it covers

The Electricity Allowance covers:

- normal standing charges
- Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy **and**
- up to 1,800 units of electricity each year, which equals:
up to 300 units of electricity in each two-monthly billing period throughout the year.

You may only get the allowance if the electricity account is registered in your name. If your name is not on the bill, you should ask your electricity provider to have your name included on the bill.

If you live in a flat or similar accommodation and do not have an electricity account registered in your own name, you should contact your supplier and have your name included on the bill with the registered account holder.

You will have to pay your supplier in the normal way for any electricity you use over and above the allowance. If you do not use all your free units, you may carry up to 1200 unused free units between each billing period with your existing supplier.

If you have a Nightsaver meter in your home, your unused free electricity units will reduce the cost of electricity in your Nightsaver account.

Natural Gas Allowance

How it is paid

If you qualify for a Natural Gas Allowance, the allowance is applied to your natural gas account from the start of the two monthly billing period that begins after we approve your application.

The allowance will appear on the second gas bill you receive after that date, and will include any arrears due to you.

What it covers

The Gas Allowance covers the standing charge and a certain amount of kilowatt hours each year.

For more information, log on to **www.welfare.ie**.

Notes

- 1) The Natural Gas Allowance cannot be paid at more than one address or at the same time as an Electricity Allowance.**
- 2) The Natural Gas Allowance does not cover the cost of installing a natural gas supply to your home.**
- 3) You may only get the allowance if the gas account is in your name. If your name is not on the bill, you should ask your gas provider to include your name on the bill.**

Group Account Allowance

You may qualify for a Group Account Allowance if you are living in self-contained accommodation (a flat or an apartment) and:

you have your own electricity or gas slot meter,

or

there are a number of separate meters operating from one meter and the registered consumer of gas or electricity at your address is a landlord,

or

there are no separate meters, but the registered consumer of gas or electricity at your address is a landlord.

Note

The Group Account Allowance cannot be paid at more than one address (or at the same time as a Gas or Electricity Allowance).

How it is paid

The allowance is paid on the 1st Tuesday of each month to an account in a nominated financial institution or a nominated post office. You must provide details of your preferred payment method on the application form.

Note

If you are being paid through a post office, using a social services card, you must collect your allowance before the next monthly payment is due.

If you require a social services card, please contact Household Benefits Section, LoCall 1890 500 000.

For more information, log on to www.welfare.ie.

Bottled Gas Allowance**What it is**

If your home is **not** connected to an electricity or natural gas supply but you would otherwise satisfy the conditions of the scheme, you may qualify for a Bottled Gas Allowance.

How it is paid

The allowance is paid on the 1st Tuesday of each month to an account in a nominated financial institution or a nominated post office. You must provide details of your preferred payment method on the application form.

Note

If you are being paid through a post office, using a social services card, you must collect your allowance before the next monthly payment is due.

If you require a social services card, please contact Household Benefits Section, LoCall 1890 500 000.

For more information, log on to www.welfare.ie.

Telephone Allowance

How it is paid

You may qualify for a Telephone Allowance for a **landline phone** or a **mobile phone**.

If you choose a **landline phone**, depending on your supplier the allowance will be paid as a credit on your telephone bill or on the 1st Tuesday of each month to an account in a nominated financial institution or a nominated post office. The telephone account must be in your own or joint names. If this is not the case, you should contact your supplier to have the name changed.

If you choose to receive the allowance for a **mobile phone**, the allowance is paid on the 1st Tuesday of each month to an account in a nominated financial institution or a nominated post office. You must provide details of your preferred payment method on the application form.

For more information, log on to **www.welfare.ie**.

Note

If you are being paid through a post office, using a social services card, you must collect your allowance before the next monthly payment is due.

If you require a social services card, please contact Household Benefits Section, LoCall 1890 500 000.

The allowance does not cover the initial charge for installing the telephone or the cost of purchasing a mobile phone.

6. How do I get a Free Television Licence?

If you qualify for the Household Benefits Package you will get a Free Television Licence from the **next renewal date** of your current television licence. The licence remains valid for as long as you continue to receive the Household Benefits Package. We will send you a letter telling you that you have been awarded the Electricity or Gas Allowance, Telephone Allowance and Free Television Licence.

7. How do I apply?

Complete the application form HB1 with relevant bills and return it to:

Household Benefits Section

Social Welfare Services
FREEPOST
College Road
Sligo

LoCall: 1890 500 000 (from the Republic of Ireland only)

If you are applying for the Household Benefits Package on the basis of the means test, we will send you a separate means test questionnaire to complete.

Note

The rates charged for using 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

8. What if I change address after being awarded the allowances?

If you change address your allowances will be stopped. You must re-apply for the Household Benefits Package at your new address.

9. Where can I get more information?

For further information on the Household Benefits Package, contact **Household Benefits Section** at the address across or e-mail **householdbenefits@welfare.ie**

For information booklets, application forms and more information on social welfare services:

- Log on to **www.welfare.ie**.
- Text to **51909** (see details on Page 19).
- LoCall Information Line at **1890 66 22 44** (from the Republic of Ireland only) or **+353 71 91 93313** (from Northern Ireland or overseas).
- Drop in to your local Social Welfare Office or Citizens Information Centre.

Note

The rates charged for using 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

Appendix 1

Means test

If you are **aged between 66 and 70** and **not** getting a qualifying payment, you must satisfy a means test in order to qualify for the Household Benefits Package. (See pages 6 and 7 for information on qualifying payments).

Step 1

We calculate your appropriate **weekly means limit**.

This is based on the current maximum rate of State Pension (Contributory) that applies in your situation, for example, if you are single, married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting, have dependent children or you are living alone.

We calculate the weekly means limit by adding together:

1. **the maximum rate of State Pension (Contributory)**
 2. **plus €100.00 and**
 3. **any further allowances as appropriate for a qualified adult, dependent child(ren), Living Alone Increase.**
- Together, these give the total weekly means limit.**

Step 2

We calculate your weekly means by adding together your income and means from savings and investments. This is compared to your weekly means limit.

If your weekly means are **less than or equal to** your weekly means limit, you satisfy the means test.

How we assess your savings capital and investments

When working out your means from investments and savings, we add together the following items and use a formula to work out your means:

- cash value of investments and property (except your home),
- money in any savings account, or any kind of bank accounts, and
- cash-in-hand.

Capital:	Weekly means assessed:
First €20,000	Nil
€20,000 - €30,000	€1 per €1,000
€30,000 - €40,000	€2 per €1,000
Over €40,000	€4 per €1,000

Example: You are a single person aged 66 who lives alone, has a weekly income of €220 from an occupational pension and €25,000 in savings.

Step 1 - Calculating your weekly means

State Pension (Contributory) Rate	€230.30
(under age 80 - maximum rate from Jan. 2012)	
plus	€100.00
plus Living Alone Increase	€ 7.70
Appropriate weekly means limit	€338.00

Step 2 - Comparing your means to the limit

In this example, we do not assess the first €20,000 of savings as means. We assess the next €10,000 at €1 per €1,000. This means that the savings of €25,000 has means of €5 per week assessed against it.

So, the total means assessed is €220 (occupational pension) plus €5 (savings), giving a total of €225.

Weekly means limit	€338.00
Weekly means assessed	€225.00

As your means are less than the weekly means limit of €338.00, you satisfy the means test.

Appendix 2

The countries covered by either EC Regulations or under a Bilateral Agreement are:

- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Channel Islands
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Isle of Man
- Italy
- Japan
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Republic of Cyprus (Cyprus South)
- Republic of Korea
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- the Netherlands
- the United Kingdom
- the United States of America

To request forms, text the form code followed by your name and address to 51909 (from the Republic of Ireland only). Standard text rates apply.

For example, if you wanted to request the Bereavement Grant form, text FORM BG MARY MURPHY 1 NEW STREET, OLD TOWN, CO. DONEGAL.

Social welfare payment or scheme	Form code
Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance	FORM BTSCFA
Bereavement Grant	FORM BG
Carer's Allowance	FORM CARA
Carer's Benefit	FORM CARB
Child Benefit (Form CB1)	FORM CHILD
Disability Allowance	FORM DA
Domiciliary Care Allowance	FORM DCA
Family Income Supplement	FORM FIS
Free Travel	FORM TRAVEL
Fuel Allowance	FORM FUEL
Household Benefits	FORM HHB
Invalidity Pension	FORM INV
Living Alone Increase	FORM LAA
Maternity Benefit	FORM MAT
One Parent Family Payment	FORM OPFP
Respite Care Grant	FORM RCG
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	FORM SPNC
State Pension (Transition/Contributory)	FORM SPC
Widow(er)'s/Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension	FORM WCP
Widow(er)'s/Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension	FORM WNCP

Citizens Information

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on the broad range of social and civil services to the public. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service.

www.citizensinformation.ie

Lo-Call 1890 777 121 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm)

Local Centres (see Golden Pages)

Citizen Information is available from over 250 locations nationwide. The contact details and opening hours of your nearest Citizens Information Centre are listed in the Golden Pages.