

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, 1st Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

HB/CTB G16/2009

21 September 2009

Contact	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none">• technical content of this bulletin, contact details are given at the end of each article• distribution of this bulletin, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: orderline@cds.co.uk• bulletin in general, contact Kath Murphy<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Who should read	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
Action	For information

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Guidance to assist LAs with performance against the Right Benefit Indicator (RBI)

Introduction

- 1 This item gives further advice on target setting and monitoring performance for the Right Benefit Indicator (RBI). It supersedes any previous advice contained in earlier circulars and bulletins on the issues it covers.
- 2 As stated in *HB/CTB Circular A4/2008*, the RBI gives an indication of LA performance in the area that contributes most towards the overall amount of incorrectness in HB/CTB. Over 70% of the HB/CTB that is incorrectly paid results from changes in customers' circumstances that occur after the start of the claim and are not reported to, or identified by, LAs.

Bulk “pre-identified” changes

- 3 Some changes, like rent increases and bulk upratings, are included in the total changes shown on the Housing Benefit Operational Database (HoBOD). However, these changes occur at fixed points each year and are therefore ‘pre-identified’. As they are already known about they do not contribute to the 70% of fraud and error in *para 2* above. You will need to be aware of this when setting targets and monitoring performance.
- 4 You should therefore disregard bulk “pre-identified” changes when using the RBI to monitor your progress in reducing fraud and error.
- 5 This is also important because, if you used the data in *Appendices B and C* of *HB/CTB Circular A10/2008* to set a local target, the ‘expected changes’ derived from this data **excludes** any bulk ‘pre-identified’ changes.
- 6 An alternative approach that some LAs have successfully adopted is to estimate the number of bulk changes that they expect in the year and add them to the initial target calculated from *Circular A10/2008*. In that way monitoring can more accurately be carried out against the figures shown on HoBOD.

Irregularly large numbers of changes on HoBOD following first SHBE scan

- 7 The change to deriving RBI data from the Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) to the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) may result in irregularly large number of changes appearing on HoBOD following the first scan after the transfer. As with bulk changes, you should disregard any irregularly large numbers when monitoring performance.

- 8 As advised in *Circular A10/2008 para 4* and on HoBOD it is important also to assess progress by tracking typical month-by-month performance against the RBI rather than relying on year-to-date figures (which may include bulk changes) to assess performance.

Queries

- 9 If you have any queries or require advice on setting local targets, the Performance Team will be happy to help. Their contact details are

Andy Munro Wales, London, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands

Email: Andy.Munro@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7449 5400

Jane Perfect Scotland, East Midlands, North East, South East, South West, and East of England

Email: Jane.Perfect@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7449 5404

SHBE Right Time Performance Information – September 2009 Update

- 10 Further to information released via *HB/CTB G15/2009* (dated 7 September 2009), we are now able to update you on the progress of quality assurance work for Right Time Indicator (RTI) performance figures for Quarter 1 2009/10 (April to June).
- 11 In conjunction with ongoing close working with software suppliers, it is intended to repeat the previous feedback exercise whereby data is provided to individual LAs for quality assurance purposes, but on this occasion covering the months of April and May 2009. This information will be sent out to the e-mail address of the person in each LA who made the original request for data. The named individual must keep the statistics secure. The data provided is **restricted for quality assurance purposes only**. This means the statistics must not be shared or released in any form.
- 12 We will again include a questionnaire with the data relating to the statistics. Feedback from LAs is an important part of ensuring our data is accurate and so following the many useful comments received from the last exercise we have taken the decision to extend this area of the work. On this occasion please complete the questionnaire **even if you are completely satisfied with your figures**. As the quality assurance exercise for RTI is still ongoing, **any response received from LAs** is useful to us as we aim to ensure our figures are an accurate representation of new claim and change event processing in every authority.

- 13 We are expecting to begin sending out figures **from the last week of September** onwards. Once completed, please forward the questionnaire to IFDDMS.HBMSDIT@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK within twenty working days of your receipt of the information.
- 14 There are again a small number of LAs that have not requested performance information up to this point. If you did not request your data originally please contact:
- For LAs in **Scotland and Wales**: contact alby.stone@dwp.gsi.gov.uk to request your right time performance data
 - For LAs in **England**, who you need to contact depends on your Government Office Region (GOR). Please contact
 - alby.stone@dwp.gsi.gov.uk if your LA is in GOR
 - East
 - West Midlands
 - philip.massey@dwp.gsi.gov.uk if your LA is in GOR
 - East Midlands
 - North East
 - South East
 - South West
 - martin.lister@dwp.gsi.gov.uk if your LA is in GOR
 - London
 - North West
 - Yorkshire and Humber

Electronic Transfer of HB/CTB Claim Data to LAs Project (e-Transfer Project) National Rollout

- 15 *HB/CTB Bulletin G14/2009* advised of the postponement of the e-Transfer rollout as a result of technical issues with the Data Transfer Appliance (DTA) service. We are pleased to announce that these issues have been resolved and e-enablement will begin again from 28 September 2009.
- 16 Due to the successful testing of the electronic LA Claim Information (LACI) from Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) we will be e-enabling LAs to receive both the LACI and LA Input Document (LAID) at the same time.

- 17 LAs will be rolled out in tranches with up to 50 LAs being e-enabled on a weekly basis. LAs will be notified approximately three weeks before their e-enablement date. Notification will be provided to the LA via their Single Point of Contact (SPOC). If there has been a change to the LA SPOC could you provide the new name, contact number and e-mail address to the project email address shown at *para 20*.
- 18 To assist with the preparation for e-enablement LAs should consult the LA Briefing pack available on the DWP website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/hb-information-flows-programme/e-transfer-update/>
- 19 National roll out of the electronic Employment Support Allowance LACI will begin in November 2009. Further information will be provided in future bulletins.

Queries

- 20 If you have any queries about this subject, please e-mail the project at QH.HBINFLOWSPROGRAMME@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Employment and Support Allowance CAM System

- 21 The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Customer Account Management (CAM) system has been operational since 27/10/08. To date customers wishing to make a joint HB/CTB claim alongside their ESA claim have had a clerical HCTB1 issued to them for completion which they should return direct to LAs.
- 22 As intended, from 26 October 2009 the standard process for customers wishing to claim HB/CTB alongside a new or repeat ESA claim will be to complete a full gather of HB/CTB information on the CAM system. At the point that the gather for ESA is complete (or after one calendar month if the customer has not provided all the ESA required information) the claim information will be forwarded to the appropriate LA on a Local Authority Claim Information (LACI) document.
- 23 The LACI effectively is the documentation that the LA will work from in order to assess the customer's HB/CTB claim and simply represents a different type of claim documentation to add to the HCTB1, CMS Local Authority Information Document or LAs own claim forms already used.
- 24 Initially the method of transfer will be either by printed out hard copy issued from a central point within Jobcentre Plus or by e-transfer. Please refer to the e-transfer project update contained in this bulletin for further information. The e-transfer project will provide future updates on the electronic process via these bulletins and the DWP website.

- 25 During the summer of 2009 Housing Benefit Strategy Division (HBSD) undertook a series of seminars to highlight this change. As a result, full guidance on the process to be employed from 26 October 2009 has been produced and is available on the LA Resource website at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/employment-and-support-allowance/#esa>
- 26 The website also contains a full list of FAQs from the seminars and sample LACIs to support LA training programmes.

Queries

- 27 If you have any questions arising from this change please contact HBSD on hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

HB and CTB forms for prisoners in England and Wales

- 28 *HB/CTB Circular A2/2009* advised you of the introduction of three new Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) forms; HCTB 6, HCTB 7 and HCTB 8. The forms are for use by prisoners who were claiming HB/CTB immediately prior to custody to report a change in their circumstances. Stocks of these forms are usually held and issued by the prisons in England and Wales; however we have received several enquiries asking whether the forms are available for use in Scotland.
- 29 The forms are not available in prison establishments in Scotland as they were produced by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) for use in prisons in England and Wales. However, LAs in Scotland may come across these forms if a person is taken into custody in England or Wales, but is released to an address in Scotland.
- 30 NOMS have advised us that as the Scottish Prison Service is independent from England and Wales, and governed by the Scottish Justice Department, they have no powers to direct Scottish prisons to adopt the use of the forms.

Further information

- 31 If you need further information about the use of these forms in England and Wales please contact Philip Richardson at NOMS philip.anthony.richardson@noms.gsi.gov.uk

HB/CTB cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal

- 32 Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) Leeds is aware of the following HB/CTB cases that are awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal
- **CH/448/2009:** HB overpayment recoverable from landlord. Claimant had died whilst in Ireland. When eventually informed of death, errors occurred at Jobcentre Plus office concerning Income Support (IS) suspension and notice not provided to LA. Official error?
- 33 Thank you to those authorities that have let us know about cases they are appealing. Please notify us of cases at the point that the application for leave to appeal is made to the Upper Tribunal (previously Commissioners') office, or the appeal is lodged following grant of leave by a First Tier Tribunal Judge (previously tribunal chairman). Please let us know if a case reference (CH/.. or CSH/..) has been allocated.

Queries (please note change of email address)

- 34 If you have any queries about cases before the Upper Tribunal Judges (previously Commissioners) or courts, please contact us by
- email at DMALEEDS.CUSTOMERSUPPORTSERVICES@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK or
 - fax on 0113 2324841

Clarification of HB/CTB Circular A17/2009, paras 22-24

- 35 *HB/CTB Circular A17/2009* contains guidance on the increase to the lower HB/CTB capital thresholds (from £6,000 to £10,000) for customers who have reached the qualifying age for State Pension Credit – pensioner claims.
- 36 We have received a number of queries from LAs regarding the section on verification of capital below the lower threshold, in paras 22 – 24 of A17/2009. In particular authorities have asked whether those paragraphs relate only to pensioner claims or to all claims.
- 37 To clarify, as the change to the lower capital threshold relates only to pensioner claims, then the guidance on verification of capital below the lower threshold also relates only to pensioner claims. *HB/CTB Bulletin G22/2008* still applies to working age claims.

Further advice or information

- 38 If you require any further advice or information about this item please contact Christine.watkins@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Statutory Instruments

- 39 The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have now been laid
- 2009 No.2343, The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No.3) Regulations 2009, coming into force 1 October 2009
 - 2009 No.2459, The Rent Officers (Housing Benefit Functions) Amendment Order 2009, coming into force 12 October 2009
- 40 Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/law-volumes/the-law-relating-to-social-security/> and the website of the Office of Publication Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

What's new on the web

- 41 The following items can be found on the website link shown

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin G14/2009	Suspicious of Benefit Fraud involving the Netherlands Electronic Transfer of HB/CTB Claim Data to LAs Project (e-Transfer Project) National Rollout Current HB/CTB Circulars	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g14-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Bulletin G15/2009	Release of Right Time Indicator (RTI) performance data – an update Deletion of HB/CTB Circulars A17/2006 and A20/2006 Statutory Instruments	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g15-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A18/2009	Student support uprating	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a18-2009.pdf
HB Direct issue 93 September 2009	Newsletter	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-93-sept-2009.pdf

HB/CTB Circulars issued recently

- 42 The following HB/CTB Circulars have been issued recently
HB/CTB Circular A18/2009