

# Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

## General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, The Adelphi, 1 - 11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT  
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

**HB/CTB G10/2006**

**16 October 2006**

<b>Contact</b>	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>technical content of this bulletin</b>, should be sent to the person named in the relevant article</li><li>• <b>distribution of this bulletin</b>, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Tel: 0113 399 4040</li><li>- Fax: 0113 399 4205</li><li>- Email: <a href="mailto:orderline@cds.co.uk">orderline@cds.co.uk</a></li></ul></li></ul> For any <b>general</b> queries, contact Kath Murphy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="mailto:Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk">Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</a></li></ul>
<b>Who should read</b>	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
<b>Action</b>	For information Overpayments Policy Team – secondee opportunity – deadline 27 October 2006 Take-up of CTB – immediate action required New WIB4b form – to be used with immediate effect

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## Overpayments Policy Team – secondee opportunity

- 1 Do you have substantial experience of HB/CTB overpayments and strong written communication skills?
- 2 We are looking for someone from a local authority (LA) to review and update the *HB/CTB Overpayments Guide*, ensuring it is 'user friendly' and practical. The successful applicant will join the team for six months, starting as soon as possible. During this time they will be seconded to the DWP and based at Quarry House in Leeds.

### The work

- 3 Working with the small Overpayments Policy team in Leeds, you will carry out a full review of the present *HB/CTB Overpayments Guide*, ie
  - identify and incorporate changes to regulations and policy since the Guide was introduced, including related areas such as Management Information, Performance Standards and Subsidy
  - develop and write comprehensive HB/CTB overpayments guidance
  - using experience gained in the field, devise and formulate examples that will make the guidance clear and logical

### The person

- 4 We are looking for someone
  - who is highly motivated, with a strong background in HB/CTB overpayments
  - who can take a leading role in a small team to push forward the amendments to the Overpayments Guide
  - who has the ability to bring together information and guidance from a wide range of sources to develop detailed guidance that will be used by LAs on a daily basis
  - with strong communication skills and the ability to produce effective written material
- 5 As part of our role we need to increase support to LAs by updating the guidance on HB/CTB overpayments issues and giving clear explanations of DWP policy in these areas. We aim to take advantage of your experience of the recovery processes and also draw on your knowledge of LAs' interpretation of existing overpayments guidance.
- 6 If you are interested in a career development opportunity helping to raise the general understanding of HB and CTB overpayments, and are preferably at S01/S02 level, please send your CV by email to **Jane Autherson**, no later than 27 October 2006.

Email: [Jane.Autherson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jane.Autherson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Commissioners' cases – update

- 7 Further to *HB/CTB Bulletin G7/2006 paragraph 20*, we are aware of the following cases that are also awaiting decision by a Commissioner
- CH/2986/05 – Right of appeal – LHA direct payment to landlord
  - CH/1821/06 – Direct payment to landlord – already paid to tenant
  - CH/1840/06 – Right to reside – EEA National (stayed pending decision of Court of Appeal in CIS/3573/05)
  - CH/2205/06 – Overpayment – application of CH/4234/04
  - CH/1388/06 – Overpayment – whether defective notice caused significant prejudice
  - CH/2411/06 – Recovery from landlord
  - CH/2280/06 – Recovery from agent
  - CH/2042/06 – Reg 65 HBGR (old no.) – application of Robinson
  - CH/845/06 – Reg 7(1)(a) HBGR whether tenancy commercial
  - CH/2207/06 – Reg 7(1)(c)(i) HBGR – meaning of ‘former partner’ – only last partner?
  - CH/1556/06 – Reg 12A HBGR – rent increase within 52 weeks of the original application to the rent officer
  - CH/1911/06 – Reg 5(5) HBGR – entitlement for two homes where the claimant's partner moved in ahead of the claimant
- 8 Our thanks to all those LAs for telling us about cases they are appealing. (See *HB/CTB Guidance Manual, Part C11.720 – 721.*)

## Queries

- 9 If you have any queries about these cases, please contact ACI-Office Support  
Email: [ACI-Office-Support-Leeds@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ACI-Office-Support-Leeds@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Revised FSA banking leaflets – impact on HB

- 10 As you are aware, one of the key objectives of Local Housing Allowance is financial inclusion. Ideally, we want claimants to have their housing payments paid into a bank account and for them to set up a standing order to pay the rent to their landlord. This has the advantage of being a safe and secure method of payment and provides certainty for landlords that the rent will be paid.
- 11 With this in mind we have been working closely with the Financial Services Authority to get HB/CTB listed as a state benefit and an entitlement letter to one of these benefits acceptable as a form of identification (ID).
- 12 You will be pleased to see that the following forms
- *Checking your Identity – the fight against money laundering, financial crime and terrorism*
  - *Basic bank accounts – your questions answered*
- were revised in September 2006 and now include updated information on ID requirements which state that banks may accept certain documents as ID. Such documents include a letter from a Government department or local authority confirming a right to state benefits such as a pension, Child Benefit, Income Support, Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit.

- 13 The links to these revised leaflets are  
[http://www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer/pdfs/identity\\_check.pdf](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer/pdfs/identity_check.pdf)  
[http://www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer/pdfs/bank\\_account.pdf](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer/pdfs/bank_account.pdf)

## **Temporary absence – CSHB 873/05 and CSHB 385/05**

- 14 We have received queries about these two Commissioner's decisions and would like to stress that both decisions are of equal status and therefore LAs are free to follow either decision, so long as the facts and law applicable to the case are consistent with the decision you are following.
- 15 However, I would like to confirm that Commissioner May's decision in CSHB 385/05 does uphold the policy intention.

### **Further information**

- 16 For further information please contact  
[Lucy.Da-Silva@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Lucy.Da-Silva@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Revamped HB/CTB MIS Guides**

- 17 Look out for changes in the presentation of the Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit Management Information System Guides (HB/CTB MIS Guides).
- 18 Some time ago we asked for your views of the HB/CTB MIS Guide. You told us the guide was difficult and time consuming to navigate, and that you wanted better access to related information and more detail to aid interpretation.
- 19 As a result of your feedback, work has been underway to revamp this guidance. The first stage – to convert the current 2006-07 version of the Guide will go part way to addressing your concerns. This should be available, on our website, within the next few weeks.
- 20 The 2007-08 version of the Guide, again available during October, will build on this and include links to related guidance and regulations.

### **Have we got it right?**

- 21 Once you've had an opportunity to use the re-vamped Guides we would be interested in your views. Shortly after they appear on the website we will be asking you for your comments.
- 22 Watch out for the re-vamped Guides on our website  
[www.knowledgenetwork.gov.uk/hbds](http://www.knowledgenetwork.gov.uk/hbds)

### **Further information**

- 23 For further information please contact  
[Jan.ripley@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jan.ripley@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

# IT Information Flows for local authorities – Replacement of the RAT

## Security

- 24 Management test checks carried out by LA and LAST have, so far, identified seven staff from seven different authorities who have misused the system. Despite repeated advice on use and security protocols set out in the Memorandum of Understanding, some staff have chosen to disregard these.

## Reminder

- 25 Any person found to be misusing the system will be considered for disciplinary action ranging from their access to the system being removed indefinitely, dismissal or, in the most extreme cases, prosecution and imprisonment. LAs and their contractors are required to take stringent action against anyone found to have leaked, deliberately disclosed information or misused the system in any way.

## Types of misuse identified

- 26 Since the use of CIS by LAs, checks have identified the following types of misuse
- browsing information on relatives
  - accessing partner/ex-partner's record
  - browsing for family and celebrities
  - accessing own NINO
  - using the system for non-HB/CTB administration
- 27 These misuses of the system have resulted in
- three employees being dismissed and barred permanently from accessing DWP systems
  - one employee being suspended during the investigation
  - two employees having their access suspended
  - one employee awaiting the outcome of the investigation into their case
- 28 **Security and the protection of customer data is of paramount importance.**
- 29 **Unauthorised disclosure, or leaking information, or unauthorised access can never be justified.**
- 30 **The Department has a number of measures in place to identify misuse of the system. Any person found to be misusing the system will be reported to their employer for investigation.**

## RATs decommissioning

- 31 *HB/CTB Bulletin U11/2006* contained details on the interrupted access to CIS during week commencing 17 July 2006. It confirmed that the project had temporarily halted decommissioning of the RATs as a contingency measure, in the event of similar IT failure.

- 32 The project stakeholders have now agreed that the RATs decommissioning can start again once the fully resilient service is in place. This will be scheduled as follows
- 1 LAs will have the RAT router disconnected remotely and PID access removed
  - 2 following that, the ISDN lines will be disconnected
  - 3 finally, the RAT equipment will be collected
- 33 The table below shows the timetable for disconnection of the RATs routers and removal of PID access. Termination of the ISDN lines and collection of the kit will be done after this. A company called Lupprians will arrange collection of the RATs (monitor(s), keyboard(s), PC(s) and printer(s)) via the LA RAT contact.
- 34 LAs that went live on CIS during May and June should have already had their RATs decommissioned and collected. Please inform the project using the contact details provided if this has not yet been completed.

<b>Date LA live on CIS</b>	<b>Date RAT router and PID access removed</b>
July 2006	w/c 13 November 2006
August 2006	w/c 13 November 2006
September 2006	w/c 20 November 2006
w/c 2 October 2006	w/c 20 November 2006
w/c 9 October 2006	w/c 27 November 2006
w/c 16 October 2006	w/c 30 November 2006
w/c 23 October 2006	w/c 4 December 2006
w/c 30 October 2006	w/c 11 December 2006

- 35 Please ensure that any RATs kit is stored securely following disconnection, and whilst awaiting collection.

## Queries

- 36 If you have any queries/issue in relation to RATs decommissioning please contact
- Chris Charlton  
 Tel: 0113 2519049  
 Email: [chris.charlton@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chris.charlton@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Take-up of CTB: scan identifying Pension Credit customers whose records show no evidence of a live CTB (or HB) claim

### Introduction

- 37 This item gives information about The Pension Service's (TPS) ongoing programme of work to support LAs' activities to raise awareness and encourage increased take-up by those eligible to claim CTB.

- 38 TPS has been undertaking further work to identify how it can provide more information to LAs about those who may be potentially eligible to claim CTB to allow you to target your take-up activity more accurately. In particular, we have received a number of requests from individual LAs on whether we can provide them with information on customers in their area receiving Pension Credit but not receiving CTB.

## Data-matching scan

- 39 At the end of October 2006, TPS will run a data-matching exercise to identify those customers receiving Pension Credit but with no evidence of a live HB/CTB claim. The scan information should reach LAs by early November 2006. The HB/CTB data used in the exercise will be the most recent monthly data extract that each LA has supplied to HBMS.
- 40 The list will give the customers' name, address, date of birth and postcode held by TPS.

## Action for LAs

- 41 You can use the scan results to tailor your take-up activities, by contacting the customers on the scan after confirming from information held that the customer has a Council Tax liability. The data must only be used for HB/CTB take-up and held securely in accordance with normal procedures for customers' HB/CTB claims data.

## Statistical data

- 41 In order to assess the effectiveness of the scan, we are asking LAs to provide some statistics. We are only asking for one return, showing the overall picture by the end of April 2007
- 42 A proforma is sent with this bulletin as an attachment: Proforma.doc. Please use the proforma to email, fax, or post the statistics to TPS. Email, fax and address details are shown on the proforma.
- 43 Please send a NIL return if you do not intend to use the scan information.

## Uprating 2007

- 44 We would like to remind LAs of the identifier that will be placed on all Savings Credit (uprating only) ETD reports. Details were issued in *HB/CTB G8/2006* paras 67/68.

## Contact details

- 45 If you have any queries/issues in relation to the output of the scan and statistical returns, contact
- Email: [Fiona.McLeish1@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Fiona.McLeish1@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk)

## New DWP fraud campaign

- 46 The DWP launches its new anti-benefit fraud campaign on 30 October 2006. It builds on the success of earlier campaigns and supports targets to reduce overpayments from fraud and error.

- 47 The campaign has a new look and a tough new message: *DWP is now 'Targeting Benefit Thieves'*. The campaign will show what constitutes benefit fraud and what the consequences of committing it are. The campaign will say *'No ifs, no buts. Benefit fraud is a crime, break the law and you face a criminal record'*. National TV and press advertising will target the message at potential benefit thieves, and then the campaign will focus at community level using local press and PR, outdoor media.
- 48 For local authorities who want to link up with the campaign, DWP is producing poster templates to download and customise with local contact details. Details of how to get the templates will be available in the next issue of HB Direct.

## Queries

- 49 If you have any queries about the campaign, please contact Keith Prust on  
Email: [keith.prust@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:keith.prust@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0113 232 4782

## New WIB4b form for LA returns on cautions & administrative penalties, and a new address for returns

- 50 Your attention is drawn to a change of format for the WIB4b form which LAs use to give information to DWP about cautions and administrative penalties. Responsibility for data entry will also simultaneously transfer from London to Newcastle.
- 51 It is therefore operationally important to DWP that all LAs use the latest form and send it to the Newcastle address printed on the new form (also shown below). This is because the London-based data entry team is closing down and the new style form has been redesigned to match the Newcastle data entry team's requirements. The new style form replaces the previous one located in the *HB/CTB Security Guidance Manual, Appendix 17*.
- 52 The changes to the form are largely cosmetic, but will allow for quicker and potentially more accurate data entry. The information requested on the form is the same with the exception of the following
- an additional field: **Date sanction was administered**
  - for Yes/No questions, input **1** for Yes and **0** for No. If you leave a Yes/No box blank, the data entry staff will assume a **0** entry, ie No
- 53 The new style WIB 4b form should now be sent to  
HBDS  
Information Directorate (InfD)  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Room BP5201  
Benton Park View  
Benton Park Road  
Longbenton  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE98 1YX
- 54 The form is sent with this bulletin as an attachment: Form WIB4b.doc

## Housing Benefit website

- 55 In HB/CTB G9 2006 and HB Direct issue 58 we told you about our plans to revamp the Housing Benefit area of the DWP. We also asked you for your suggestions for improvements on the content and layout of this area.
- 56 It has since come to our attention that the email address provided for your responses was incorrect. Comments should be sent via email to [Central-Services-Team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Central-Services-Team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).
- 57 Because your views are important to us we have extended the deadline to Friday 27 October 2006.
- 58 The HB website can be found at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/index.asp>

## What's new on the web

59 The following items can be found on the website link shown

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin G9/2006	HBSD/IAD Scan guidance and specification – available for formal consultation Special exercise to invite claims to State Pension Housing Benefit website Valuation of National Savings Certificates from 1 July 2006 Customer Management System – Customer signatures and revised wording of the Customer Declaration Rollout of Tactical e-Services Stats 124 returns – use of sampling IT Information Flow for LAs – replacement of the RAT Student claims	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/g9-2006.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/g9-2006.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Bulletin U12/2006	Student claims – clarification of HB/CTB Circular A15/2006 - treatment of grants	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/u12-2006.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/u12-2006.pdf</a>
moreDirect	Magazine	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/2006/more-direct-oct06.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/2006/more-direct-oct06.pdf</a>

## HB/CTB Circulars issued this month

60 The following HB/CTB Circular has been issued this month

- Circular A16/2006
- Circular S3/2006

## Other publications issued this month

61 The following publication has also been issued this month

- HB Direct Issue 58