

## Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Circular

Department for Work and Pensions

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# HB/CTB A13/2009

### ADJUDICATION AND OPERATIONS CIRCULAR

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>WHO SHOULD READ</b> | All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff  |
| <b>ACTION</b>          | For information   |
| <b>SUBJECT</b>         | 2009/10 Single HB Extract – Guidance for Local Authorities (LAs)<br><br>Updated guidance on completion of the 2009/10 Single HB Extract fields for the derivation of the performance data for the 'Right Time' and 'Right Benefit' indicators |

### Guidance Manual

The information in this circular does not affect the content of the HB/CTB Guidance Manual.

### Queries

If you

- want **extra copies of this circular/copies of previous circulars**, they can be found on the website at [www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars)
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## 2009/10 Single HB Extract – Guidance for LAs

### Introduction

- 1 This circular updates the previous guidance set out in circular A5/2008 issued in March 2008. It has been designed to help with the accurate completion of the fields critical to the calculation of
  - average processing times for new claims and change events for the 'Right Time' indicator, and
  - the number of increases and decreases in HB/CTB entitlement for the 'Right Benefit' indicator
- 2 In particular, your attention is drawn to the updated/clarified guidance around multiple changes, telephone changes and claims made in advance and the relevant Treat as Made (TAM) dates.
- 3 It is separated into four parts
  - Appendix 1 provides guidance on specific fields and is intended as a desk aid
  - Appendix 2 provides further guidance on dates to be entered into the relevant fields and sets out how processing times are calculated
  - Appendix 3 provides more general guidance
  - Appendix 4
    - contains a table of FAQs and scenarios
    - addresses commonly raised issues
    - highlights any changes in interpretation since April 2008

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## **Guidance on completing HB/CTB fields for the 2009/10 Single HB Extract**

### **Right Time and Right Benefit Indicators**

The following guidance has been designed to provide specific detail on completion of the Single HB Extract fields and more general guidance on definitions.

The 'Right Time' indicator measures the average time taken in calendar days to process all new claims and change events in HB and CTB.

The 'Right Benefit' indicator measures the annual number of increases and decreases in HB/CTB entitlement.

The table covers new claims and change events separately.

## New Claims Processing

| Field Descriptor  | Options  | Guidance on completion   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Date most recent claim was received</b><br><b>HB Field 35</b><br><b>CTB Field 36</b> | Insert date  | <p>The date recorded in this field is the date the most recent <a href="#">HB/CTB claim</a> (or 'relevant information' forwarded by DWP) was physically received at a <a href="#">designated office</a> of the local authority, eg, date claim is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• received <a href="#">electronically</a></li> <li>• date stamped at post opening or at a reception point</li> <li>• made during the course of an interview or visit</li> <li>• recorded as made over the <a href="#">telephone</a></li> </ul> <p>This does not include <a href="#">an intention</a> to claim benefit for example by requesting a claim form from the LA by a telephone call.</p> |
| <b>Claim Treat as Made (TAM) date</b><br><b>HB Field 220</b><br><b>CTB Field 229</b>    | Insert TAM date if appropriate, otherwise leave blank. | <p>This will be either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for advance claims, the <a href="#">TAM</a> date determined by the LA in accordance with the HB/CTB Regulations or</li> <li>• the <a href="#">date of initial contact</a> providing all necessary documentation to process and make a decision on the claim is received within one month.</li> </ul> <p>In all other cases, this field should be left blank.</p>  |

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|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Source of the most recent claim</b><br/> <b>HB Field 221</b><br/> <b>CTB Field 230</b></p>  | <p>1 = LA 1 = LA claim form<br/>                 2 = HCTB1<br/>                 3 = HCTB1(PCA)<br/>                 4 = HCTB1 (PC)<br/>                 5 = JCP and PDCS input documents - LAIDs and LACIs<br/>                 6 = HBRR1 (Rapid reclaim form)<br/>                 7 = LA 'shortened' claim form<br/>                 8 = Telephone claim (no subsequent paper claim form received)<br/>                 9 = E-channel claim (made electronically with no paper claim form subsequently submitted - requires an Electronic Communications direction)<br/>                 10 = Other</p> | <p>Indicate how the most recent HB/CTB claim was received by the designated office of the LA.<br/>                 Accurate recording of the source of claim will allow the evaluation of the impact of new policies and the effect on processing times.</p>   |
| <p><b>Date that all information was received from customer to enable a decision on the most recent claim</b><br/> <b>HB Field 269</b><br/> <b>CTB Field 272</b></p>   | <p>Insert date</p>  | <p>If no further information/confirmation is needed from the customer, insert the date that the customer provided the <b>fully</b> completed claim form (fields 35/36). Otherwise, enter the date that the customer supplied the <b>final</b> piece of information requested by the LA in order to process the claim.</p> <p>Field 269 will be used when calculating the 14 day HB payment Key Management Information.</p> |
| <p><b>Date that all information was received from third parties (e.g. Rent Officers, Jobcentre Plus) to enable a decision on the most recent claim</b><br/> <b>HB Field 270</b><br/> <b>CTB Field 273</b></p> | <p>Insert date</p>  | <p>Accurate recording of the date in this field will identify where delays occur in the system and impact on processing times.</p>   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Date of first decision on most recent claim</b><br><b>HB Field 37</b><br><b>CTB Field 38</b>             | Insert date of decision   | This is the date the first decision was made on the claim and therefore the date the processing time ends for the calculation of the 'Right Time' Indicator.  |
| <b>Outcome of first decision on most recent claim</b><br><b>HB Field 39</b><br><b>CTB Field 40</b>          | 1 = Decided successful with all information, benefit payable<br>2 = Decided successful without all information, benefit payable<br>3 = Decided unsuccessful with all information, benefit not payable<br>4 = Decided unsuccessful without all information, benefit not payable<br>5 = Decided defective, benefit not payable.<br>6 = Withdrawn<br>7 = Other | <b>Option 5</b> should be selected where the claim form has not been properly completed and the one month time limit has elapsed.<br><b>Option 6</b> should be selected where the customer has withdrawn the claim. Withdrawn claims will not count towards the indicator as no decision has been made on the claim.<br><b>Option 7</b> should only be used for records created in error - claims entered on the system in error, <b>not</b> put into payment and subsequently removed. Such cases will be ignored for the 'Right Time' indicator. All other cases should be covered by Options 1 to 6. |
| <b>Claim entitlement start date</b><br><b>HB Field 41</b><br><b>CTB Field 201</b>                           | Insert date   | Leave blank if no entitlement was established for the most recent claim. This would apply where Options 3 to 7 have been selected for Fields 39 and 40 – Outcome of first decision on most recent claim.<br>Otherwise, depending on the circumstances, the date entered in these fields will be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Monday after the claim date</li> <li>- The first day of rent and/or council tax liability</li> <li>- Up to and including the 13<sup>th</sup> Monday after the claim date (advance claims)/17<sup>th</sup> Monday for pensioner advance claims</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Date of first HB payment/first payment on account (Rent Allowance cases only)</b><br><b>HB Field 223</b> | Insert the date of first payment on account or the first properly decided benefit payment if no payment on account was made.  | Benefit is considered to have been paid on the date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an instrument of payment is posted</li> <li>- the LA authorises benefit to be paid into BACS account</li> <li>- of a cash payment to the customer</li> </ul>  |

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|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Was the first payment a payment on account (Rent Allowance cases only)?</b><br/> <b>HB Field 224</b></p> | <p>1 = Yes<br/>                 0 = No</p> | <p>This is used to identify claims where the first payment is a payment on account. The information from this field will be used in determining the 14 day HB payment Key Management Information which will be published on HoBOD in due course.</p> <p>A payment on account does not count towards the indicator. A decision to make a payment on account does not end the processing time for the 'Right Time' indicator. The processing time continues until a decision is made on the claim.</p> |
| <p><b>Date 'Council Tax payable' notified to the Benefits Section</b><br/> <b>CTB Field 271</b></p>            | <p>Insert date</p>                         | <p>Complete only if the LA was unable to process the claim for CTB any earlier because the property in which the customer lives was <a href="#">unbanded for Council Tax</a> pending valuation.</p>  |

**Change Events Processing**

| Field   | Options   | Guidance on completion  |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Type of change<br/>HB/CTB Field 250</b></p> | <p>1 = Automated annual uprating<br/>This option should be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Automatic uprating of the HB/CTB applicable amounts and social security benefits</li> <li>- Annual Council Tax increases</li> <li>- Batch changes to Council Tax Liability</li> </ul> <p>2 = All other changes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All rent increases</li> <li>- Changes to Pension Credit assessed income figures (including uprating of the assessed income figure)</li> <li>- Changes following Rent Officer determinations or LHA anniversary dates</li> <li>- Decisions to terminate a claim following a period of suspension because the customer has failed to respond to an intervention by the LA</li> <li>- Decisions to start or stop direct payments</li> <li>- Uprating of customers' occupational/private pensions</li> </ul> | <p>The Single HB Extract will collect additional information on all changes where a decision is made, including changes which do not affect the customer's entitlement.</p> <p>All change events requiring a decision must be captured. For example, changes resulting from revisions to a decision or accuracy checks must be captured although they will not count towards the indicator. Since April 2008, changes to rents (including Rent Rebate tenants) <b>have</b> counted towards the indicators.</p> <p>Generally, changes recorded under Option 1 will <b>not</b> count towards the indicator whereas changes recorded under Option 2 will count. The only exceptions are those recorded under Option 2 and then under Options 11 and 12 in Field 254 – 'How was the change Identified'.</p> <p>Where the LA has taken the initiative to uprate customers' occupational/private pensions, these change events will count towards the indicators and should be recorded under Option 10 – LA activity: other in Field 254 – 'How was the change identified'.</p> <p>If Option 1 and 2 changes are processed at the same time then record Option 2 and select the relevant identification option at Field 254.</p> |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Date LA first notified of change in claim details</b><br/> <b>HB/CTB Field 251</b></p> | <p>Insert date. Completion of this field is mandatory.</p> | <p>This should be the date of the first notification by whatever means.<br/>         For accuracy checks/management checks [Field 254 (11)] enter the date that the check was carried out.</p> <p>For further guidance on which date to use see <a href="#">Date Change Notification Received</a> in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Failure to complete this field may result in the change being excluded from the indicator when the performance derivation rules are applied.</p>  |
| <p><b>Date change of details are effective from</b><br/> <b>HB/CTB Field 253</b></p>         | <p>Insert date</p>   | <p>The <a href="#">effective date</a> is determined by the LA in accordance with the regulations.<br/>         If <a href="#">multiple changes</a> are reported on one notification from the same source these would be treated as one change event. The effective date of the earliest change is the date to be entered in this field.<br/>         If separate notifications are received on the same day from different sources then each notification should be processed separately, the change with the earliest effective date being processed first.</p> <p>Further guidance on <a href="#">changes notified in advance</a> is available in Appendix 2.</p> |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>If not annual uprating, how was the change identified (HB/CTB Field 250 Option 2 changes only)<br/>HB/CTB Field 254</b></p> | <p>1 = Customer letter/e-mail/fax<br/>                 2 = Customer telephone call<br/>                 3 = Notified through e-channels – on-line facilities<br/>                 4 = JCP report - ETD<br/>                 5 = PDCS report - ETD<br/>                 6 = 3rd Party (e.g. Landlord) report<br/>                 7 = LA intervention: Visit<br/>                 Note: Include those visits not undertaken as part of a Review or Fraud investigation activity<br/>                 8 = LA Intervention: Review<br/>                 Note: There should be a corresponding record type R<br/>                 9 = Fraud investigation<br/>                 10 = LA activity: other (diary date prompt, uprating of customers' occupational/private pensions etc)<br/>                 11 = Accuracy check/Management Check<br/>                 12 = Outcome of appeal/reconsideration/revision<br/>                 13 = Other<br/>                 14 = Royal Mail – Do not redirect</p> | <p>Options 1-3 are 'customer' related reported changes.<br/>                 Option 10 – LA activity: other. This option should be used where the LA has been proactive in identifying and actioning a change.<br/>                 Option 10 should also be selected when the LA has terminated a claim following suspension for failure to respond to an intervention.<br/>                 Option 12 - Outcome of appeal/reconsideration/revision. This option should be used if the claim has been subject to;<br/>                 &gt; the customer requesting that the LA reconsider their original decision<br/>                 &gt; an appeal by the customer or<br/>                 &gt; revision to the claim following LA input error.<br/>                 Option 13 – Other. This should only be used if not covered by one of the other options - for example, a Commissioner's Direction, Judicial Review or a change in policy.</p> |
| <p><b>Date supersession decision was made on the HB/CTB claim<br/>HB Field 255<br/>CTB Field 256</b></p>                          | <p>Insert date</p>   | <p>Enter the date a decision was made on the change event or the claim was terminated.</p>   |

|  |                                  |  |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>Weekly HB benefit entitlement<br/>Field 43</b></p>                                 |                                  | <p>Enter the weekly HB entitlement. i.e. the amount notified to the claimant in accordance with HB R, Schedule 9, paragraph 9(d).</p> <p>If HB is not in payment at time of the data extract, the field should be zero.</p> <p>For 2009/10, the Right Benefit indicator will continue to be derived using HBMS. At the point where HBMS is 'switched off', performance will be derived from fields 43 and 44. The values in these fields will be combined to give a joint HB/CTB entitlement figure.<br/>(see HB/CTB Circular A8/2009)</p> |
| <p><b>Weekly Council Tax Benefit entitlement<br/>Field 44</b></p>                        |                                  | <p>Enter the weekly amount of CTB entitlement.<br/>For Second Adult Rebates (SAR), enter the SAR awarded.<br/>If CTB is not in payment at time of the data extract, the field should be zero.<br/>For 2009/10, the Right Benefit indicator will continue to be derived using HBMS. At the point where HBMS is 'switched off', performance will be derived from fields 43 and 44. The value in these fields will be combined to give a joint HB/CTB entitlement figure.<br/>(see HB/CTB Circular A8/2009)</p>                               |
| <p><b>Weekly entitlement before the change<br/>HB Field 50<br/>CTB field 52</b></p>      | <p>Manual input not required</p> | <p>This field will be populated automatically.<br/>It will be used to determine performance towards the 'Right Benefit' indicator when it is derived from 'T' records.</p>   |
| <p><b>New weekly entitlement after the change<br/>HB Field 248<br/>CTB Field 249</b></p> | <p>Manual input not required</p> | <p>This field will be populated automatically.<br/>It will be used to determine performance towards the 'Right Benefit' indicator when it is derived from 'T' records.</p>   |

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## Further guidance 2009/10

### New claims

#### Date of receipt

#### Written claims

- 1 For claims made in writing on a claim form provided specifically for that purpose or in some other form acceptable to the LA, the date of receipt is the date the claim is received at the [designated](#) office.

#### Electronic claims

- 2 For electronically submitted claims, whether or not the LA requires a signature, the date of receipt is the day the form is received electronically. This could be a non-working day.
- 3 If an LA has e-enabled its business a handwritten signature will not be required, although an electronic signature may be a requirement.

#### Tele-claims

- 4 In the case of tele-claims use the date of the telephone call when the claim details are taken, regardless of whether the LA then requires a signed confirmation of the details.

#### Intention to claim

- 5 When the customer contacts the LA stating their intention to make a claim in advance of making the claim by any of the methods described above, use the date of receipt of the claim **not** the date of first contact.

### Processing times

#### General rule

- 6 When calculating processing times all days will be counted from the date the claim was received (at the designated office), including weekends and public holidays, and will include any days when there are reasons for additional processing days beyond the LA's control, for example, a customer's failure to provide additional information and delays between

- designated offices, and
- The Rent Officer and the Benefit Processing Centre

The processing times for all defective and effective claims will count towards the performance indicator.

- 7        However, the following will **not** count towards the indicator
- a decision to make a payment on account (this is not a decision on a claim)
  - the period of backdated award
  - any subsequent decision resulting from an appeal/reconsideration or revision
  - withdrawn claims
  - claims entered on the system in error, **not** put into payment and subsequently removed

### **Exceptions to the general rule**

#### **Claim made in advance**

- 8        When a claim to HB/CTB is made in advance under HB R 83(10), 83(11)\*, the processing time starts from the date the claim is Treated As Made (TAM) by the LA under those regulations. If the claim is properly decided on or before the TAM date, the time taken to process the claim for the purposes of the performance indicator will be one day. Otherwise the processing time will be from the TAM date to the date a decision is made.

*\*see also CTB R 69(12) and (13); HB SPC R 64(11); CTB SPC R 53(12)*

#### **Property unbanded for Council Tax purposes**

- 9        If an LA is unable to make a decision on a new CTB claim because the property in which the customer lives is unbanded for Council Tax pending a valuation, the processing time starts on the date the amount of Council Tax payable is notified to the Benefits section.

#### **Claim form and LAID/LACI received**

- 10       When a customer makes an HB/CTB claim directly to the LA instead of or in addition to, making a claim at the Jobcentre Plus office, the processing time starts from the date the LA designated office receives the claim form or the date it receives the LAID, whichever is the earlier. Similarly, in the case of pensioners where a claim to HB/CTB has been made simultaneously and independently of the Pension Disability and Carers Service, the processing time starts from the date the LA designated office receives the claim form or the date it receives the LACI, whichever is the earlier.

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## Change events

### Multiple changes

- 11 When multiple changes to a claim are reported in one notification from the same source at the same time, this should be treated as one change event. By changes notified together we mean one single notification (letter from customer for example), from the same source on the same day, setting out multiple changes to the claim. When a single notification is processed which contains multiple changes, the effective date of the earliest change should be entered in 'date change of details are effective from' (HB/CTB Field 253). Occasionally, a customer may supply two separate notifications on the same day to a local authority. This should still be treated as one notification as the 'date notified' and 'source' of the reported changes are the same. Processing time will start on the date the notification is received and end when a decision can be made on the claim once the LA is in receipt of all the evidence/confirmation needed to action **all** the reported changes. Sometimes an LA will choose to process these changes separately to avoid any over/underpayments, so creating more than one 'T' record. When performance is derived from the Single HB Extract, the change ('T' record) with the latest decision date will be the one that is counted. The other 'T' records will be excluded for the purposes of the right time indicator.
- 12 Separate notifications are defined as changes notified, perhaps on the same day, but from different sources and should be processed individually. This will generate a 'T' record for each change.
- 13 Where the information provided by the customer is incomplete, further information/proof of the changes obtained from the customer or third party should **not** be treated as separate notifications.
- 14 Multiple changes should be the exception rather than the rule with LAs working with customers to encourage them to report changes as they happen to avoid any over/underpayments occurring.

### Date change notification received

- 15 The date the change notification was received (at the designated office)
- electronically
  - date stamped at post opening or at a reception point
  - during the course of an interview or visit
  - recorded as made or notified over the telephone (see Appendix 3 paragraph 18 for further advice)

- 16 For **data matches** use the following notification received dates
- When an LA has to contact the customer or a third party to establish correct information, use the date the customer or third party responds and confirms that there has been a change. Subsequent action, such as seeking further information, will be included in the time taken to process the change.
  - When the data match arrives before a corresponding notification from the customer or third party already held by the LA has been dealt with, use the date of the receipt of the original notification from the customer or third party.
  - When no contact with the customer or third party is necessary, for example, the LA can check the information independently (via the Customer Information System [CIS] for example) use the date of receipt of the data match.
  - When the data match leads to a revision of the original decision because information which corresponds with the data match is already held (e.g. LA input error), the data match will not count towards the indicator.
  - When the LA makes further enquiries and receives no response from the customer or a third party and decides to terminate the claim following a period of suspension, use the day following the date the customer or third party was due to respond to the LA (the end of the suspension period).
- 17 Processing times for **bulk National Fraud Initiative** (NFI) notifications should be dealt with in the same way.
- 18 For changes notified following an **intervention** (review) by the LA, use the date that the customer, or someone acting on their behalf, *initially* returns the review form. The time waiting for the customer/representative to respond to requests for further information will count towards the indicator.
- 19 If the claim has been suspended because there has been no contact from the customer/representative following an intervention, use the day following the date the customer/representative was due to respond to the LA.
- 20 **Changes reported or confirmed by the customer as part of a fraud investigation**, for example at an interview, should be included in the indicator. The date the change is reported or confirmed should be your start date. The time taken to gather evidence in advance of the change being confirmed or reported by the customer does not count towards the indicator. Similarly, changes reported during, but independently of, the fraud investigation should be acted upon in the normal way and will be included in the indicator.
- 21 For change events arising from **diary dates**
- If the diary date can be actioned without further contact with the customer or third party, for example the information can be obtained from CIS, use the date of the diary date.
  - If contact with the customer or third party is necessary to obtain further information use the date the customer *first* responds. If further information is still required, the additional time taken to obtain it will be included in the processing time.
  - If no reply is received, use the day following the date the customer was asked to respond to the *initial* request for further information/evidence.

- 22 For LA **rent increases** use the date the benefits section receives the details from the housing department.

## Processing times

### General rule

- 23 As with new claims processing, when calculating processing times for change events all days will be counted, including weekends and public holidays, and will include any days when there are reasons for additional processing days beyond the LA's control, for example, a customer's failure to provide additional information and delays
- between designated offices
  - between the Rent Officer and the Benefit Processing Centre, and
  - in obtaining the necessary information when the claim has been suspended

The count stops when a decision has been made on the claim.

### Exceptions to the general rule

#### Changes notified in advance

- 24 If a change is notified in advance, ie before the date from which the change takes effect, the processing time starts from date determined under *HB R 79\** (date on which a change takes effect). If a decision is made on the change on or before the date the change takes effect, the time taken to process the change for the purposes of the indicator will be one day. However, if a decision is not made on the change by the date it comes into effect, the processing time starts from the date the change takes effect up to and including the date a decision is made.

*\*see also CTB R 67; HB SPC R 59; CTB SPC R 50 and 51*

#### Property unbanded for Council Tax liability

- 25 The LA is unable to make a decision on a Council Tax Benefit (CTB) claim on a change of address because the new property in which the customer lives is unbanded for Council Tax pending a valuation. In this instance the processing time starts on the date the change of address was notified and ends when the LA makes the decision on the ending of liability at the old address. Any subsequent action taken to revise that decision once the Council Tax liability is known for the new address is **not** counted.

#### Notification of a change through Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) reports

- 26 If the change notification is received through ETD reports, LAs should regard it as having been received on the first working day it becomes retrievable (usually the first or second working day following the day the data was generated). If an LA defers accessing the ETD, the days of delay will be included in the number of calendar days taken to process the change.

**Joint HB/CTB claims**

- 27 The handling and treatment of joint HB/CTB claims are slightly different for the two indicators. The following paragraphs explain the distinction between the handling of joint HB/CTB claims for deriving performance for the two indicators.

Right Time Indicator

- 28 Where a new claim has been received for HB and CTB, processing time for each of the two elements of the claim will be calculated and counted separately. Similarly, where a change has been actioned which affects both HB and CTB, the two resulting changes will be calculated and counted as two separate change events.
- 29 Where multiple changes are reported on a claim affecting HB and CTB and only one 'T' record is used to derive performance, this will still result in separate change events being calculated and counted for HB and CTB.

Right Benefit Indicator

- 30 Although a change affecting both HB and CTB are counted as two separate changes for the right time indicator, for the right benefit indicator this is only counted as one change.
- 31 Any case which shows a change in the amount of weekly HB/CTB entitlement from one month's extract to the next will be counted as one change for the purpose of this indicator. The **total** HB/CTB entitlement is used - so it is only the overall change in HB + CTB that will count. If there is no **overall** change it will not count.

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## General guidance

### Acceptable claim forms

- 1 HB/CTB claims must be made in writing
  - on a claim form approved for the purpose and provided free of charge by the LA, for example
    - HCTB1, full claim form
    - HCTB1(PC), pensioner claim form
    - HCTB1 (PCA), shortened pensioner claim form
    - LA Input Document (LAID) – received from Jobcentre Plus when a claim associated with IS/JSA/IB and made through the Customer Management System (CMS), see Customer Management System – A Guide for Local Authorities
    - HBRR1, HB Rapid Reclaim form
    - LA 'shortened' claim form
    - tele-claims or e-enabled claims
    - LA Claims Information (LACI) – received from the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS)

Examples of these forms are available on the DWP website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/model/>

  - in a form otherwise acceptable to the LA, for example a letter, see *HB/CTB Guidance Manual, A2 How claims must be made – Para 2.190*

### Effective claims

- 2 A claim on an approved form is **properly completed** and, therefore, **effective** when the claim form, LAID or LACI has been completed in accordance with the instructions on the form **and** the customer has provided the supporting information and evidence requested on that form.
- 3 If a customer makes a dated statement in writing that they want to claim benefit, **and** otherwise provides you with the information and evidence that you would have required if the claim had been made on an approved claim form, LAID or LACI then this claim will also be an effective claim (*HB regulation R83*)\*

\*See also *HB SPC regulation R 64, CTB regulation R 69, CTB SPC regulation R 53*
- 4 In some cases, you may then require additional information or evidence. The customer should provide this within a calendar month (or such longer period as is reasonable).

## Defective claims

- 5 A claim is **defective** if it is
- made on an approved form but is **not** properly completed, or
  - clearly a claim **but** is not made on an approved form and does **not** provide the necessary information or evidence that you would have required if the claim had been made on an approved claim form, for example a letter saying that the writer wants to claim benefit but with little or no other information.
- 6 However, the claim must be Treated As Made from the date the original claim was received if it is followed up within the appropriate timescales by a properly completed claim form, LAID or LACI, or the necessary information or evidence requested on that form to make it effective.

## Treat As Made date

- 7 Receipt of a claim for HB/CTB or notification of a change at any designated office will be the starting point for the processing time for the 'Right Time' indicator, except when a claim to HB/CTB [is made in advance](#) under *HB R 83(10)*, *83(11)\**, in which case processing time will start from the Treat As Made (TAM) date determined by the LA under those regulations.

\* *CTB R 69(12) and (13); HB SPC R 64(11); CTB SPC R 53(12)*

- 8 If the claim is properly decided on or before the TAM date, the time taken to process the claim for the purposes of the indicator will be one day. However, if the claim is not decided on or before the TAM date, processing time will be calculated from the TAM date until the date a decision is made.
- 9 In addition to the regulations as set out in para 7, there are a couple of exceptions to the determination of TAM dates. *HB R 76(2) and CTB R 69(10)* refer to claims where the TAM date **can** fall in the same week as liability starts/the same day as liability starts. (*see Appendix 4 [11]*)

## Initial date of contact

- 10 If a customer makes a dated statement in writing that they want to claim benefit, and otherwise provides you with all the information you need to process the claim, the claim can be Treated As Made from that date if it is followed up by a properly completed claim form. The customer should provide the information within one month of being asked to do so, but you may extend this period if the circumstances need it. Treat the date of any HB claim as the date the applicant or third party first notifies an LA designated office (or DWP for a claim linked to IS/JSA/Pension Credit/Incapacity Benefit (IB)) of their intention to make a claim, provided the claim is received at either office, within a month of the claim form being issued, or any reasonable longer period.

## Decisions on claims

- 11 A decision will result in the claim being successful or unsuccessful. Once a claim is effective, a decision must then be made, even if any additional information you require has not been received (assuming that this is available and can reasonably be provided).
- 12 When the customer has failed to remedy a defective claim and the time limit lapses, a decision must be given on that basis. (*HB regulation R 89*)\*

*\*See also HB SPC regulation R 70, CTB regulation R 75 and CTB SPC regulation R 60*

## Payments on account

- 13 A decision by the LA to make a payment on account in respect of any claim does not count as a proper decision on that claim and therefore will not count towards the indicator.

## Withdrawn claims

- 14 When the customer decides not to proceed and withdraws a claim, no decision is required as there is no longer a claim on which to make a decision.

## Change event

- 15 A change event means any notification/information received during the course of a benefit award (and other than as part of or in the course of the making of a new claim) from the customer or third party which leads to a superseding decision on a claim.
- 16 A change notification can be received
- in writing
  - by Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) from Jobcentre Plus or The Pension, Disability and Carers Service
  - via the Housing Benefit Matching Service
  - electronically
  - by telephone (see paragraph 18 for further advice)
  - during the course of a visit or interview, including video links
  - as part of a fraud investigation
  - following contact initiated by the LA, e.g. a diary date, intervention

- 17 The following changes are **excluded** from the indicator
- automatic uprating of the HB/CTB applicable amounts and social security benefits
  - annual Council Tax increases
  - batch changes to Council Tax liability
  - revisions to earlier decisions, eg following an accuracy/management check or appeal/reconsideration/revision

The first three categories will be recorded under Option 1 in Field 250 – Type of Change.

The final category will be recorded under Option 2 in Field 250 – Type of Change and then, either Option 11 Accuracy Check/Management Check or Option 12 Outcome of appeal/reconsideration/revision in Field 254 – How was the change identified. When the performance data is extracted from the Single HB Extract, Options 11 and 12 will be excluded from the Right Time indicator and at the point when the Right Benefit indicator performance is derived from 'T' records.

## Changes reported by telephone

- 18 Generally, a customer is required to report a change in writing. However, since December 2006, some customers have been allowed to use the [telephone](#) to
- make a claim, and
  - report any changes

*HB/CTB Circular A18/2006* gave details about how claims and change notifications could be submitted by telephone. LAs who want to offer a tele-claim service must provide and publish a telephone number for this purpose.

Where LAs have arrangements to accept claims by telephone, they can also receive notification of any changes of circumstances by the same route, if they wish. The law then allows them to accept changes notified by telephone without the automatic need for written confirmation. LAs still have the right to ask individual customers to confirm a change in writing, if they think it is appropriate.

*HB/CTB Circular A11/2009* – Dealing with changes in circumstances – sets out the detail and the effect on processing times of accepting changes by telephone.

## Effective dates

- 19 If a change is notified in advance, ie before the date from which the change takes effect, processing time will start from the date determined under *HB R 79\**. If a decision is made on the change on or before the date the change takes effect, the time taken to process the change for the purposes of the indicator will be one day. However, if a decision is not made on the change by the date the change comes into effect, processing time will continue until the date a decision is made.

\* see also *CTB R 67; HB SPC R 59; CTB SPC R 50 & 51*

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## Designated offices

20 The definition of a designated office is (from HB regulation, R 2(1))\*

*‘The office designated by the relevant authority for the receipt of claims to HB/CTB either by*

- a** notice upon or with a form approved by it for the purpose of claiming HB/CTB, or*
- b** reference upon or with such a form to some other document available from it and sent by electronic means or otherwise on application and without charge, or*
- c** any combination of the provisions set out in sub-paragraphs **a** and **b** above.’*

*\*see also CTB R 2(1); HB SPC R 2(1); CTB SPC R 2(1)*

21 The LA’s claim form for HB/CTB, or a covering notice accompanying the form, will specify either a list of designated office addresses to which the customer can return the claim form, or state where these addresses can be found, or a combination of both. This information should include all the designated offices as required by the above regulation.

22 By definition, not all LA offices are designated offices unless they are specifically stated as being designated to receive HB/CTB claims on the forms and notices mentioned above. This also applies to DWP offices, which are also not designated offices unless they, too, are specifically stated as being designated to receive HB/CTB claims on the forms and notices mentioned above.

## FAQs/Scenarios - New Claims and Change Events

| Key Word/Phrase                                   | Question/Scenario  | Answer   |
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| <b>1. Decisions on claims</b>                     | What is meant by a decision on claims?   | <p>Claims are normally decided once the customer has been given an opportunity to provide all the information requested on the form, and any additional information the LA may require has been received from the customer and/or third parties. This includes decisions made on claims where the customer may have been asked to provide further information but has declined to or has not taken the trouble to reply to the request within the time given.</p> <p>A decision will result in the claim being successful or unsuccessful.</p> |
| <b>2. Ineligible claims</b>                       | Will all ineligible claims be counted as 'effective' new claims? For example, when the customer's capital exceeds the limit.   | Yes, all claims which are ineligible will be counted in the same way as effective new claims.  |
| <b>3. Property not yet banded for Council Tax</b> | <p>1) What happens when a CTB claim is received for a property which has not yet been valued?</p> <p>2) What happens to a claim when the customer reports a change of address to a new property which has not been banded?</p> | <p>1) In this instance the processing time starts on the day the Benefits section is notified of the Council Tax payable.</p> <p>2) The LA should make a decision on the ending of Council Tax liability at the old address. The processing time ends at that point. Any subsequent action to award CTB in line with the correct banding at the new address would be classed as a revision and would not count towards the indicator.</p>  |

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| <p><b>4. Date most recent HB claim was received</b></p> | <p>What date should be used here?</p>   | <p>Date HB claim (or ‘relevant information’ forwarded by DWP) is physically received at a designated office of the local authority.</p> <p>‘Relevant information’ would include the Local Authority Input Document (LAID) forwarded by Jobcentre Plus and the Local Authority Claim Information (LACI) forwarded by The Pension Disability and Carers Service (PDCS).</p> <p>This does not include an intention to claim benefit, for example by requesting a claim form from the LA.</p> <p>Processing times will be measured from the date that an electronic claim form is received, even if it is unsigned.</p> <p>Do not treat an initial date of contact as the start date. The date of receipt must be used.</p> |
| <p><b>5. Revised action on a new claim</b></p>          | <p>A claim is decided with benefit not payable. Following a request for a review of the decision it is realised that the claim should have been successful (i.e. benefit payable). What will be counted here?</p> | <p>The claim will have originally been included in the indicator as a ‘new claim decided unsuccessful – benefit not payable’. Should the decision on the claim be ‘revised’ with the revised decision that the claim should have been successful, it will be counted as a change event and recorded in HB/CTB Field 254 under Option 12 – Outcome of appeal/reconsideration/revision.</p> <p>The revision to the claim will <b>not</b> count towards the indicator.</p>   |

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| <b>6. Waiting for Rent Officer determination</b>        | When all the necessary information has been provided but the Rent Officer determination has not been received, can we use the Indicative Rent Level to make a payment, count this as a decision, and then treat the actual determination, when received, as a change event? | No. Where it has been decided to use an Indicative Rent Level to ensure that a payment is made pending the Rent Officer's decision, this is a payment on account and should not be counted towards the indicator. A decision can only be made once all the information is received, including the Rent Officer's determination. For the purposes of the indicator, the processing time will be counted to the day that the decision is made, and <b>not</b> the day that the payment on account is made. |
| <b>7. Incomplete claim form</b>                         | A customer has failed to provide a properly completed claim, even when given one calendar month (or such longer period as is reasonable) to rectify the defect. Will this count towards the indicator?  | Yes. Such claims should be treated as defective and counted as 'new claims decided unsuccessful'; therefore, they will be included. Remember that you should give a decision that the customer has failed to satisfy the conditions of entitlement to HB/CTB because they have not made a claim in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed time.   |
| <b>8. Additional information requested not provided</b> | A customer has provided a properly completed claim form, including the information and evidence required on that form, but has not provided the additional information requested by the LA. Will this count towards the indicator?  | Yes. As the claim has been properly completed, this will be an effective claim. If the additional information or evidence requested is not forthcoming, you will need to make a decision based on the information and evidence available. Depending on your decision the claim will be counted as successful or unsuccessful.  |
| <b>9. Decision appealed</b>                             | What happens if a decision is made on a claim which is subsequently appealed? Will the subsequent revision count towards the indicator?   | No. Revisions do not count towards the indicator. See also '5' above.  |

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| <p><b>10. Advance claims (1)</b></p> | <p>Where a claim is accepted and logged up to 13 weeks before the tenancy actually commences, is the calculation for the days to process based on application date to determination?</p>  | <p>No. Where a claim is made in advance, under <i>HB R 83(10) 83(11)*</i>, the processing time starts on the Treat As Made (TAM) date determined by the LA.</p> <p>If the claim is processed and a decision made prior to the TAM date then processing time will be one day. If the decision is made after the TAM date then processing time will start on the TAM date and end on the day the decision was made.</p> <p><b>Definition</b> - Under these regulations, please note that the TAM date has to be in the calendar week before entitlement starts and the received date is earlier that the calendar week which includes the TAM date.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">*see also <i>CTB R 69(12) and (13); HB SPC R 64(11); CTB SPC R 53(12)</i></p>   |
| <p><b>11. Advance Claims (2)</b></p> | <p>There are a couple of exceptions to 10 above where the TAM date <b>has</b> to be the date the customer becomes liable for HB/CTB under <i>HB R 79(2) and CTB R 69(10)</i>. Will the Single HB Extract TAM date validity tests be able to differentiate between these claims and those defined in 10 above?</p> | <p>No. At the moment, when the validity tests are applied, there is no way of differentiating between the claims made under the different regulations. If claims made in advance (including these exceptions) fail one or both of the rules as set out below*, the claims will be treated as 'normal' claims and processing time will be calculated from the date of receipt to the decision date. However, as the same rules are applied to the data from <b>all</b> LAs, no LA will be disadvantaged.</p> <p>* Rules for validating the TAM date from the Single HB Extract:<br/> Entitlement start date should be in the week after the TAM date<br/> Received date should be in the week before the TAM date (or earlier).</p> <p>If <b>either</b> of these rules is breached then the TAM date will be</p> |

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|   |  | ignored and the processing time will be derived using the received date and decision date.   |
| <b>12. A new claim with a change event notified</b>                     | If the customer notifies a change before a decision is made on a new claim will this be counted as a new claim successful and a change event or just as a new claim as the change has been notified prior to the benefit decision being made on the new claim? | The change would not count as the notice was not received 'during the course of the benefit award', as benefit had not been awarded at that time. This applies whether or not a payment on account is made. Instead, the change was notified as part of the making of a new claim.   |
| <b>13. Extended payment</b>   | Should we be recording one change event when an extended payment is awarded, and then another when the customer moves to in-work benefit?  | A superseding decision is needed to award the extended payment so this should be included in the indicator and the processing count would start from the receipt of the notification or ETD. A second change event would then be counted for the right time indicator when the customer moves onto in-work benefit or the claim is terminated. If the customer does move onto in-work benefit the processing time for the change event would be the receipt of the in-work claim form/evidence and would end when the superseding decision is made.  |
| <b>14. End of entitlement to IS/JSA(IB) or Pension Credit guarantee</b> | If we get an ETD from DWP notifying us that IS/JSA(IB) or Pension Credit has ended can we make a decision to end the passported HB/CTB claim at that point?  | If the information provided means that there is no longer entitlement to HB/CTB, for example the customer has died or moved away from the area, a superseding decision could be made to end the award. Where the customer's circumstances are not clear or it is known the customer has started work the LA must make further enquiries before making a decision. The processing time starts when you receive notification of the cessation of that other income-related benefit and ends when you are either able to give a decision regarding any ongoing entitlement or you decide to terminate the claim because the customer has not provided you with any information. |

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| <b>15. Review action</b>  | Does information received from the customer or somebody acting on their behalf following the issue of a 'review' form on a case identified as 'at risk', count towards the indicator?  | Yes. Since April 2008, information received as a consequence of review action will be included in the indicator.   |
| <b>16. Change notifications received in response to mail shots</b>    | If mail shots are issued reminding customers to report changes do subsequent change notifications count towards the indicator?   | Yes. Since April 2008, change notifications arising from any general activity to promote reporting of changes will count towards the indicator.  |
| <b>17. Changes where the HB/CTB amount in payment is not affected</b> | If a customer moves to a property with the same rental value, there is no effect on the amount of HB/CTB in payment. Similarly, if the customer notifies that their non-dependant's income has increased, it does not necessarily take the income into the next banding and therefore does not affect the amount of HB/CTB. Do they count towards the indicator? | Yes. Since April 2008, under the new Performance Framework, they will count towards the 'Right Time' indicator.  |
| <b>18. Date a notification through ETD is received</b>                | When should notification of a change received by ETD be treated as received?   | If the notification of the change is received through ETD reports, this should be regarded as having been received on the first working day following the day that the data was generated from the Pension Disability and Carers Service or Jobcentre Plus. There may be occasions when the ETD reports take two working days to arrive at the LA; the date used should be the day when the ETD reports were <b>first</b> retrievable. |
| <b>19. Pensions Credit savings</b>                                    | Do changes to income/capital notified by customers receiving Pension Credit savings credit only count towards the indicator?   | Such changes notified to the LA should be forwarded to the Pension Disability and Careers Service (PDCS). PDCS may then send a revised Assessed Income Figure (AIF) by EDT. Actioning this EDT will generate a change event for the LA.  |

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| <p><b>20. Telephone notifications (1)</b></p> | <p>Does an LA need Chief Executive's authority to accept claims/changes via the telephone?</p>   | <p>No. The Chief Executive's authority is needed only in those LAs who have <b>e-enabled</b> their business to take claims and notifications electronically without a signature.</p>   |
| <p><b>21. Telephone notifications (2)</b></p> | <p>Can any LA accept changes notified over the telephone?</p>  | <p>In most circumstances, change notifications by telephone should only be accepted by a LA which has published a telephone number for the use of making a tele-claim. This number can also be used to take change notifications over the phone without the <b>automatic</b> need for written confirmation. In this situation, the processing time for any change notified by telephone starts from the day the change is reported.</p> <p>The processing time for LAs not set up for tele-claims starts from when the written notification is received. (see circular A11/2009 for more detailed information).</p>  |
| <p><b>22. Telephone notifications (3)</b></p> | <p>Although we are not set up to take claims by telephone, can we accept and action change notifications taken over the telephone?</p> | <p>Although regulations permit taking a change notification by telephone in individual cases, if an LA is <b>not</b> set up to take tele-claims, by accepting and actioning, <i>without waiting for written confirmation</i>, a change taken via the telephone then there is no record or audit trail to refer back to should the customer challenge a decision.</p> <p>However, an LA may decide, in certain circumstances, to suspend benefit pending written confirmation of a change. For example, a customer may call to say they have started work. To avoid a potential overpayment, an LA may decide to suspend the claim until proof of earnings is received.</p> |

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| <p><b>23. Internal notifications</b></p>                                   | <p>If we receive an internal notification of a change, ie notice from our housing department that a tenancy has ended or from our revenues section that a customer has moved out of an address, will this count towards the indicator?</p>   | <p>Any notice given (where that notice is physically received at the designated office of an LA) by the customer or another person or body during the course of a benefit award will count towards the indicator.</p>  |
| <p><b>24. Changes reported to Council Tax Office – Revenues Office</b></p> | <p>When a change is notified to a Council Tax office or a Revenues office other than a Benefit office it takes several days for the Benefit office to receive the notified change. What date can we use as a date of notification? Is it the date the notification was received at Council Tax/Revenue offices or is it a date notification was actually received at the benefit office?</p> | <p>It is for the LA to decide which offices should be designated and provide clear information to the customers about their location. If you have decided the Council Tax office or Revenues office within your LA is a designated office, in order to meet your customers' needs, then the date of receipt of the change notification is the day it was received at that office. If, for example, your Revenues Office or Council Tax Office is based elsewhere at a different postal address and is not a designated office then the date the change notification is received by a designated office would be the start of the processing time for the purpose of the indicator.</p> |
| <p><b>25. Uprating</b></p>   | <p>Will annual uprating of benefits or rents be included in the indicator?</p>   | <p>Although the Single HB Extract will collect information on all changes where a decision is made, changes to entitlement resulting from uprating of Social Security benefits, annual Council Tax increases, batch changes to Council Tax Liability do not count towards the indicator.</p> <p>However, since April 2008, all annual rent increases, including LA rents and changes to the Pension Credit Assessed Income Figure (AIF) including up-rating of the AIF have been included in the indicator.</p>  |

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| <b>26. Pension Credit AIF</b>                        | Why is this treated differently to normal state benefit uprating and included in the indicator?                                      | With the introduction of the right time performance indicator we tried to make things easier by including as many changes as possible in the count. The exclusion of normal state benefit uprating was because these are processed automatically in bulk. As pension credit cases are usually uprated on a case by case basis or in smaller batches it was decided that these would be counted towards the indicator. |
| <b>27. Changes that coincide with uprating</b>       | Will changes that coincide with uprating be included in the indicator?   | Yes. For example, if the LA rent increase, a change to the AIF in Pension credit or an increase in an occupational pension coincides with the uprating, the change is included in the indicator.  |
| <b>28. Uprating of occupational/private pensions</b> | Where an LA has been proactive and increased customers' occupational/private pension will this count towards the indicators?         | Yes.<br><br>However, if the customer then writes in to advise that the increase is incorrect, resulting in the LA reassessing the claim, this will not be counted as it will be a revision to a previous decision.  |
| <b>29. Tax Credit awards</b>                         | Are the April provisional payments on the Tax Credit award notices considered as uprating and therefore excluded from the indicator? | These are not considered as uprating but should be treated like other advance notifications. Processing times start from the date the change to the Tax Credit award takes effect in HB/CTB and ends when a decision is made. If a decision is made by the date the change takes effect the time taken to process is one day.   |

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| <p><b>30. Large scale electronic rent increases</b></p>   | <p>What about large-scale electronic rent increase notifications (ie uprating e-notifications from a large RSL)?</p>  | <p>These count as change events.</p> <p>Normally these changes are notified in advance of the date the change takes effect.</p> <p>Providing decisions are made by the date the changes take effect in HB/CTB, the time taken to process the changes will be one day. This also applies to individual notifications of future changes. If a decision is not made on the change by the date the change comes into effect, the processing starts from that date until the decision is made.</p> |
| <p><b>31. Annual Rent Officer reviews and LHA anniversary dates/significant birthdays which impact on 'room sharing'.</b></p> | <p>Does the standard 'annual review' referral to the Rent Officer count towards the indicator?</p>  | <p>Yes. All changes resulting from Rent Officer decisions etc count towards the indicator</p>   |
| <p><b>32. 52 week rent referral exclusions</b></p>  | <p>If a customer notifies us of a change to their rent but the 52 week exclusion period has not expired does this change count as a change event at the time of the notification or at the 'annual review'?</p> | <p>The change would need a decision at the time it was notified and would count towards the indicator. The annual review would count as a further change event.</p>   |

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| <p><b>33. Advance notifications</b></p> | <p>An LA is notified on the 17 April 2009 that a customer's income has changed slightly but on examining the wages it is clear that the change in take home pay is due to tax and NI changes. The LA decides to exercise its discretion and disregard this change for 30 weeks as the claim has been highlighted for review in June 2009 because a child is turning 16. When the claim is reviewed in June and the change in income taken into account, is the 17 April the start date for the performance indicator?</p> | <p>This should be treated as an advance notification. Processing time for the indicator starts from the date the LA chooses to apply the change. If a decision is made by that date, the time taken to process the change is one day.</p>  |
| <p><b>34. Multiple changes (1)</b></p>  | <p>How are multiple changes included in one single notification from the same source counted towards the indicator?</p>   | <p>'T' records are generated for each notification rather than each change reported.<br/>                 When one notification is received from a customer on the same day reporting multiple changes to their claim, for the purposes of the indicator, this will count as <b>one</b> change event. Ideally, one 'T' record should be generated on the assumption that the all the changes are processed at the same time, entering the date of the <b>earliest</b> effective date of change in Field 253. However, we are aware that, to stop any over/underpayments some LAs chose to process these changes separately. For example, it may be possible to action one of the changes immediately (no further information required) but other reported changes may need confirmation/proofs and so delay the actioning of the change. In cases such as these, although more than one 'T' record will be generated, for the purposes of the Right Time indicator, only one 'T' record will be counted towards the indicator. This will be the 'T' record with the latest decision date.<br/>                 If two separate notifications are received from a customer at the same time then this would still count as <b>one</b> change event for the purposes of the indicator.</p> |

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| <p><b>35. Multiple Changes (2)</b></p>       | <p>A change is reported by the customer. On the same day the LA is notified, via another source, of another unrelated change to the same claim. Should these two changes be processed together as they were received on the same day?</p> | <p>No, these are two separate notifications from different sources and should be processed as separate change events for the purposes of the indicator (two 'T' records will be generated).</p>   |
| <p><b>36. Claims with gaps in IS/JSA</b></p> | <p>When we are advised that a customer has had a gap in IS/JSA should we make a superseding decision to end the award from the start of that period and ask the customer to re-apply?</p>   | <p>No, you should allow the customer one calendar month to establish any entitlement during that period and make any changes retrospectively. If you then determine that the customer was not entitled to HB/CTB during that period then you would need to make a decision to terminate the claim. A new claim would then be needed. However, a shortened claim form would be acceptable in this circumstance.</p> <p>If you establish that there was an ongoing entitlement but that the amount of benefit payable was affected, the reduction in entitlement during that period and the return to the original entitlement would be treated as two change events.</p> <p>If you are dealing with all these changes retrospectively it is possible to make one superseding decision providing you hold all then necessary information to correctly calculate benefit entitlement for the past and ongoing claim.</p> |

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| <p><b>37. Calculating earnings of a Working Age customer</b></p> | <p>How can I avoid waiting for five weeks before calculating earnings?</p>  | <p>For cases where the customer has started work or increased their hours of work, instead of waiting for five week/two month-based evidence LAs should use the provisions under HB Reg 29 to either contact the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employer in order to attain a cert of employment, or</li> <li>• customer to request any documentary evidence available to date (such as just one wage slip) to estimate earnings</li> </ul> <p>Otherwise, waiting for the required wage slips will mean the customer will either accrue an overpayment or, if benefit is suspended, get into rent arrears.</p> |
| <p><b>38. Management Check</b></p>                               | <p>Following a management check, a decision was revised. Although this does not count towards the indicator as a change event would any subsequent action via diary dates etc set at the time of the check?</p> | <p>Yes. Any future action identified at the time of the check would be dealt with in the normal way and would count towards the indicator.</p>   |
| <p><b>39. Change in CT liability</b></p>                         | <p>When there has been a change in CTB due to a change in CT liability will it count towards the 'Right Time' Indicator?</p>  | <p>Annual or batch changes to Council Tax liability will <b>not</b> count towards the indicator but one-off changes to CT liability within a household <b>will</b> count towards the indicator.</p>  |
| <p><b>40. Date all information received</b></p>                  | <p>Why do we need to differentiate between information received from customers and third parties?</p>   | <p>We need to be able to differentiate between information received from customers and information received from third parties. The distinction will be useful when we come to analyse the performance of LAs in more detail and can establish what is causing any delays in the process.</p>  |

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| <b>41. Intervention - decision to terminate a claim following a period of suspension</b> | Will a decision to terminate a claim following a period of suspension as the customer has failed to respond to an intervention by the LA be included in the indicator?                     | Yes. Since April 2008, these will be included with a one day count if actioned on the day after the time allowed for the customer to respond ends.  |
| <b>42. Joint Tenancy Flag</b>  | Does the 'Joint tenancy Flag' refer to rent liability or council tax liability?  | It relates to rent liability only. This field should be completed for HB or HB/CTB claims. It should be left blank if the claim is for CTB only.  |
| <b>43. Customers total hours worked – Restricted input field</b>                         | The 'Customers total hrs worked' input field is restricted to 3 characters. As we record the actual hours worked, ie 16.5 or 17.25 they exceed the restriction. Will the field be amended? | The maximum field length only refers to the number of characters <b>before</b> the decimal point. So the exact figures (eg 16.5, 17.25) should be recorded.   |
| <b>44. Recording In-work credits.</b>  | Where should In-work credits be recorded?  | As there are no specific 'income' fields for In-work credits, they should be recorded under Claimants Other Income and Partners Other Income - Fields 113/169.<br><br>Fields 114/170 - Total disregarded income should also be completed  |
| <b>45. Data Matches</b>  | Under what circumstances could an LA confirm a data match independently without contacting the customer or a third party?  | We would define 'where the LA can check information independently' as establishing confirmation via systems (for example CIS), or by whatever other means an LA has access to, without the need to approach the customer or a third party. As LAs can be set up slightly differently, in terms of access to systems etc, it would be the individual LA who would need to establish which Data Matches could be confirmed independently without approaching the customer or a third party. |