A Guide to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Rent Service

How can I pay my rent?

You can pay your rent in five different ways.

1. In the Civic Office – The cash office is open 8.45am – 4.30pm Monday to Thursday & 8.45 – 4.00pm on Friday
2. By Direct Debit through your Bank or Building Society. You will need to complete a Direct Debit form to do this. A form is available from the Income Team on 01446 709511 / 709512 / 709513 / 709514
3. At the Post Office providing that you have your rent payment card with you. If you pay at the post office, your payments will take longer to reach the Council, so you will need to pay your rent at the beginning of each week it is due.
4. By Credit/Debit Card via the telephone service 01446 709239. The office opens the same hours as all other Council Offices.
5. Pay your rent on line via the Vale of Glamorgan Council web site using a Credit/Debit Card. You will need you pin number to do this.

When should I pay my rent?

You must pay your weekly rent including any other charges in advance. If you do not do this, your account will be in debt and we will have to send you notification letters that you are in arrears. You must pay your rent on the Monday of the week it is due.

What happens if I cannot pay my rent?

If you are unable to pay your rent you should contact the Income Team on 01446 709511 / 512 / 513 / 514 immediately. If we know there is a problem, we can often help you. If you delay in taking action it can lead to serious problems in the future. It is very important that you do not ignore any of the letters we send you. Remember, the earlier you contact us, the easier it is for us to help you.

I have received a letter showing I am in debt. What should I do?

Please read the letter carefully and check that you are receiving all the Housing Benefit you are entitled to. If you know you are in debt, pay off what you owe as quickly as possible. If you cannot pay this off immediately you will need to contact the Income Team as soon as possible so we are able to help you resolve this matter.
If you disagree with the balance on your rent account then you should contact us immediately. We will send you an up to date copy of your rent statement detailing all the payments received onto your rent account. You should check any receipts that you have against this statement. You should always keep the receipts that you have paid as this is your proof of payment. Once a year the Council will send you a letter confirming the balance on your rent account.

**How do I get help with my rent?**

If you receive Benefits from the Department of Work and Pension, (which used to be called the Benefit Agency or Department of Social Security) you may be eligible for Housing Benefit to assist with your rent payments. The amount of Housing Benefit received depends on what type and amounts of Benefit that you received. If you want to apply for rent rebate, you will need to complete an application form and supply information about your personal financial situation to the Housing Benefit Section. Council staff will be happy to assist you in completing this form. This will enable the Housing Benefit Section to calculate the amount of rent rebate that you are entitled to receive.

If you are a new tenant, your Neighbourhood Manager will be able to provide you with any information that you require regarding your tenancy conditions. During your sign up appointment you will receive a Money Advice appointment to help you apply for the relevant benefits and assist you with any budgeting advice needed.

You must return the completed form to the Housing Benefit Section immediately, as Housing Benefit will only pay benefit from the Monday following the date on which your application is received. The address of your Housing Benefit Office is The Vale of Glamorgan Council, The Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry. Telephone number 01446 709244.

**Remember –**

- To always ask the Housing Benefit Section for a receipt for any information that you provide

- Until the Housing Benefit section tells you how much Housing Benefit you will get, you are still responsible for paying the full amount of rent.

- It is important to remember that some of the rent that the Council charges include elements for water and sewerage which are collected on behalf of the utility company. These parts of the rent are not eligible for Housing Benefit and must be paid by every tenant regardless of their income.

- If you receive Universal Credit payments the Housing Benefit element is included in this payment. You will be responsible for paying your rent from this monthly payment that is paid directly to you.
What help can I get if I have difficulty paying my rent?

If at any time you fall into arrears for whatever reason, it is very important that you contact your Income Officer immediately. They will be pleased to offer friendly, constructive advice. You will be offered a Money Advice appointment to help you budget your money effectively and ensure that you are in receipt of all the Benefits that you are entitled to. The Income Officer will agree an affordable weekly amount based on your income. You must make sure that you keep to the agreement and pay every week. You can contact the Income Team or the Money Advice Team, telephone number 01446 709312 / 146 / 588.

What will the Council do if I do not pay my rent?

The consequences of falling behind with your rent can be serious. As well as being a breach of your responsibilities in the tenancy agreement, having rent arrears will prevent you being registered for a transfer or exchanging your home. The Council normally writes to tenants who have outstanding balances on their rent accounts every two weeks. If arrears continue or if they increase, this will result in the Council issuing a Notice of Seeking Possession, and eventually taking legal action against you through the Courts for repossession of you home.

What is a Notice of Seeking Possession?

This is a legal notice which warns you that if you do not bring your rent account up to date then the Council is formally notifying you that they will apply to the County Court for a possession order for your home. The Notice of Seeking Possession is normally hand-delivered to your property. If you receive a Notice, it is very important that you make contact with the Council to agree an arrangement to clear any outstanding arrears. If you do not do this then the Council will commence proceedings in the County Court for possession of your home. At this stage, you will be summoned to appear in Court and provide information as to why you have failed to make payments to clear your rent arrears.

What will happen in Court?

The County Court judge will decide on what action will be taken against you. The Court may award the Council immediate possession of your home or may suspend the possession order on condition that you pay the rent plus an additional amount on a regular basis. If once you have been to court you break the terms of the Court Order, the Council can return to Court to request an eviction order to make you leave your home. Any order made against you constitutes a County Court judgement. This may prevent you obtaining credit or a mortgage in the future. The Council will also seek the costs of the action, which you will be responsible for paying. The Court costs are currently £250.00.

If you are in arrears and need help you can also contact the following independent advice agencies who will be happy to discuss your case in confidence.
Citizens Advice Bureau, 119 Broad St, Barry, South Glamorgan CF62 7TZ
Phone: 01446 722812 / 0344 477 2020

Shelter Cymru, 23 Cathedral Road, Cardiff. CF11 9HA
Phone: 0845 075 5005

Age Concern, 38 Holton Road, Barry. CF63 4HD
Phone: 01446 747654