

# 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 G11/2006**

**15 November 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

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## Customer Management System Release 5

- 1 Customer Management System (CMS) Release 5 is scheduled to be available to Jobcentre Plus users from Monday 27 November 2006. We are committed to continue to work with Jobcentre Plus toward the improvement of the information received from CMS via the Local Authority (LA) Input Document. This includes
  - the introduction of changes to reflect legislative changes
  - improvements to the business process
- 2 One of the major objectives of Release 5 is the improvement of the automatic updating of the Jobcentre Plus computer systems with the information collected within CMS. This should
  - lessen the need for the manual entry of data onto these legacy systems
  - improve the accuracy and completeness of the LA Input Documents sent to LAs
- 3 Release 5 includes a number of improvements and the following should be of interest to you
  - the introduction of a print log within the LA Input Document
  - an improvement in the correct setting of Yes/No indicators in Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) cases
  - an amendment to the information recorded following a legislative change in respect of personal injury payments
  - an improvement to customer notifications to encourage them to provide any necessary verification of evidence more promptly, and
  - additional functionality for Jobcentre Plus staff to amend personal details during the data gather without the need to completely rebuild claims

### Print log

- 4 Regulations made in November 2005 aligned legislation on the date of claim for Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) with the primary benefits
  - Income Support (IS)
  - JSA
  - Incapacity Benefit (IB)
- 5 If there is no entitlement to IS or income-based JSA (JSA(IB)), the date of any associated HB/CTB claim is the date of first contact with Jobcentre Plus, provided the customer statement was returned within one month of its issue to the customer.
- 6 It is therefore essential for you that Jobcentre Plus records the print/issue date of customer statements while a decision on the 'passporting' primary benefit is yet to be made. The current requirement is for Jobcentre Plus to enter these details manually into 'case notes', but Release 5 will automate the process to ensure that you receive accurate and complete information.

- 7 A table known as the 'Print Log' will be included in the LA Input Document. This will
- appear between the 'Proof of Identity Statement' and the 'reply slip'
  - list, in chronological order, the various notifications issued to the customer as part of the claim process
- 8 This information will include the date of issue of the initial customer statement and, if applicable, subsequent issue date(s) of customer statements following the inclusion of any corrections. This will help you when calculating due dates for HB and CTB.

## Yes/No indicator

- 9 We are aware that there have been issues where the Yes/No indicator has not been automatically set in some JSA cases. As a result, in Release 5 we have introduced an improvement to make sure Jobcentre Plus are aware of an HB/CTB interest, through additional information contained on their own Input Documents, and we expect the Yes/No indicator to be updated manually if necessary.

## Treatment of personal injury payments

- 10 A new 52-week grace period is being introduced during which lump sum capital payments for personal injury payments, which are **not** placed in a trust fund, will be disregarded. A number of questions have been added to see if any of the capital declared by the customer includes a lump-sum payment for personal injury which has
- been received within the preceding 52 weeks, and
  - not been held in trust
- 11 The customer's responses are recorded on both the
- Customer Statement, and
  - LA Input Document (within the 'Capital Details' section)
- 12 The Financial Assessor records any subsequent verification of the lump sum payment which is shown within the 'Verification Items Details' section of the LA Input Document.

## Combined Customer Statement and Verification Letter

- 13 From Release 5 the Customer Statement indicates the Evidence Requirements items to be verified and distinguishes them from other verification items. It now contains the Proof of Identity paragraph previously contained within the Verification Letter. We hope this improves the level of evidence provided by the customer at the initial verification stage thus aiding Jobcentre Plus to process claims more quickly. LAs should now receive confirmation of the evidence verified more quickly and also the decision on the passporting primary benefit.

## Personal details amendments

- 14 Currently, Jobcentre Plus cannot alter certain personal details once they have been entered onto CMS, eg if a name was spelt incorrectly during the inbound call stage of data gather. In such cases, the claim had to be completely re-input onto CMS, a process known as a 'rebuild'. This is extremely time consuming for Jobcentre Plus, adding to their clearance times.

- 15 Release 5 introduces flexibility for Jobcentre Plus staff to alter a limited number of these details. Title, name, address, contact number, nationality details gathered for the customer or partner, and name and date of birth for children, can now be amended at any time following the completion of the inbound call up to the recording of an acceptable statement. Hopefully, this will speed up the time taken by Jobcentre Plus to process claims containing errors such as these and aid you by speeding up the notification of awards.

## Next steps

- 16 The Housing Benefit Strategy Division (HBSD) Modernisation Projects Team continues to develop and deliver, if possible, changes to CMS to reflect relevant legislative changes and agreed business improvements for you within future releases. We will continue to consult with LA users on various continuing pieces work being undertaken toward this end.
- 17 If you have any queries relating to the content of this article please contact the HBSD Modernisation Projects team on [hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Commissioners' cases – update

- 18 The Tribunal of Commissioners' decision in CH/4234/04 (recovery of overpayment from tenant or landlord) is to be reported as R(H) 06/06.
- 19 Further to *HB/CTB Bulletin G7, paragraph 20*, the following cases (that we know about) 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
- 20 Thanks to all those LAs for letting us know about cases they are appealing. Please keep them coming – see *HB/CTB Guidance Manual, Part C11.720 - 721*.
- 21 If you have any queries regarding these cases, please contact [ACI-Office Support-Leeds@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ACI-Office Support-Leeds@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

# Rapid Reclaim

## Background

- 22 Ministers have recently highlighted their intent to improve the current system for people reclaiming benefits after a short spell of work. We were given the challenge of considering how to
- improve current processes for reclaiming benefit, and
  - make it more attractive to those who want to try temporary work, or are concerned that it would take a long time to reclaim benefit should the work not last
- 23 The current Rapid Reclaim process was analysed to ensure it was working effectively and cases were being identified and processed as quickly as possible.
- 24 We do not currently collect management information regarding this process, so Wave 13 of the Omnibus survey enabled us to request all 408 LAs to provide data regarding the processing of Rapid Reclaim cases. The survey identified that LAs were using various processing styles when they received a Rapid Reclaim form. Twenty-nine per cent of LAs identify Rapid Reclaim cases quickly and process them within five days. However, a significant proportion of LAs still take, on average, 15 days or more to process Rapid Reclaim claims.
- 25 This guide provides a brief overview to help refresh awareness of the current process.

## What is Rapid Reclaim

- 26 The HB Rapid Reclaim form (HBRR1) is a declaration that the claimant's circumstances have not changed since their last entitlement to IS/JSA and HB/CTB.
- 27 HB Rapid Reclaim allows LAs to assess the HB/CTB claim based upon information previously supplied as long as
- the reclaim is within **12 weeks**, and
  - there has been **no change in circumstances** during the period between claims

## Circumstances when HB Rapid Reclaim is appropriate

- 28 HB Rapid Reclaim is appropriate when **all** the following conditions are met
- the claimant is reclaiming either IS or JSA at the same time as they are reclaiming HB/CTB, and
  - they are reclaiming benefit within 12 weeks of their last entitlement to benefit, and
  - they are entitled to IS/JSA(IB) and there has been no changes of circumstance since their last entitlement to HB/CTB

## Circumstances when HB Rapid Reclaim is not appropriate?

- 29 HB Rapid Reclaim is not appropriate if the claimant is
- claiming HB/CTB for the first time
  - reclaiming HB/CTB more than 12 weeks from their last entitlement to benefit

## When LAs should consider sending out an HCTB1

- 30 LAs should consider sending out form HCTB1 if
- the claimant indicates that their circumstances have changed since their last entitlement
  - IS/JSA (IB) is not re-awarded

## Performance and Best Practice

- 31 LAs currently process a Rapid Reclaim case, on average, within seven days. We aim to reduce this to an average of three to four days. This can be achieved if you identify and process these cases early.
- 32 Rapid Reclaim cases count as new claims. Therefore, the processing of these count toward Performance Measure 1, average speed of processing new claims. Identifying a Rapid Reclaim case early and processing it quickly could help improve overall processing times.
- 33 When the HBRR1 form is received and there is entitlement to IS or JSA (IB), LAs should be able to process the claim form without the need to ask for additional information.
- 34 Entitlement to IS/JSA will still need to be verified. This information can now be established through CIS. This should provide a faster way of checking than through the previous Remote Access Terminal (RAT) system.
- 35 Further Rapid Reclaim management information will be collected from April 2007. It may be in your best interests to
- review your processes, and
  - identify Rapid Reclaim cases early
- 36 We want to ensure that you are taking the opportunity to help in the process of reducing your processing times.
- 37 **LAs should ensure that staff are familiar with the content of this guidance.**

## Further information

- 38 For further information please contact Tara Taggart
- Email: [Tara.Taggart@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Tara.Taggart@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Pension Transformation DVD

- 39 LA staff who attended this year's Pension Service conference and the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) conference were able to see a DVD entitled 'Into Wave 1'.

- 40 This DVD
- explains the processes that enable The Pension Service to take claims for State Retirement Pension and Pension Credit without claim forms and customer signatures
  - explains how the three-page HB/CTB claim form is pre-populated
  - is 14 minutes long and gives an insight to The Pension Service's new Customer Account Management System
- 41 A number of LAs have requested copies of this DVD for awareness sessions with LA staff.
- 42 Following discussion at the joint DWP/Local Authority Association (LAA) Steering Group meeting it has been agreed that this DVD will be available, free of charge, to any LA who requests it.
- 43 Send requests for copies of the DVD to
- Karen Helyer  
Pensions Transformation Programme  
Cobalt 3.1  
Silverfox Way  
Cobalt Business park  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE27 0QN
- Tel: 0191 203 6242
- Email: [KAREN.HELIER@THEPENSIONSERVICE.GSI.GOV.UK](mailto:KAREN.HELIER@THEPENSIONSERVICE.GSI.GOV.UK)

## Performance Standards – Good Practice wanted

- 44 The Performance Framework Team is currently reviewing the Good Practice sections of the HB/CTB Performance Standards to ensure that they continue to be relevant. In addition to reviewing the existing content, we are looking for new material. We have contacted some of the LAs who developed new ways of working with Performance Standards funding so that we can share lessons learned and successes. We also hope to draw from case studies of LAs who have turned round poor performance to establish what practices or processes contributed to their recovery.
- 45 What has helped you improve your performance, in a particular area or overall? We would like you to contribute your ideas, no matter how big or small – most of the good practice in the Performance Standards consists of short bullet points so we are not looking for rocket science! A lot of LAs have implemented Data Image Processing software over the last few years – how do you maximise its benefits? Can you pass on some useful tips?
- 46 We would be grateful for all your suggestions by **1 December 2006**. If you want to discuss your ideas with us first, contact either Valerie Hunt or Clare Mitton – otherwise send an email to [performance-framework@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:performance-framework@dpw.gsi.gov.uk)

Contact telephone numbers: Valerie Hunt 0207 712 2310  
Clare Mitton 0207 962 8427

## Schedule payments by Direct Payment via the Local Payment System

- 47 Debt Management Debt Centres send quarterly schedules detailing customer benefit deductions for HB debt to Debt Management Finance for action. Finance make payments to LAs by hand-written cheque.
- 48 DWP has introduced the Local Payment System (LPS) to replace benefit payments being made clerically. Additional LPS functionality is being introduced for payment by Direct Payment (DP). The quarter-ending December 2006 HB schedules will be paid by DP.
- 49 Customer Payments already hold LA bank account and sort code details on the Third Party Payments (TPP) Masterfile. TPP already make DP payments for benefit deductions for HB debt sent from legacy benefit systems to TPP.
- 50 Customer Payments and Debt Management are part of DWP Shared Services. Debt Management Finance will use TPP Masterfile bank account and sort code details to make LPS DP payments to LAs.
- 51 There is no requirement for LAs to notify Finance of bank account and sort code details. Current TPP Masterfile instructions on maintaining correct bank account and sort code details stand. It is important that LAs notify the TPP Team **immediately in writing** of any changes that may affect payment or result in monies being paid into an incorrect bank account. Please send any changes to

Masterfile  
Third Party Payments  
Customer Payments  
Room 510  
Norcross  
Blackpool  
FY5 3YW

### Local Payment System's generic notification

- 52 LPS produces a generic notification for each payment made, geared to explaining to the customer details of their benefit payment. It is not suited to explaining a HB schedule payment by DP. However, this notification cannot be suppressed by LPS, so LAs will receive one for every DP payment made. It can be
- disregarded if the LA chooses, or
  - linked with the corresponding HB schedule and covering letter sent by Finance, see *Finance action*
- 53 Please see the *Appendix 1* attachment for an example of the LPS generated letter.

### Finance action

- 54 Finance will send the LA the HB schedule corresponding to the LPS DP payment, under cover of another letter – see the *Appendix 2* attachment for an illustrative example.

- 55 The LPS DP payment will be identifiable on the LA bank statement by the reference 'DWP (XX\*\*\*\*\*A)', when \*\*\*\*\* is a six digit unique LA reference number. This reference also appears on the covering letter from Finance attached to the payment schedule.

## Queries

- 56 If you have any queries, please contact

Jill Stevenson  
Debt Management  
Debt Accounting and Finance  
Finance Manager  
Room 404  
Anchorage 2  
Salford Quays  
Manchester  
M50 3YW

Tel. 0161 873 4703

Email: [Jill.Stevenson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jill.Stevenson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

- 57 If you have any queries relating to the **issue of payments**, please send an e-mail enquiry, clearly headed 'LA Payment Query' to [DM-Central-Finance1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:DM-Central-Finance1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Home working access – request for information

- 58 It would be helpful if you could confirm whether your authority has staff working from home or not and if you will be providing them with access to the Customer Information System. This information would be helpful in determining additional CIS access and which authorities may require extra time in putting measures in place. Please see the Appendix 3 attachment for more information. Please send your reply by email to Olly Akanwo

[Olapeju.Akanwo@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Olapeju.Akanwo@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Tel: 020 7712 2434

**Response by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 would be very helpful.**

## 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 G10/2006	Overpayments Policy Team – secondee opportunity Commissioners' cases – update Revised FSA banking leaflets – impact on HB Temporary absence – CSHB 873/05 and CSHB 385/05 Revamped HB/CTB MIS Guides IT Information Flows for local authorities – Replacement of the RAT Take-up of CTB: scan identifying Pension Credit customers whose records show no evidence of a live CTB (or HB) claim New DWP fraud campaign New WIB4b form for LA returns on cautions & administrative penalties, and a new address for returns	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/g10-2006.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/g10-2006.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Bulletin U13/2006	Update: New WIB 4b form for LA returns on cautions and administrative penalties	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/u13-2006.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2006/u13-2006.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular A16/2006	The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 4) Regulations 2006 People from abroad – humanitarian protection	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2006/a16-2006.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2006/a16-2006.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular A17/2006 (revised)	Targeting working age cases to reduce fraud and error in Housing Benefit	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2006/a17-2006-rev.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2006/a17-2006-rev.pdf</a>

## HB/CTB Circulars issued this month

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

- Circular A17/2006 (Revised)

## Other publications issued this month

61 The following publication has also been issued this month

- HB Direct Issue 59
- Bulletin U14/2006