



Land &
Property
Services®

Information Leaflet on

Hardship Relief Scheme

for

Non-Domestic Properties



An Agency within the Department of

**Finance and
Personnel**

www.dfpni.gov.uk

Hardship relief for non-domestic properties (businesses and organisations) was introduced in response to public consultation. The hardship relief scheme came into operation on 31 December 2005.

This leaflet explains hardship relief and gives contact details if you want to find out more.

What is hardship relief?

Hardship relief provides support for businesses and organisations that are in crisis because of exceptional circumstances. Hardship relief removes the need to pay rates during the period that a business suffers a crisis as a result of exceptional circumstances.

What is meant by a 'crisis' and 'exceptional circumstances'?

As the scheme covers unforeseen events, it is not possible to give precise definitions. However, a crisis would have to result in a serious loss of trade or have a major effect on the services that can be provided.

'Exceptional circumstances' will usually be circumstances that came from outside the business or organisation, are beyond the normal risks faced by businesses and cannot be foreseen or avoided.

The effect of strikes within a business or organisation, increased running costs and increased competition would not be considered as 'exceptional circumstances' as they are normal business risks.

As a general rule, circumstances that would be covered by a commercial insurance policy or by compensation from public funding would not be considered as 'exceptional circumstances'. However, each case will be considered on its own merits.

What type of property does hardship relief apply to?

Most non-domestic properties, including those owned or used by voluntary organisations, will be eligible for hardship relief if they meet certain conditions. However, properties such as car parks, advertising hoardings, telecommunication masts and towers, and cash machines (ATMs) will not be eligible.

How do I apply for hardship relief?

You can get an application form from our Hardship Relief Team (see the contact details at the end of this leaflet). You can also download a form from our website, using the link below:

- www.lpsni.gov.uk/hardship_relief

Will I still need to pay my rates while my application is considered?

You should continue to pay your rates while we consider your application. This will help you to avoid paying a large amount in one go if we do not accept your application. If we accept your application for hardship relief, we will refund any rates you have paid for the period the hardship relief is granted for.

What support can I expect if my application is successful?

The maximum amount of hardship relief you can get is the rates for one financial year. However, the amount may be reduced if you have received any De Minimis state aid over the past 3 years.

De Minimis state aid is aid granted to a business by a public body, publicly funded body or a body under public sector control. Hardship relief is intended to be temporary and it should apply only for the length of time that it takes a business or organisation to recover from the exceptional circumstances.

What happens if I disagree with your decision?

You can ask us to review your case within one month of receiving the decision letter from us. You must explain why you think the decision is wrong. A different and more senior officer to the one who made the original decision will review your case.

Who should I contact if I want to find out more about hardship relief?

You can get more information on hardship relief from our website or by contacting the Hardship Relief Team as follows:

Hardship Relief Team

Land & Property Services
5th Floor
Lincoln Building
27-45 Great Victoria Street
MALONE LOWER
Belfast
BT2 7SL

- Tel: 101, (the alternative number for those calling from outside Northern Ireland or who are unable to access the 101 service is 02891 513101)
 - Minicom: 18001101
 - Fax: 028 90252639
 - E-mail: hardshiprelief.rating@lpsni.gov.uk
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- Website address: www.lpsni.gov.uk/hardship_relief

