

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

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<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

HB/CTB G17/2009

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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

Contents

page

Amendment to the Rent Officers Order	2
Improving online services for DWP customers	2
CIS/EAS Implementation Project update.....	3
Statutory Instruments.....	4

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Amendment to the Rent Officers Order

- 1 This article was first published in the October issue of HB Direct (No.94) but is being repeated in this bulletin to bring this information to the attention of as many LA staff as possible.
- 2 From 12 October 2009 we are making a minor amendment to The Rent Officers (Housing Benefit Functions) Order 1997 and the Rent Officers (Housing Benefit Functions) (Scotland) Order 1997 ('The Order').
- 3 This amendment to Schedule 3B of the Order inserts a provision which enables rent officers to include rents from other comparable Broad Rental Market Areas when compiling a list of rents for each category of dwelling to determine Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. This 'extrapolation' provision is used when the rent officer is not satisfied in any month that their list of rents contains a sufficient number of dwellings to enable them to determine a representative LHA rate. A similar provision which had similar effect was inadvertently removed when we made changes to the Order which came into effect on 5 January 2009. As the amendment restores the original policy intention we have not consulted on this change. This is a technical amendment and we do not anticipate any impact on your business.
- 4 The Order can be found in the Office of Public Sector Information at www.opsi.gov.uk.

Queries

- 5 If you have any queries about this subject, please contact Olly Akanwo on 020 7449 5319 or email Olapeju.Akanwo@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Improving online services for DWP customers

- 6 In Issue 93 of HB Direct and the September 2009 issue of moredirect we featured articles about the Benefits Adviser service on the Directgov website, this article is to keep you updated on the progress we are making to deliver more on-line services.
- 7 DWP customers can already go online and use the Benefits Adviser service on the Directgov website to find out which benefits they may be entitled to.
- 8 The service has now been enhanced so customers can obtain an estimate of the amount of benefit they may be eligible for and use a 'what if' facility to input potential changes in their circumstances to see how this affects their benefits, for example, they will see if they would be financially better off in work.

- 9 Before we start to actively market this service we will ensure our systems and procedures are fully embedded within DWP. Marketing is planned to commence in November 2009 and we would advise LAs to wait until this has begun before customers are encouraged to use it.
- 10 Further information and updates on the marketing campaign will be included in future issues of HB Direct and General Information Bulletins.
- 11 To look at the Benefits Adviser go to the 'Money, Tax and Benefits' section of <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm> website.

CIS/EAS Implementation Project update

- 12 In HB Direct Issue 93 September 2009 we published the first of our regular monthly updates on the Customer Information System (CIS)/Employee Authentication System Implementation Project. Over the course of the past month we have focused on three areas
- all Section 151 and Revenue and Benefits Managers were contacted in August informing them of the CIS/EAS Implementation Project and asking them to tell us if they intend to use the local Registration Authority (RA) or the National Registration Authority (NRA) and providing details of the LA agent and LA sponsor where appropriate. We have been busy dealing with your queries and capturing your details. We have had responses from about 60% of LAs which is great, but we do need 100% so do please get in touch
 - we are continuing to build the national RA and pilot the CIS/EAS technical link-up
 - we have continued our communication campaign by updating the HB area of the DWP website with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) hopefully this covers most of your queries. There is also other useful guidance and we have attended a number of conferences including the IRRV conference
- 13 For those of you who made it to the IRRV conference we hope you found the workshop useful and for those who did not you will find the presentation and supporting consultation questions on the CIS/EAS area of the DWP website.
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/hb-information-flows-programme/eas-cis-implementation/>
- 14 Do feel free to have a look and email us any thoughts based on those questions. We have also captured all the main questions we were asked at the conference and have looked to answer them on the website.

- 15 The project team has been capturing all your responses and would like to thank those of you that have already responded to us with the information that we require. We will be sending out reminder emails and contacting you directly to chase the responses. If you are the revenue and benefits manager for your LA and have not responded to us please do get in touch as soon as you can whether to raise a query or to provide us with details. Our email address is eas.info@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Statutory Instruments

- 16 The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have now been laid
- 2008 No.1879, The Employment and Support Allowance (Consequential Provisions) (No.3) Regulations 2008. Correction
 - 2008 No.2265, The Social Fund (Applications and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2008. Correction
 - 2009 No.2516, The Vaccine Damage Payments (Specified Disease) Order 2009, coming into force on 10 October 2009
 - 2009 No.2580, The Income-related Benefits (Subsidy to Authorities) (Temporary Accommodation) Amendment Order 2009, coming into force 1 April 2010
 - 2009 No.2608, The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2009, coming into force from 1 April 2010
- 17 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>