



OHT Guide

CAT Dwelling House Relief - New Regime

Dwelling House Relief (DHR)

A CAT exemption is available under s. 86 of the Capital Acquisition Tax Consolidation Act 2003 (CATCA 03) for a disponent's family home, provided certain conditions are met.

Finance Act 2016 revised Dwelling House Relief (DHR) and the changes came into effect on 25 December 2016. The new legislation largely confines the relief to inheritances except for gifts made to dependent relatives.

What is a Dwelling?

A dwelling is defined as 'any building or part ... of a building, ... used or ... suitable for use as a dwelling', and includes grounds of up to 0.4047 hectares (circa one acre) occupied and enjoyed with the dwelling.

Where the property is larger than one acre the part of the garden or grounds which is most suitable for occupation or enjoyment with the dwelling will qualify for relief. A dwelling house can refer to a house or an apartment.

Conditions for Relief

The following conditions must be met:

- (1) The dwelling house must be occupied by the disponent as his only or main residence at the date of his death.
- (2) The beneficiary cannot be beneficially entitled to an interest in any other dwelling at the date of the inheritance.
- (3) The beneficiary must have occupied the dwelling continuously as his or her only or main

Key Points

- *Relief is only available for inheritances, except in limited circumstances.*
- *Relief will not generally be available for gifts, or gifts which convert to inheritances due to the death of the disponent within 2 years.*
- *Dwelling house relief will be available on a gift which is made to a dependent relative.*
- *Generally, the house must be occupied by both the disponent and the beneficiary on the date of the death (does not apply for a gift to a dependent relative).*
- *The age at which a beneficiary can take a property without being subject to the clawback provisions is 65.*

residence throughout the period of three years up to the date of the inheritance.

If the dwelling has been replaced during this three year period, then the beneficiary must have occupied the original dwelling, and the replacement property for at least three out of the four years up to the date of the inheritance.

- (4) The beneficiary must retain ownership of the property and continue to occupy it as his only or main residence for six years after the date of the inheritance, unless the beneficiary is over the age of 65 years at the date of the inheritance.

Where the donor or beneficiary has moved out of the house (prior to the benefit) because of his mental or physical infirmity, the beneficiary (or donor) will be deemed to continue to occupy the

property during any such period.

The residence must be occupied by the disponer as his main residence on his death (except where the benefit is taken as a gift by a dependent relative).



Revenue Guidance

Revenue dwelling house relief guidance is contained in [Part 24](#) of the Revenue CAT manual.

Previous Revenue guidance did not set out Revenue's interpretation of "residence" or comment on the meaning of "only or main".

The updated Revenue guidance states:

"The word "residence" is not defined and therefore has its normal meaning. This is a dwelling in which a person habitually lives and is his or her home. It follows that actual physical occupation of a dwelling house is necessary before it can be accepted that it is or was the person's residence.

The words "only" and "main" also have their normal meaning. Where a person owns just one residence then this is where they will habitually live as an owner occupier. Where a person has multiple residences, the "main" residence will be the one in which the person habitually lives for the majority of his or her time. Only one residence can be the only or main residence at any one time i.e. the principal private residence".

Revenue are applying a "time test" in deciding which property should be considered a main residence and it could be argued that the test of

whether a property is a main residence is more than a simple "time spent" test.

Owning More Than One Dwelling

A beneficiary cannot have a beneficial interest in more than one dwelling house if he is to qualify for relief. A residential property that is abroad (such as a holiday home), or rented (such as an apartment) will prevent relief applying. The beneficiary can acquire other dwellings after the benefit is received without jeopardising the relief.

If the residue of an estate includes another dwelling inherited at the same time the beneficiary has an interest in two dwellings at the date of the inheritance and relief will not be available. An Appeal Commissioner Decision which indicated to the contrary was reversed by the unreported Circuit Court case of *Knapp v Revenue Commissioners AC 191/07*, 12 January 2010.

The position was clarified further by Finance Act 2016 as the legislation provides that it does not matter whether the second property is one which the beneficiary was entitled to before the date of

Gifts to Dependent Relatives

Finance Act 2016 amended the legislation to include a new dependent relative provision which allows dwelling house relief on a gift of a dwelling house to a dependent relative.

A 'relative' is a lineal ancestor, lineal descendant, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece or nephew of the disponer or his spouse or civil partner.

A dependent relative is defined as an individual aged 65 years or over, or permanently and totally incapacitated by reason of mental or physical infirmity from maintaining himself. The incapacity threshold is quite high given that there is a requirement for permanent and total capacity. Further detail is given in the [Revenue Manual](#).

A dependent relative who takes a gift of a dwelling house is deemed to take it as an inheritance and the condition that the house must be occupied by the disponer does not apply. This relaxation of the condition applies to gifts only so a dependent relative who qualifies for DHR on a gift will not qualify if the benefit passes as an inheritance instead and the disponer is not living in the house on the date of his death.

the inheritance or whether the property passes by virtue of the inheritance.

Care should be taken where a property is divided into separate parts (for example a house with a granny flat or a mews at the back). The relief on the main property will not be available if the other unit is not part of the same dwelling.

Clawback of Relief

The beneficiary must continue to own and occupy the dwelling-house as his only or main residence throughout the relevant period of 6 years following the date of the benefit.

If the dwelling is sold within the 6 year period the exemption will be clawed back. However, a beneficiary can replace the property during the 6 year retention period without losing the exemption.

The original and replacement properties must be occupied as the beneficiary's only or main residence for at least six out of seven years commencing on the date of the gift or inheritance.

The clawback condition will not apply if:

- The beneficiary was over the age of 65 years (previously 55 years) at the date of the gift or inheritance,
- The sale or disposal, or non-occupation of the house occurs because the beneficiary needs long-term medical care in a hospital or nursing home and this is certified by a registered medical practitioner, or
- The house is not occupied because an employer requires the beneficiary to live somewhere else or because he is working abroad.

A partial clawback arises where a house that qualified for DHR is sold and the beneficiary does not reinvest the entire proceeds in another dwelling.

The clawback will be based on the relief that was granted originally and, in proportion to the amount of the sale proceeds that is not re-invested.

Overview of Position pre Finance Act 2016:

- *Relief was available in respect of gifts and inheritances.*
- *The beneficiary must have occupied the dwelling continuously as his or her only main residence throughout the period of three years up to the date of the gift or inheritance and could not have been beneficially entitled to an interest in any other dwelling at the date of the gift or inheritance.*
- *If the dwelling was replaced during the three year period, the beneficiary must have occupied the original and the replacement property for three out of the four years up to the date of gift or inheritance.*
- *The three year occupation requirement for gifts did not include periods in which the disponent also occupied the property except in limited circumstances.*
- *The beneficiary had to retain ownership of the property for six years after the date of the gift or inheritance, unless the beneficiary was over the age of 55 at that date.*
- *The beneficiary had to continue to occupy the dwelling as his only or main residence for six years from the date of the gift or inheritance, unless the beneficiary was over the age of 55 at that date, the beneficiary needed medical care in a hospital or a nursing home, or an employer required the beneficiary to reside elsewhere for employment purposes.*
- *If the dwelling was sold within the six-year period, the relief would have been clawed back except if the sales proceeds were reinvested and the original and replacement properties were occupied as the beneficiary's only or main residence for at least six out of seven years commencing on the date of gift or inheritance.*

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Caveat: *These notes are intended as a general guide to the dwelling house CAT exemption. OHT has endeavoured to provide an accurate commentary but the notes cannot cover all circumstances so OHT strongly recommends that formal tax advice be obtained before any steps are taken that may have a tax effect.*