



Sheltered accommodation

Sheltered accommodation is traditionally understood to mean a small community of self-contained dwellings (whether in a single building or a group of buildings) with some communal facilities (such as a day lounge) and a warden on site or close by. The residents tend to be elderly people and they have some kind of device (either portable or hard-wired) that they can use to summon help in an emergency.

In Housing Benefit there are more generous rules on fuel charges for people who live in sheltered accommodation. For claimants who do not live in sheltered accommodation HB will only cover fuel for entrance lobbies, corridors, staircases and similar common access routes. But in sheltered accommodation HB will also cover the cost of fuel used in rooms of common use. The Court of Appeal has said that “sheltered accommodation” for HB purposes is not confined to the traditional meaning summarised above: without any statutory definition of the word “sheltered” it should be given its normal English meaning, which is broad and flexible. Most local authorities now accept that almost any supported accommodation is probably “sheltered” for fuel charge purposes.