

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 G3/2009

23 February 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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Contacting the Child Benefit Office

- 1 Local authorities (LAs) who wish to contact Child Benefit Office for information about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB), should make the request in writing on headed note paper and fax it to 0191 2251254.
- 2 This section is staffed by the Correspondence Team who will call you back by telephone.

Employment and Support Allowance: guidance on 'better buy'

- 3 *HB/CTB Circular A11/2008* contains guidance on the changes made to the HB/CTB regulations to take account of the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). In particular it states that there may be situations when a couple would be better off if they swap which one of them is the HB/CTB customer.
- 4 We have now placed guidance on the DWP website concerning the procedures for swapping which member of the couple is the HB/CTB customer. The guidance can be found in *ESA – your questions answered* under the heading of *ESA better buy* using the following link <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/claims-processing/working-with-dwp/docs/ESAYourquestionsanswered211108.pdf>
- 5 It includes the following topics
 - automatically switching the customer and partner
 - the need for a claim form, its content and whether it can be adapted
 - dealing with the swap as a change of circumstances
 - withdrawing or surrendering the claim
 - suspending the original claim
 - backdating the claim from the new customer
 - implications for Local Housing Allowance

Queries

- 6 If you have any queries please contact Christine.watkins@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Delay in the start of the Electronic Transfer of HB/CTB data to LAs Project (e-Transfer Project)

- 7 The pilot of the e-Transfer Project has been delayed from the expected start date in January 2009. This is because of technical problems that occurred during testing of the new electronic transfer system.
- 8 Our suppliers are working to resolve the problems and until assurance has been received that all end-to-end communications will work securely and correctly a new go-live date has not been set.
- 9 This delay will have an impact on national rollout. It is still intended that a short evaluation period will follow the pilot, after which national rollout will start. This will start with LAs that have an operational Code of Connection compliant Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx) or Government Secure Extranet (GSx) connection.
- 10 Work is ongoing with our colleagues in Government Connect (GC) who are, in turn, working with LAs to ensure that they have an operational GCSx or GSx connection. GC is also in the process of arranging for LAs to receive the new file server that will be required to enable the e-Transfer process to go-live.
- 11 Further information will be issued shortly once the new pilot start date is known.
- 12 Details about the project and the impact of the electronic Local Authority Input Document (LAID) on LAs are available in *HB/CTB Bulletin G21/2008* which can be accessed via the following hyperlink. bulletins/2008/g21-2008.pdf

Contacts

- 13 If you have a query about this subject, please e-mail the project at QH.HBInfoFlowsProgramme@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK:

Security reminder – disclosure of customer information to the police and other law enforcement agencies

- 14 The Local Authority Support Team (LAST) has received a number of enquiries from LA managers asking if disclosure of personal customer information held on CIS to the police is permitted.

- 15 This note confirms there is no scope for this type of access to CIS in the DWP – LA Memorandum of Understanding and there is no legal gateway under the Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997 for LAs to disclose information to the police.
- 16 LAs receiving any such request for disclosure of information from CIS by the police **must**
- refuse the request
 - advise the police to contact DWP
- 17 DWP has a duty to maintain the confidence of customers who provide us with information whilst at the same time co-operating with police investigations when our internal policy and legislation allows it.
- 18 DWP has agreements with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in England and Wales and ACPO Scotland, which detail the principles behind legitimate disclosure of personal information from CIS by DWP to the police.
- 19 DWP recognises the value to both organisations of clearly identifying the legislative, policy and practical implications of disclosing information. However, to give assurance all requests are justifiable and legitimate DWP must handle any application from the police or other investigating agency.
- 20 If you have any enquires relating to the implications of this bulletin please contact
- LA CIS Security Policy Management - Malcolm.mattack@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
- LA Support Team Manager - lan.golds@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Extension to the DWP – LA MoU

- 21 We are pleased to inform you all LAs returned fully completed declarations for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DWP and LAs in sufficient time to avoid interruption to the Customer Information System service.
- 22 The current MoU (paragraph 1.8) states it will remain in place until 31 March 2009.
- 23 Following consultation with the Local Authority Associations (LAAs) we can also announce this version of the MoU will remain in force until superseded.

- 24 The issuing of the next MoU has been postponed to lessen the burden on LAs. We will provide notice of our intention to issue the next version via the General Information Bulletin, the Housing Benefit Information Flows Programme website and HB Direct.
- 25 We will highlight any significant changes to the MoU using these means of communication.
- 26 As with previous versions the revised MoU will have been approved on behalf of the LAs by the Local Authority Associations.
- 27 If you have any query relating to this matter please contact
 Malcolm Mattack - Malcolm.mattack@dwp.gsi.gov.uk , or
 David Wright - david.wright1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

What's new on the web

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin G24/2008	Administrative delay overpayments and fraud definition Changes to the National Insurance Number (NINO) benefit process HB/CTB Circular F5/2008 – Capital Data Matches HB awards and payments on account Closure of the Pensioner HB/CTB Claims project Statutory Instruments What's new on the web HB/CTB Circulars issued this month Other publications issued this month	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/bulletins/2008/G24-2008.pdf

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin G1/2009	<p>Access to the Customer Information System – Criminal Records Bureau checks</p> <p>Security notice – CIS access to HMRC and DWP data</p> <p>A27/2008 clarifications</p> <p>Employment Support Allowance guidance available online at the Resource Centre</p> <p>Changes to Income Support (IS), income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA(IB)), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(IR)) and State Pension</p> <p>Credit (SPC) cases for homeowners: potential effect on Council Tax Benefit cases</p> <p>Tackling child poverty</p> <p>PDCS Pension Centre Liaison Officer (PCLO) expanded role</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p>	<p>http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/bulletins/2009/g1-2009.pdf</p>
HB/CTB Bulletin G2/2009	<p>Council Tax Benefit awareness campaign</p> <p>Changes to the National Insurance Number (NINO) benefit process – Form DCI 1</p> <p>Benefit Fraud campaign is right on target</p> <p>Reviewing the changes to the HB/CTB backdating rules</p> <p>Government Connect</p> <p>Taking account of Invalidity Addition (IVA) paid as part of State Pension in HB and CTB</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p> <p>Current HB/CTB Circulars</p>	<p>http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/bulletins/2009/g2-2009.pdf</p>

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin U3/2008	Changes to Income Support (IS), income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(IR)) and State Pension Credit (SPC) cases for homeowners: potential effect on Council Tax Benefit (CTB) cases.	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/bulletins/2008/u3-2008.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A24/2008	Amendments to the HB Overpayments and Excess CTB Regulations, which include changes to the provisions relating to 'recovery from a partner' Introduction of a new overpayments subsidy classification called 'Administrative delay' Changes to the definition of a Fraud overpayment in the Subsidy Order	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2008/a24-2008.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A25/2008	Rapid Reclaim: change to eligibility conditions	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2008/a25-2008.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A26/2008	Guidance to LAs on the In and Out of Work Processes and The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2008 SI No 2987	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2008/a26-2008.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A27/2008	Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit: 2009 uprating	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2008/a27-2008.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A28/2008	Revised process for the transfer of the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) Return from 1 January 2009 (Quarter 3 2008/09 onwards)	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2008/a28-2008.pdf

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Circular A1/2009	HB/CTB (Amendment)(No.2) Regulations 2008 SI 2824/2008	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a1-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A2/2009	Introduction of the new Housing and Council Tax Benefit Forms for prisoners	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a2-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular S1/2009	Details of the distribution of the government contribution and overall DHPs for 2009/10	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/s1-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular S2/2009	Details of additional specific grant for administration costs for 2009/10	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/s2-2009.pdf

HB/CTB Circulars issued this month

29 The following HB/CTB Circulars have been issued this month

HB/CTB Circular A2/2009

HB/CTB Circular S2/2009

Other publications issued this month

30 The following publications have been issued this month

HB Direct Issue 86 February 2009