

National Products

Amber Valley

Academy QA Module

The Academy prototype QA module provided a software package for standardising and automating quality assurance and checking activity for all authorities using the Academy Benefits software application. This included the facility to generate reports on an ongoing basis for analysing types of error by category and by individual, for identifying training needs and for evaluating the effectiveness of training delivery.

Contact: Angela Duckworth, Benefits Performance Team Leader, Amber Valley Borough Council, email: angela.duckworth@ambervalley.gov.uk

Amber Valley

Getting Claims Right First Time

The objective of this national bid project was to transform the processing of new benefit claims for all Academy's LA client base, including handling customer enquiries. This included 110 existing customers and 10 projected customers which represented nearly one third of all authorities in England, Wales and Scotland who administer HB and CTB.

Contact: Tracy Summers, Revenues Customer Services Team Leader, Amber Valley Borough Council, email tracy.summers@ambervalley.gov.uk

Bracknell Forest Pericles Additional Functionality

The purpose of this project was to enhance the Pericles solution, providing additional functionality to streamline existing processes and to remove the need for manual intervention/recording.

Contact: Shanaz Alam, Benefits Service Manager, Bracknell Forest District Council, email shanaz.alam@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Bradford

HBMS Intervention module

Development of an "intervention module" to electronically import HBMS data (both data-match referrals and high risk intervention referrals) into the Comino Universal Document Management and Workflow system. Output includes the development of XML schemas for universal use. The solution will assist LAs to achieve compliance with the Performance Standards. In Bradford using the solution has dispensed with paper records, improved audit trails and delivered better monitoring of targets and workloads generating efficiency savings. All performance measures relating to interventions have been exceeded since the solution was implemented.

Contact: Allan Stobbs, Operational Manager, City of Bradford MDC, email: allan.stobbs@bradford.gov.uk

Broadland **Academy Benefits templates**

To develop a standardised suite of system generated letter templates covering all aspects of HB/CTB administration for use by LAs using the Academy Benefits system. This will provide participating LAs with letters that provide clear and comprehensive information to claimants and third parties, conform to the standards of plain English and support the implementation of DWPs ongoing reform agenda. The project has proved to be very beneficial to the LA and their customers. The LA receives fewer calls, particularly at the end of the year; fewer of those calls are complaints about the content of the letters. Other Academy sites are implementing these letters. The Benefit Manager at Broadland would be pleased to receive the views of other LAs.

Contact: Amanda Cliff, Benefit Manager, Broadland District Council, email amanda.cliff@Broadland.gov.uk

Camden **IBS Decision letters improvement**

To change the IBS Open Revenues System's computer generated decision letters, ensuring that all the necessary correspondence types of letters are available.

This has improved the decision letters for all Benefit services using the IBS system. The letters are in clear English and are easier for the customer to understand. In Camden this has led to a reduction in enquiries from customers unable to understand decision letters which has reduced the number of formal complaints. This has enabled Benefits staff to spend less time dealing with enquiries and more time assessing claims.

Contact: Alan Porter, Acting Chief Benefits Officer, London Borough of Camden, email alan.porter@camden.gov.uk

Conwy **Welsh Benefits NVQs**

The project provided the infrastructure to provide benefits vocational qualifications from a consortium of Welsh LAs. This included the review and adaptation of the methodology, material and on-line software package currently supporting the delivery of SVQs in Scotland and was developed into a product to support the delivery of Benefits NVQ in Wales.

Contact: Eryl Rowlands, Head of Revenue and Benefits, Conwy County Borough Council, email eryl.rowlands@conwy.gov.uk

Dover **National leaflet set**

The development of National Leaflets covering the following elements:

Working Age,
Pension Age,
Overpayments and Debt,
Students,
Appeals,
Backdating,
Discretionary Housing Payments
Landlords.

The leaflets have been edited by Plain English and awarded the Crystal Mark. The leaflets are available in translation in 9 other languages.

Contact: Cara Duffield, Project Manager, Dover District Council, email cara.duffield@dover.gov.uk

East Lothian **National Performance Management Framework**

To develop a Performance Management Framework product for HB/CTB sections within all LAs. The product includes a Hosted IT Solution which collates data drawn from all applicable LA systems, in addition to data entered manually, assisting LAs in meeting components of all the Performance Standards modules. The software will also improve data reporting to DWP. Nearly 300 LAs have signed up to take the service and are now involved in benchmarking and sharing best practice to improve service delivery.

Contact: Colin Shand, Head of Revenues and IT, East Lothian Council, email cshand@eastlothian.gov.uk

Edinburgh **Benefits Online**

The project involved the development of an interactive, fully integrated online form for HB/CTB. The principle of the project was to achieve full automation in certain parts of the new claims process by incorporating a real time integrated benefit calculation and submission of electronic applications.

Contact: Mike Peterson, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Edinburgh City Council, email mike.peterson@edinburgh.gov.uk

Edinburgh **SVQs Benefits qualifications**

The project provided a consistent approach to implementing a national programme of vocational qualifications for all 32 Scottish LAs benefiting more than 500 candidates over the next two years. To meet the differing needs of LAs a flexible package of tailored support has been devised:

- training needs analysis
- detailed training plan

- support for work based training
- mentoring and support for line managers

Contact: Mike Peterson, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Edinburgh City Council, email mike.peterson@edinburgh.gov.uk

Edinburgh Model New Entrant Training Material

The project gave all LAs and training providers model new entrant training material which was to be updated on a rolling basis to accommodate changes as they occurred.

Contact: Mike Peterson, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Edinburgh City Council. Email mike.peterson@edinburgh.gov.uk

Gateshead Mobile Working Solution

This bid enabled the introduction of Mobile Working with the Anite Pericles product. The current user base of Pericles Benefits is 25 LAs, of which 22 have adopted the functionality provided by the Mobile Working solution. The functionality offered provides downloading of claim details, together with documentation held on a range of DIP/Workflow systems used by the participating LAs, subsequent completion of reviews and new claims through the mobile device and the uploading of those details to the back office system. The bid also includes a feasibility study as to the introduction of full integration of a wireless solution. The introduction of this solution will facilitate significant improvements in visiting productivity, as well as providing the means to improve access to the Benefits system through home visits for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the public.

Contact: Pam Richardson, Benefits Manager, Gateshead Council, email PamRichardson@gateshead.gov.uk

Greenwich The full overpayments solution

This provides an automated system of handling overpayments, including the recovery process and the improvement of management information and statistics.

Contact: Mike Sofianos, Assistant Director of Finance, Greenwich Council, email Mike.sofianos@greenwich.gov.uk

Highland E-learning Fraud Awareness Package

Development of a new electronic Fraud Awareness training package in partnership with Meritec Ltd, this is aimed at new and existing benefits staff that work principally in a front office environment although this package is also

suitable for back office staff. User feedback has been excellent as has take-up with nearly 300 authorities using this system.

Contact: Allan Gunn, Client and Control Manager, Highland Council, email allan.gunn@highland.gov.uk

Leicester Upgrade to IBS Open Revenues Software Package

To introduce IT software system changes required to allow the IBS Benefits system to generate a four percent pre-payment sample of cases in line with the requirements of the Performance Standards.

Contact: Raj Adatia, Systems Support Manager, Leicester City Council, email Raj.Adatia@leicester.gov.uk

Lewisham Shared Service Centre Study

The project studied the feasibility of introducing different collaborative arrangements between Lewisham and one or more other LAs in HB/CTB administration. The study demonstrated that collaborative working was an effective means of delivering cost-effective and efficient services for more than one LA. It also highlighted a number of options for collaboration, factors that should be considered when selecting a partner and potential impediments that would need to be resolved before entering a partnership.

Contact : Mick Lear, Benefit Manager, London Borough of Lewisham, email Mick.Lear@lewisham.gov.uk

Manchester Core Cities Fraud Awareness Video

To produce a fraud awareness video suitable for employees and the public with an emphasis on the impact of benefit fraud on public funds, and encouraging the employees and the public to report HB fraud. It is available in the form of a video and CD as well as streamed on the intranet, and on DVD for screening in public receptions and available to Housing Associations for display purposes. The video bears a generic logo ("Local Authorities Working Together To Fight Crime"), together with details of the DWP HB freephone number, and comes with the artwork for posters which can be customised to include the authorities own logo. Copies of the generic version (both CD and DVD) will be available free of charge to any local authority wishing to use the product, however stocks are limited and authorities requiring a large number of copies may have to pay for duplication. Local Authorities can also have the product re-branded with their own logo and freephone number at their cost.

Contact: John Rosenbloom, Corporate Services, Manchester City Council, email j.rosenbloom@manchester.gov.uk

Manchester Intelligent online benefit claims process & benefits calculator

Development of a streamlined, end-to-end electronic benefit calculation and claim process for self-service, mediated and mobile claims. “BECS Claims” transforms the claim process, improves performance and reduces customer error by increasing access, showing entitlement in advance, capturing valid data and evidence first time and integrating with back office systems.

Contact: Andrea Broodbank, Project Officer, Manchester City Council, email a.broodbank@manchester.gov.uk

Mid Sussex Academy benefits training manual

The project provides comprehensive training/procedural guidance material for all LAs using the Academy Benefits software application covering all aspects of the assessment of HB/CTB claims.

Contact: Colin Holden, Benefit Manager, Mid Sussex District Council, email ColinH@midsussex.gov.uk

Mid Sussex Academy Skillswise

The project provides a comprehensive e-learning package for the Academy Benefits software application to LAs. It covers the administration of HB/CTB claims with the functionality of the Academy Benefits system. The methodology for delivery of e-learning is by transaction driven training/guidance and practise sessions on the key processes associated with the assessment of HB/CTB claims. Administrator access to the system allows LAs to monitor progress of trainees through formal testing sessions to monitor progress and identify training needs.

Contact: Colin Holden, Benefit Manager, Mid Sussex District Council, email: ColinH@midsussex.gov.uk

Mid Sussex HCTB Interactive Learning Tool

The LA, in partnership with the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV), has developed an electronic learning centre on a hosted solution. The system is designed to produce a standard national on-line induction programme for new entrants into HB/CTB. The system produces two major elements; a learning resource and an information resource. It also includes a personal profile. It has been designed for those with no prior knowledge of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and as a reference tool for more experienced staff.

Take up: Over 96% of authorities in England, Scotland and Wales have registered with the programme.

Contact: Sarah Glaskin, Senior Technical Officer, Mid Sussex District Council
email SarahG@midsussex.gov.uk

Website: www.irrvlearning.org.uk

North Tyneside Intelligent Electronic Claim Form

In conjunction with Arun and Wealden district councils, North Tyneside Council has developed an interactive on-line application form based upon the HCTB1 which is automatically integrated into the LA document management system. The data entered on the form is validated in real time and online help is available. Where necessary, requests for further information needed are generated. The form can be amended by the LA to reflect changes in regulations or LA policies. It can also be used to provide a telephone claims service and in a mobile environment.

Contact: Richard Corbiere, Team Revenue, North Tyneside Borough Council,
email Richard.Corbiere@northtyneside.gov.uk

Poole Academy online HCTB1 Phase 1 and 2

Phase 1 comprised the development of an interactive online application form based on the HCTB1 that can be made available through all relevant electronic media (Kiosks, web, handhelds etc). It advises customers of the evidence required. The project could be confined to developing the product for Academy Benefits systems but could be developed on a stand alone basis for use by all LAs.

Phase 2 comprised the development and provision of interface to Academy Benefits 'back office' to create a new benefit claim based on the data collected from the e-claim form. This utilises XML schema developed as part of the National Benefits Project.

Contact: Paul Hudson, Acting Head of Benefits, Borough of Poole, email:
paul.hudson@poole.gov.uk

Southampton Academy Skillwise e-learning package

The development and provision of further modules for Academy Skillwise; the e-learning package developed exclusively for the Academy benefits system. This provides an in-depth training package covering areas such as the LHA, the integrated fraud function and overpayments all of which are core aspects of benefits administration. The courseware has been converted to run over a Web Browser to provide greater flexibility in terms of deployment and usability.

Contact: Andy Pirrie, Partnership Officer, Southampton City Council, email
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South Buckinghamshire New entrant E-learning training material

HBLearning is a wide-ranging e-learning facility designed to support the training requirements for both new and experienced staff. Through the use of professionally designed graphical images the courseware brings the legislation to life and makes it much easier to remember than text alone. The training tool can be accessed via the HBLearning website www.hblearning.co.uk.

Contact: Neil Berry, Senior Contracts Officer, South Buckinghamshire District Council, email: Neil.berry@southbucks.gov.uk

South Derbyshire Recovery of overpayments through data exchange

The project provides software enabling LAs to share their HB and CTB information using the LoCTA service for the purpose of tracing debtors and recovering overpayments of benefit. The software also enables LAs to share information with each other and provides interface with the DWP Information Directorate Data Matching Service (IFD DMS), formerly known as MIDAS. In addition, LAs who have installed the facility find it useful during the verification process as it enables them to check whether HB and CTB are being claimed concurrently in other LAs.

Contact: Chris Swain, Head of Revenues, South Derbyshire District Council, email: chris.swain@south-derbys.gov.uk

South Gloucester Automated Forms Processing

To acquire an Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) system to automate the capture of handwritten and machine printed data on benefit and other claim forms. The purpose of the project was to reduce human error, to trigger further enquiries to the customer where necessary and to release staff resources from the manual inputting of data to provide better frontline services. The software would be integrated with a range of document and workflow management and various core benefit systems used by the LAs.

Contact Mike Hayesman, Head of Customer and Revenue Services, South Gloucestershire Council, email Mike.Hayesman@southglos.gov.uk

Stroud Electronic Data Management Improvement

The project has improved and enhanced the IBS OPENWorkflow and DIP product. This unique document management system can be used as a stand alone application but can also be fully integrated within the IBS benefits system. IBS OPENWorkflow has been enhanced to improve performance and reduce resources required in benefit administration. The project was delivered using a phased approach with the key areas for each phase being:

1. Improved on-line management information and queue analysis

2. Automated batch processing of items from a queue for example; claim suspension
3. Enhanced security and scanning
4. New reporting suite
5. Version control allowing splitting of images once saved
6. Automated "work item" creation from system generated reports

Contact: Simon Killen, Recovery Team Manager Stroud District Council,
email: simon.killen@stroud.gov.uk

**West Lothian Improvements in quality of benefit correspondence
for 19 Civica sites**

The purpose of this project was to undertake a complete redesign of the content and layout of correspondence and associated software to deliver a more efficient and streamlined approach to benefit administration. The project was remit was to improve claimant/landlord understanding of entitlements, rights and responsibilities and to provide efficiencies by reducing the time taken by decision-makers in manually editing individual letters. The letters explain benefit legislation in Plain English, reconciling the paradox of maintaining legal compliance whilst conveying the content clearly. The development is intended to roll out to Civica's other sites.

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