

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Circular

Department for Work and Pensions

1st Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA

HB/CTB A14/2009

ADJUDICATION AND OPERATIONS CIRCULAR

WHO SHOULD READ	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
ACTION	For information
SUBJECT	Process for the transfer of the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) Return from 1 April 2009 (Quarter 1 2009/10 onwards)

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/
- have any queries about the
 - **technical content of this circular**, contact Malcolm Moran
 - Telephone: 0191 216 2674
 - Email: HBDDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
 - **distribution of this circular**, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline
Email: orderline@cds.co.uk

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Process for the transfer of the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) Return from 1 June 2009 (Quarter 1 2009/10 onwards)

Introduction

- 1 This circular refers to the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) Return and contains
 - details of the process to be followed for the transfer of this data between Local Authorities (LAs) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from 1 June 2009, Quarter 1 2009/10 onwards.
 - a copy of the HBRF Return Template V2.0
 - 'Top Tips' to support the accurate completion of this return

Background

- 2 Since the introduction of the Single HB Extract (SHBE) in April 2008, data relating to Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) has been collected electronically on a separate data return. Most of the information collected in this return was previously collected via the Stats 124.
- 3 If possible and practical it is DWP's intention to eventually collect this information via the SHBE and we will be working with Local Authority Associations (LAAs) and Software Suppliers to achieve this aim. In the interim, LAs are expected to provide this separate return to DWP as it is vital to the Department's wider policy work including statistical modelling and responding to parliamentary questions. *HB/CTB Bulletin G21/2008 para 2* confirms the data requirements for 2009/2010.
- 4 *Guidance for Completion of Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud Return* is available on the DWP website – a link can be found at *Appendix 1*.
- 5 With effect from 1 June 2009 (Quarter 1 2009/10 onwards) the template (*HBRF Return Template V2.0 – see Appendix 3*) and process described in this circular should replace any previous templates and guidance relating to the collection and transfer of this data.

General guidance

- 6 The timetable detailing the Periods of the Return and the deadline dates for transfer of this data to DWP is reproduced at *Appendix 2*. It is also included in the *Guidance for Completion of the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud Return* is available on the DWP website – a link is included at *Appendix 1*.

- 7 LAs are asked to ensure that their Responsible Encryptor (RE) is aware of the timetable and the date transfer of this data is planned. Data received after the deadline date **cannot** be processed and **will** result in performance information being missed for that quarter.
- 8 Please ensure that data is submitted in the correct format using the template provided (*Appendix 3*). If data fails to load and/or is not received by DWP in the correct format, by the deadline date it **will** result in performance information being missed for that quarter. Please refer to *Appendix 5* for a desk aide on submitting data.
- 9 The automated loading process **will not** pick up your data if it is **not** returned using the correct template and/or in the format detailed. LAs will be informed if data fails to load and/or is incorrectly formatted. Data can be re-submitted only within the quarter to which it relates and received by HB Newcastle by the timetabled deadline date. 'Top Tips' (*Appendix 4*) highlights common formatting issues which could prevent your data being loaded or reported accurately.
- 10 When scheduling transfer dates, LAs are advised to allow time for clearance of any policy queries (see *para 20*), software and/or formatting issues to ensure their data is received by HB Newcastle in the required format by the timetabled deadline date. Frequently Asked Questions have been compiled relating to queries raised during previous quarterly collections and may support completion of your return. *Frequently Asked Questions v2.0* can be found on the DWP website – a link is provided at *Appendix 1*.
- 11 LAs are asked to ensure that the **deadline dates** for receipt of data by DWP contained in this circular are taken into consideration when scheduling system downtime. Housing Benefit Newcastle require advanced notification when system downtime coincides with the data transfer period in order to consider alternative arrangements.
- 12 HB Newcastle should be alerted **immediately** if unexpected software issues jeopardise receipt of this data by the deadline date.
- 13 If LAs are unable to submit a full return, but can supply some of the data then please submit a partial return. Please include, in your covering email, supporting information detailing the reasons for the missing data. It should be noted however, that normal return deadlines apply and amendments to a **previous** quarter's data cannot be accepted. **We will only accept amendments to the current quarter as set out in the paragraph below.**
- 14 Data can be re-submitted or amended, only within the quarter to which it relates and before the deadline date, by **fully** completing a new template. The email accompanying this transfer should be clearly annotated to indicate that this is replacement data. Any amendments received after the deadline will not be actioned and **will** result in incorrect performance data being published.

- 15 Two weeks before the 4-week return is due all LAs that have not submitted data will receive an Email reminder. This reminder will reiterate details of the timescales for the return; the format to be used; and the procedure to follow if encountering problems with meeting the deadline. **No further reminders will be issued.**

Exception process

- 16 In **exceptional circumstances** when an LA cannot submit or re-submit data by the quarterly deadline an extension of up to **five working days** can be requested. All requests **must** be submitted immediately **via email** to HBDDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk with extension request in the subject header. It is the Senior Operational Managers decision whether to allow the extension.
- 17 It is not possible to be definitive regarding what constitutes exceptional circumstances. However, problems that could reasonably have been foreseen or instances where an LA has requested an extension for similar reasons previously will be considered less favourably during this process.
- 18 There will be no right of appeal against the decision of the Senior Operational Manager and there will be no extensions allowed beyond an additional five working days.
- 19 For further details relating to any of the information referred to in the general guidance, loading or exception process please contact
- Malcolm Moran
Tel: 0191 216 2674
Email: HBDDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk , or
 - the Newcastle HB Team (see *Appendix 7* for a complete contact list)

Clarification of HBRF data requirements

- 20 LAs should avoid sending requests for clarification of HBRF data requirements to named individuals. Instead, to enable us to give you the best service we can, queries should be directed to the contact point below. If we cannot answer your question right away we will tell you the reason for the delay and how long it will be before we can send a full reply.

Email: HBDDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

PGP background and support

- 21 HB Newcastle contacted each LA during 2008 to identify the LA personnel who have been assigned RE status. The role of each LA's RE is to receive and issue the electronic PGP public key that allows the encryption/decryption and secure email transfer of data.

- 22 When transferring data, the file name used should be the LA number and the email subject heading should contain only the month of extraction. For example, where LA number 12345 has extracted their Quarter 1 data on the extraction date of 30 June this should be shown as follows
- File name = 12345
 - Email subject heading = June
- 23 Twelve months support and maintenance has been purchased from PGP, allowing access to PGP engineers via telephone and email between 08:00 and 17:00 hours, Monday to Friday. This support is due to expire in September when the preferred transfer of data will be via GFTS (Generic File Transfer Service). Further details regarding any change in submission of data will be communicated later in the year.
- 24 Further support is available on the PGP portal which includes a knowledge base, FAQs and tutorials. The site can be accessed at <http://support.pgp.com>. Login ID and password details have already been supplied to the LAs RE's.

Transfer of the HBRF Return to HB Newcastle

- 25 All LAs should currently have the public keys for Leigh Armstrong, Lianne Leighton and Coral Smart. Due to recent staff moves please delete the keys that you hold for Lianne and Coral.
- 26 Further PGP licenses have been applied for in HB Newcastle for Malcolm Moran and Gillian Leighton. These keys will be communicated separately via email prior to the Quarter 1 extraction date of 30 June 2009.
- 27 If you do not have the public key for Leigh Armstrong, or do not receive the keys for Malcolm Moran and Gillian Leighton by 30 June 2009 then the RE should contact:
- Malcolm Moran
Tel: 0191 216 2674
Email: HBDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
- 28 LAs should use the following process for transferring their HBRF Return to DWP
- The RE should note that it is no longer necessary to telephone HB Newcastle before transmission.
 - When ready to forward data to DWP the RE should transfer their HBRF Return to Malcolm Moran malcolm.moran@dwp.gsi.gov.uk (HB Newcastle), via PGP encrypted email, using the three public keys provided – Malcolm Moran, Leigh Armstrong and Gillian Leighton (*para 27* advises what to do if you have not received these).
 - By the end of the following working day of receipt of this data in HB Newcastle the RE will receive an email confirming receipt of data. **Further contact with the RE will only be made if there are problems within the data transfer process.**

- Should you **not** receive an email confirming receipt of data by the end of the following working day then it is the responsibility of the RE to query this with HB Newcastle (see *para 31* for contact details). **Failure to check an email receipt has been received may result in performance information being missed for that quarter.**
- LAs should ensure they use the file name and email subject heading detailed in *para 22* when transferring their data. Please also refer to *Appendix 5* Submission Desk Aide.

29 It is important that all the steps in *para 28* above are followed on **every** occasion that this data is transferred to DWP.

30 When there is a change of RE LAs should ensure the new RE provides their contact details to the recipients of their data in DWP using the following contact details.

Leigh Armstrong
Email: hbsdiad-scan@dwpgsi.gov.uk

31 All queries relating to this transfer process should be directed to

Malcolm Moran
Tel: 0191 216 2674
Email: HBDDataService@dwpgsi.gov.uk

Transfer of data via third party suppliers

32 Should an LA wish to sub-contract the sending of data to a third party supplier, the DWP will accept transfer of the HBRF Return via that supplier on the understanding that the Department's specified standards and procedures are strictly adhered to.

33 The responsibility for ensuring that data is transferred to DWP in the correct manner and at the correct time; and that the requisite records of that transfer are maintained cannot be delegated to a third party and remains the responsibility of the owning LA.

34 LAs should therefore satisfy themselves that any third party supplier they use has the necessary processes and procedures in place to meet this requirement.

35 LAs wishing to use a third party supplier must notify DWP in writing, by email to HBDDataService@dwpgsi.gov.uk, confirming their intention and accepting their responsibilities listed above. They should also include the suppliers name together with the name, location, email address and telephone number of the suppliers RE.

36 LAs were provided with PGP licenses specifically to provide (and receive) data to DWP (although use for other purposes is not precluded). If the LA is transferring responsibility for transfers to a 3rd party then **both** the PGP licenses should transfer to the third party. If the LA then wishes to use PGP for other purposes they will need to purchase their own copy.

37 Queries relating to the use of third party suppliers should be directed to

Malcolm Moran

Tel: 0191 216 2674

Email: HBDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Guidance for completion of the HBRF Return and FAQs

The link below can be used to locate the following

- Guidance for Completion of 2009/2010 v2.0
- Frequently Asked Questions v2.0
- HBRF Returns Template v2.0

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/performance-value-for-money/returning-data.asp>

Timetable – 2009/2010

HBRF returns should cover the following periods and be sent to the DWP by the following deadlines

Period of return	Deadline date for receipt by DWP
1 April 2009 – 30 June 2009	31 July 2009
1 July 2009 – 30 September 2009	30 October 2009
1 October 2009 – 31 December 2009	29 January 2010
1 January 2010 – 31 March 2010	30 April 2010

HBRF Return template v2.0

Where to find the template

- 1 Template v2.0 supersedes all previous versions of this template and should be used for submission of this return from 1 April 2009 (Quarter 1).
- 2 A copy of this template, sent as a separate attachment with circular, will be available on our website from 26 June 2009 and can be accessed using the following link <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/performance-value-for-money/returning-data.asp>

Guidance for using the template (v2.0)

HBRF template guidance

- Select 'Enable Macros' when message box appears.
- Template will open into Guidance Instructions giving details on how to complete the form, select one of the following
 - **Yes.** This will re-activate the menu functions and also the data completion tabs.
 - **No.** This will shut down the spreadsheet.
- A small number of local authorities may experience difficulties in opening this template, for example the screen going white. If you experience any difficulties in accessing this spreadsheet please contact:
- Malcolm Moran
Tel: 0191 216 2674
Email: HBDDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

HBRF Form Format tab

- This worksheet is protected allowing only those cells that require completion to be accessed.
- Each of the active cells contains data validation, this will result in
 - an information box being displayed providing information about the completion of that question. This box can be moved anywhere on the screen by clicking and dragging
 - an error message will be displayed if an invalid entry has been made
- The Local Authority Number cell can be completed by either
 - keying in your local authority number
 - selecting your number from the drop down list

Failure to enter your LA number will result in your data not loading onto our system and consequently data not being published onto HOBOD.

Both of these options will display your local authority name to the right of your number. If you are unsure of your local authority number then please refer to the LA number tab on this spreadsheet.

HBRF String Format tab

- Cells in this tab will automatically populate with figures entered in the HBRF Form Format.
- If completing your data direct into this tab, then points **1** to **3** refer from **HBRF Form Format**.

'Top Tips' – common formatting problems identified

This appendix aims to identify formatting problems that have compromised the loading of HBRF data. This list is by no means exhaustive but seeks to highlight the common issues and clarify requirements:

DO:

- ❖ submit your return as early as possible as this may allow time to rectify any software or data quality issues
- ❖ notify us immediately if you will be unlikely to submit your data by the specified deadline
- ❖ use the template attached to this circular to return your data
- ❖ provide your correct six figure LA number
- ❖ leave any field blank where you are unable to provide data
- ❖ provide 'total' figures only
- ❖ use **only** numeric entries in fields – text such as N/A, unknown, etc is not acceptable
- ❖ if you are unable to breakdown overpayment amounts, please enter total amount in the **Total** cell
- ❖ submit a partial return if you are unable to submit a full return.

DO NOT:

- ❖ create links or formula in the template
- ❖ alter the layout of the template
- ❖ re-name the worksheets
- ❖ delete any of the worksheets
- ❖ provide a breakdown of figures
- ❖ password protect your template
- ❖ create your own spreadsheet
- ❖ put text in fields
- ❖ include 'pence' – figures should be provided to nearest 'pound' only (amounts **over 50p** should be rounded 'up' and amounts of **50p and under** should be rounded 'down')
- ❖ breakdown fields – individual, personal data is not required for any field
- ❖ populate cells if you do not have any data (please note a 0 is regarded by analysts as a positive figure and should not be used if data is unavailable).

Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud

Data Submission Desk Aide

If you have a problem or query at any time, please contact
Malcolm Moran on 0191 216 2674

Periods of return in 2009/2010		Deadline Dates	Email Subject Header
Quarter 1	1 st April - 30th June 2009	31 st July 2009	June
Quarter 2	1 st July - 30th September 2009	30 th October 2009	September
Quarter 3	1 st October - 31st December 2009	29 th January 2010	December
Quarter 4	1 st January - 31 st March 2010	30 th April 2010	March

Before the relevant quarter

1. Ensure the current Circular and Guidance is followed.
2. Using the above table, plan the dates into your workload.
3. Notify us **immediately** of any software difficulties or other issues, which could prevent you submitting the data by the specified deadline.
4. Ensure the Responsible Encryptors will be available to send the data when required.
5. Extract your data on the last day of the relevant quarter.
6. If any query is not covered within the FAQs (Appendix 1) then you should seek clarification by contacting HBDDataService@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

After the Extraction Date - completing the Template

7. Using the current Template, input your data to either the Form Format or the String Format tab.

Please do not do any of the following, as this could result in your data not being accepted for publication

- a) Create your own spreadsheet, links or formulae in the Template.
- b) Alter the Template layout, add, delete or rename the worksheets.
- c) Password protect the Template.
- d) Put text such as N/A into fields.
- e) Show money fields as £/p. Monies should be rounded to the nearest £. For example £17599.51 would be shown as £17600 or £17599.49 would be shown as £17599
- f) If data for a particular field is unavailable, do not populate with '0' as analysts regard the latter as a positive figure.
- g) Provide a claimant level breakdown showing either names or numbers. We require total figures only.

Before submitting your data

8. Check your data is both correct and supplied in the manner required.
9. Check the correct Local Authority name and number are shown on the Template, together with the date of the relevant quarter e.g. 30/06/2009.
10. Save the file using your LA Number and month of extraction as subject header, eg
File Name:**12345**
Email subject Header: **June**
11. The email subject header should relate to the month of extraction, please see above timetable.
12. Following the introduction of gcsx there have been problems with file naming conventions and multiple extensions. The way around this is to rename the **file.pgp** - for example, the file name will then read xxxx.pgp instead of xxxx.xls.pgp. or xxxx.txt.pgp or xxxx.dat.pgp etc.
13. In some instances you may need to remove the .pgp extension.
14. You are no longer required to contact HB Newcastle before submitting HBRF data.

Frequent Errors made by Local Authorities

1. Using incorrect PGP keys
2. Using incorrect number of keys.
3. Using an incorrect mailbox
4. Using incorrect Templates
5. Changing or amending Template
6. Deleting Template tabs

Submitting your data

15. When ready to submit your HBRF Return, the Responsible Encryptor should ensure the data is encrypted using the **three** public keys provided: **Malcolm Moran, Leigh Armstrong and Gillian Leighton**
16. The Responsible Encryptor should then transfer the HBRF return via PGP encrypted mail using the above keys to Malcolm Moran – malcolm.moran@dpw.gsi.gov.uk
17. Please submit a partial return if unable to send all the required data, providing details of missing data as detailed in point 19.
18. Send your data as soon as possible as this may allow time to rectify any software or data quality issues.
19. If required, write any explanatory notes in the main body of the email used to submit the data

Following Data Submission

20. After you submit the data file, HB Newcastle will contact you via Email by the *end of the following working day* to advise of receipt. For example:-
12345 submit a data file @ 08:30 on 01/07/2009
We will reply no later than 19:00 on 02/07/2009
21. If you do **not** receive a confirmation of receipt email within the given time, it is then the responsibility of the RE to query this with HB Newcastle, see Contact list attached to latest circular.
22. If you wish to make an amendment after your initial submission, it **must** still be received **within** the timetabled deadline for the relevant quarter, as amendments received after this date will **not** be accepted.
23. As HB Newcastle no longer have the functionality to key separate data or update manually, you need to complete a new Template in full, with the Email subject header showing 'Revised'
24. If HB Newcastle rejects your file for any reason, please follow the instructions provided within your rejection Email and return by the timetabled deadline, allowing enough time to amend possible corrections

Thank you

HOUSING BENEFIT RECOVERIES AND FRAUD

CHECK LIST

HAVE YOU.....	Y / N
1 Referred to the latest circular?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Followed the tips on how to complete Template v2 2009/2?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Checked correct Authority name and number are entered ?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If the LA number is not completed, your data will not be picked up and may result in data not being published</i> 	
4 Checked the date relevant to the quarter is entered?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Checked your data by following the Top Tips?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Compared your data with past quarters for a quality consistency check?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Used single file extension?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Encrypted the data using the PGP keys for Malcolm Moran, Gillian Leighton and Leigh Armstrong?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 If required, put any explanatory notes in the body of the mail used to send data?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Used the correct mailbox?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All data and amendments <u>malcolm.moran@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</u> • All data issues, queries and extension requests <u>HBDataService@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</u> 	

All answers to these questions should be YES

HB Newcastle contact details

Housing Benefit

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