

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

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

HB/CTB G7/2009

22 April 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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Customer Management System (CMS) Release 10

- 1 Release 10 of the Customer Management System (CMS) was delivered on 20 April 2009 and builds on the successful implementation of previous releases by introducing a series of initiatives that will have a direct impact on local authorities (LAs). The initiatives include
 - backdating for HB/CTB claims
 - non-dependant benefit types
 - alternative contact number
 - Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) Rapid Reclaims
 - non Work Focus Interview (WFI) claims
 - Habitual Residence Test
- 2 This article provides more information about these initiatives.

Backdating for HB/CTB claims

- 3 Prior to 20 April 2009 Income Support (IS) and JSA customers were asked '*What date do they want to claim from?*' If the customer wished to claim IS or JSA from a date before the Initial Date of Contact then questions to determine the reason for the delay in making the claim were triggered.
- 4 The Release 10 change will ensure that, if appropriate, these questions are also asked in relation to any claim to Housing benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Benefit (CTB). This information is output onto the Local Authority Input Document (LAID).
- 5 Being able to request the backdating of HB/CTB claims at the initial claim gather would mean that the customer would rarely, if ever, need to make a separate request direct to the LA. This will help avoid the risk of disrupting the smooth administration of HB and/or CTB during, or after, the decision making process. This supports the principle of joint working between Jobcentre Plus and LAs by gathering customer information only once.

Non-dependant benefit types

- 6 CMS is being updated to reflect the introduction of Pension Credit and income-related Employment and Support Allowance ESA(IR). The wording of the non-dependant question has been changed to prompt the user to ask whether the non-dependant is receiving Pension Credit or ESA(IR).
- 7 Collecting this information at the outset will allow the LA to make a more informed decision and reduce the risk of error entering the system.

Alternative contact number

- 8 There are occasions when the customer contacts Jobcentre Plus using a phone other than their daytime contact number. CMS has been updated to allow the user to record an alternative contact number in addition to their daytime telephone number. When appropriate, CMS also allows the user to record an alternative contact number for an appointee. When collected, this information will appear on the LAID.

Jobseeker's Allowance Rapid Reclaims

- 9 CMS automatically identifies potential Rapid Reclaims for the following benefits
- Incapacity Benefit (IB), including Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) and IB in youth
 - IS, and
 - JSA
- 10 Changes have been made to allow information, for customers claiming under the JSA Rapid Reclaim provisions, to be gathered on CMS and automatically transferred to the Benefit Delivery Centre (BDC) using a new streamlined process.
- 11 CMS will also identify Rapid Reclaims for all other primary benefits; however these will be handed off to enable clerical claim forms to be issued. When a customer indicates that they wish to make a claim for HB and/or CTB, the existing clerical process to issue a clerical HCTB1 or HBRR1 to the customer will be retained.

Non Work Focus Interview (WFI) claims

- 12 This change will enhance CMS so that for any case when an immediate WFI is not appropriate the case will be made available to the BDC at the point the gather has been completed. This activity will result in the LAID being produced by the BDC rather than the jobcentre.
- 13 This means that verification will not have taken place when the LAID is produced and sent to the LA. However, BDCs will be responsible for completing any verification before they make a decision on the claim and they should provide details to the LAs.
- 14 The volume of claims not requiring a WFI is relatively small and includes customers claiming
- IS on the grounds of incapacity regardless of HB/CTB
 - IS/IB regardless of HB/CTB
 - IB regardless of HB/CTB

- 15 In addition those customers who wish to take part in a voluntary WFI will follow this route

Habitual Residence Test

- 16 Questions relating to the habitual residency have been amended to reflect current legislation.
- 17 For this requirement the script (asking for details relating to residency) will be amended to **not** ask about a specific type of leave. This will ensure the right information is gathered, and people are not refused benefit because the wording on their UK residence permit doesn't match the wording on the CMS script
- 18 The question *'Has the Home Office granted you leave to remain in the UK as a refugee, Exceptional leave to remain in the UK or Indefinite leave to remain in the UK?'* has been amended to read
- 'Have you been granted leave to remain in the UK?'*
- 19 The following options have been included to the drop-down menu
- discretionary leave
 - Humanitarian Protection, and
 - Other (with accompanying free text field)
- 20 In addition the question *'Has your partner returned to the UK or come to live in the UK within the last 5 years?'* has been amended to two years to reflect the changes made to the corresponding customer question in CMS Release 8.

Enquiries

- 21 For further advice and information about these changes please contact: HBSDMP.WWEG@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

ESA Customer Account Management (CAM) release and national rollout

- 22 ESA was introduced in October 2008. The second release of the IT system (Release 1.1) that supports ESA was successfully implemented on 6 April 2009 with a number of enhancements. Most improvements are transparent to LAs, however, for the first time, Electronic Transfer of Data (ETDs) will be produced in respect of a contributory only benefit, namely contribution-based ESA (ESA (C)).

- 23 To accommodate this improvement there is a minor change to the ETD file. As ESA ETDs are included in the JSA Payment System (JSAPS) ETD files, an indicator has been included to distinguish which benefit the data relates to
- C** – ESA(C)
- E** – ESA(IR)
- J** - income-based JSA (JSA(IB))
- 24 The production of ESA(C) ETDs replaces the manual forms issued by DWP to date and the operational guidance will be updated accordingly.
- 25 To date the CAM system, though used nationally to take all customer calls, has been available in only one processing centre (BDC). This system is now to be implemented in all processing centres delivering ESA. This roll out will take place in five tranches, during 2009, as detailed below.
- 26 **The introduction of this system has no direct impact on LAs at this stage as the HB/CTB gather will not commence until 26 October 2009 as agreed.** This information is being disseminated so that LAs are aware that Jobcentre Plus staff will be operating a new system and will be developing their experience of it.

	Tranche 1 01/05/2009	Tranche 2 01/06/2009	Tranche 3 06/07/2009	Tranche 4 03/08/2009	Tranche 5 01/09/2009
East of England	Peterborough	Bury St. Edmonds	Basildon	Norwich	Luton
East Midlands	Lincoln	Leicester	Wellingborough	Derby	Nottingham
London	Hackney	Ilford Makerfield	Glasgow	Stratford	Belfast
North East			Newcastle		Sunderland
North West	Hyde Oldham	Birkenhead Bolton	Burnley Preston	Chester St Helens	Chorlton Carlisle
Scotland	Greenock Kilmarnock	Coatbridge	Clyde & Fife	Bathgate	Aberdeen Clydebank
South East	Worthing	Totton	Hastings	Cosham	Canterbury
South West	Plymouth	Gloucester	Chippenham	Bristol	St. Austell
Wales	Merthyr	Newport	Wrexham	Caerphilly	Llanelli
West Midlands	Wolverhampton	Hanley	Handsworth	Worcester Cannock Walsall	Ravenhurst
Yorkshire and the Humber	Barnsley	Halifax	Bradford Sheffield	Leeds	Hull

Queries

- 27 For further advice and information please contact
HBSDMP.WWEG@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Mailing to Pension Credit customers

- 28 You will be aware that the Government has been taking a number of steps to ensure that the economic downturn has the minimum possible effect on pensioners.
- 29 As part of the effort we are mailing selected customers who are currently getting Pension Credit and may be entitled to help with Council Tax and housing costs to encourage them to claim benefits to which they may be entitled.
- 30 We will also supply the details of who we are mailing to the relevant LAs. This will give the customer's name, address, date of birth and postcode held by the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS).
- 31 A copy of the text of the letters to be issued to these customers is attached at *Appendix A*, sent as a separate attachment to this bulletin.

Action for LAs

- 32 We would like LAs to follow up our mailing of customers by contacting the customers on the scan who still have not claimed either HB or CTB, after confirming from information held that the customer has a Council Tax (CT) liability.
- 33 The data must only be used for HB/CTB take-up and held securely in accordance with normal procedures for customers' HB/CTB claims data.

Scan data

- 34 The scan data will be sent to your nominated data recipient who has access to PGP software as the data will be encrypted to conform to data security rules. This will be by 7 May 2009.
- 35 If your nominated data recipient does not receive the file by 7 May 2009, they should contact John Maclean, DWP IFD, (email JOHN.A.MACLEAN1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK) who will investigate.

- 36 Most incidents are resolved when the date, time and name of the nominated data recipient to whom the data has been sent are confirmed. If the matter is still not resolved, an e-mail from the nominated data recipient giving full details will need to be sent to John Maclean. Only exceptionally will data be re-sent. No data will be re-sent after 11 May 2009. This is to protect both the data owners, IFD and LA staff.

Statistical returns

- 37 To assess the effectiveness of the scan, we are asking LAs to provide some statistics. We are only asking for one return, showing the overall picture by the end of September 2009.
- 38 A form is at *Appendix B*, sent as a separate attachment to this bulletin. Please use the form to email, fax, or post the statistics to PDCS. Email, fax and address details are shown on the form.
- 39 Please send a NIL return if you do not intend to use the scan information.
- 40 If you have any queries regarding the content of this article please contact HB-CTB-LIAISON@THEPENSIONSERVICE.GSI.GOV.UK

Timetable

April 2009

- PDCS to data match the Pension Credit live load against HB/CTB data
- The data match should provide a list of up to 250,000 customers who receive Pension Credit but not HB and/or CTB (NB this scan will not identify entitlement to HB and/or CTB)

May 2009

- PDCS to send letters to those on the list to invite customers to make a claim to CTB and/or HB by contacting their LA. (**Note:** copies of these letters are attached.)
- PDCS to send the scan data to every LA.
- Each LA to match the scan data against their CTB and HB records to identify those on the scan who have now claimed.
- Following this, to match the scan data for those who have not yet claimed against, where appropriate, their Council Tax or other records. This will identify those who are liable to pay Council Tax or, where known, pay rent.
- Each LA to contact those who are liable for Council Tax (and/or pay rent) and invite them to claim their potential HB/CTB entitlement.

July 2009

- Normal data protection provisions apply and so LAs must destroy the scan data provided by PDCS within three months of receiving it. This data is provided solely for this take-up exercise only and the information should not be used for any other purpose.

September 2009

- LAs will be asked to complete a basic management information return to enable us to judge the success of this exercise.

Successful pilot of the electronic transfer of HB and CTB Data to LAs Project (e-Transfer Project)

- 41 The technical problems that delayed the start of the e-Transfer project pilot have been resolved, and eight LAs are now receiving HB/CTB claim information on an electronic LAID, rather than a paper copy.
- 42 Lessons learned from the pilot have been incorporated in a new build file server, known as the Data Transfer Application (DTA) which will be tested in Doncaster, Aberdeenshire and Wyre Forest LAs at the end of April.
- 43 National rollout will begin in May 2009. We plan to start this by enabling up to a further 30 LAs. This will provide the project with additional assurance that the rollout process and guidance are reliable and robust enough to support continued national rollout.
- 44 Following the successful transfer of the electronic LAID in these additional sites, rollout will continue in the remaining sites to the end of September 2009.
- 45 The rollout schedule will be aligned closely with the Government Connect Project's rollout, beginning with those LAs that have an operational Code of Connection compliant Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx) or Government Secure Extranet (GSx) connection. Government Connect will arrange for the installation of a new DTA in the LA. Once installed the project will arrange for the LA to be e-enabled from which point the LA will receive their LAIDS electronically on the DTA.
- 46 Rollout in each LA will be dealt with through the nominated Single Point of Contact (SPOC). If you have not provided the project with a SPOC and require information about this role please contact the project at the address provided below.
- 47 The second phase of the project, when the PDCS Local Authority Claim Information (LACI) will be sent electronically, is planned to start in July 2009.

48 Details about the electronic LAID process are available in the following General Information Bulletin: <bulletins/2008/q21-2008.pdf>

Contacts

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

Statutory Instruments

- 50 The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have now been laid
- 2009 No.794, The Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling) Order 2009, coming into force from 31 March 2009
 - 2009 No. 795, The Pension Protection Fund (Pension Compensation Cap) Order 2009, coming into force 1 April 2009
 - 2009 No. 809 C.53, The Pensions Act 2008 (Commencement No. 3 and Consequential Provisions) Order 2009, coming into force from 1 April 2009
 - 2009 No. 846, The Occupational Pension Schemes (Contracting-out) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, coming into force 6 April 2009
- 51 Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/docs/lawvols/bluevol/> and the website of the Office of Publication Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

What's new on the web

52 The following items can be found on the website link shown

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB Direct issue 88 March 2009	Newsletter	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/hb-direct-newsletter/2009/issue-88-april-2009.pdf
moredirect March 2009	Magazine	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/hb-direct-newsletter/2009/moredirect-march09.pdf

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin G5/2009	<p>Definition of a Fraud overpayment</p> <p>HB/CTB Bulletin G22/2008- Clarification to the alignment of capital verification for HB/CTB claims at £6,000</p> <p>Feedback from the CIPFA PDT Roadshows</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p> <p>What's new on the web</p> <p>HB/CTB Circulars issued this month</p> <p>Other publications issued this month</p>	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/bulletins/2009/g5-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Bulletin G6/2009	<p>Performance and Good Practice Guide survey</p> <p>The rapid reclaim process and ESA: clarification</p> <p>Local Housing Allowance Guidance Manual Amdt 2</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p>	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/bulletins/2009/g6-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A4/2009	<p>Change to the requirement for NINos to be allocated to partners in claims for HB/CTB if they have no right to be in the UK</p>	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a4-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A5/2009	<p>Sale and rent back arrangements</p>	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a5-2009.pdf
HB/CTB circular A6/2009	<p>Supersession</p>	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a6-2009.pdf

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Circular A7/2009	Data Take On and Processing Schedule (DTOPS) for the extraction and transfer of Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) and Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) data for 2009/10	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a7-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A8/2009	2009/10 HB/CTB Right Benefit Performance Indicator - Update for Local Authorities (LAs)	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a8-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A9/2009	Further amendments to HB/CTB to take account of the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance – SI 2009/583	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a9-2009.pdf
HB/CTB Circular A10/2009	The Social Security (Use of Information for Housing Benefit and Welfare Services Purposes) Regulations 2008	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2009/a10-2009.pdf

HB/CTB Circulars issued this month

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

HB/CTB Circular A8/2009

HB/CTB Circular A9/2009

Other publications issued this month

54 The following publications have been issued this month

LHA Guidance Manual - Amendment 2

Subsidy Guidance Manual - Amendment 4 **(DN: Check if delivered by 21/4)**

HB/CTB Guidance Manual - Amendment 18 **(DN: Check if delivered by 21/4)**