

Editorial

This month's HB Direct has an update on performance for Quarter 2 of 2011/12. It's a fairly stable picture nationally though a slight deterioration on Quarter 2 2010/11. The performance team are keen to support authorities who are focusing on improving performance so please make use of our expertise and contact us if you think we can help.

I'm pleased to report that the ATLAS rollout is nearing completion with just the Northgate sites to roll out later this month. This phase has gone very smoothly and I'd like to thank both the project teams and partners in local authorities for making the project such a success during implementation. A particular thank you to the early adopter authorities for leading the way.

The Housing Delivery and Universal Credit teams have had a busy month. There have been a series of workshops focusing on delivery and we're looking at the requirements for 2012/13 to prepare for transition.

Many of us are seeing you at regional events this month and there's a strong DWP showing at the IRRV event later this month.

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[Distribution enquiries](#)

Automatic Transfers to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) Phase 2

ATLAS phase 2 national rollout will now be delivered in two stages. LAs who use Capita, Civica or who have in-house IT solutions successfully went live with phase 2 on 23 January 2012. LAs using the Northgate IT solution will follow on 27 February 2012. The revised date for Northgate authorities was explained in a letter issued to the affected LAs on 17 January 2012.

You are reminded that any incidents regarding ATLAS should be raised via the existing incident management process detailed in the ATLAS awareness pack.

The following documents have been distributed to all by e-mail

- Phase 2 awareness pack on 16 December 2011
- Phase 2 additional guidance on 17 January 2012

Thanks to the early adopter authorities who have assisted the project and the national rollout LAs by testing processes and providing useful feedback to enable the national rollout to be as smooth as possible.

If you have any queries about ATLAS please contact us via: QH.HBINFLOWSPROGRAMME@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK using your GSx/GCSx.e-mail, or see the contact details on the [HBIFP ATLAS](#) webpage.

IRRV Benefits and Benefit Fraud Conference – Come and see us

We are pleased to let you know that we will once again be attending the IRRV Benefits and Benefit Fraud Conference and Exhibition at Telford International Centre on 22 and 23 February 2012.

There will be 3 presentations by DWP

- Jeremy Groombridge – Strategic Direction for Universal Credit
- Julia Sweeney – Housing Benefit and Welfare Reform
- Donna Rigsby – Single Fraud Investigation Service.

Throughout the conference you will find staff from our Housing Divisions, Universal Credit Programme and Single Fraud Investigation Service who will be able to answer questions on issues such as:

- Universal Credit
- Housing Benefit Reforms
- Single Fraud Investigation Service
- ATLAS
- Benefit Cap
- Social Fund Reforms.

In addition we will have representatives from the Department for Communities and Local Government to answer your questions on Council Tax localised support schemes.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference.

LAs and the delivery of Universal Credit (UC)

As you will be aware the UC LA Liaison Team has spent the last year working closely with individual LAs and their representatives, including the LGA, LAAs, COSLA and the Welsh LGA to discuss the impact of UC at local level and the possible role that LAs could play.

Following a submission by the District Councils Network, Lord Freud chaired a workshop on 26 January 2012 which explored possible ways that we could work with the LAs from the point of UC go-live in 2013 and into the future to maximise the benefits of the new system to claimants and to help to get more of them back to work.

We hope to be able to share some more information about the workshop findings in the near future but the long and short of it is that Lord Freud was keen to further explore the potential for LAs to add value to the delivery of UC and is considering a series of pilots looking at possible ways in which LAs could work closely with other partners at local level to deliver UC.

We will keep you posted when more details are available.

Universal Credit LA visiting programme

The LA visiting programme is continuing and in recent weeks visits have been undertaken by Lord Freud, the Minister for Welfare Reform; Malcolm Whitehouse, the Universal Credit Programme Director and other Senior DWP Directors as well as various officials from the offices of both the Secretary of State and the Minister for

Welfare Reform to see first hand the impact that UC will have on LAs.

If you would like the team to visit your authority please contact Ron Alligan by email: ron.alligan1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or phone on 0207 449-7187.

Communications from Housing Benefit Divisions

You may have noticed that HB circulars, bulletins and the HB Direct newsletter are being sent to you from a different source. We are now using a Qbase mailing service.

At the bottom of each email there is a unsubscribe link which looks like this

UNSUBSCRIBE:

If you no longer wish to receive any further communication from the DWP please click here.
If you would just like to unsubscribe from this mailing, please reply to the email address above.

If you click on this link your email address will be closed on our database and you will not receive any further email communications from DWP, not just the HB Direct or circulars that the unsubscribe link was on.

If you no longer want to receive HB circulars, bulletins or the HB Direct newsletter, can you contact housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk and we will take you off the individual emailing lists.

Performance update

On 24 January 2012 DWP published the speed of processing data for HB and CTB claims for the second quarter of 2011/12. The figures show an increase in the average number of days taken to decide new claims when compared with the same quarter of the previous year. Despite this increase, performance is still better than the same quarter of 2009/10.

In the second quarter of 2011/12 it took an average of 24 days to decide new claims compared to 22 days in the same quarter of 2010/11. The average time taken to process changes of circumstances was 11 days which is the same as the second quarter of 2010/11 and 2009/10.

Average days to process new claims and changes of circumstances

	Q2 2011/12	Q2 2010/11	Q2 2009/10
New claims	24	22	25
Change of circumstances	11	11	11

DWP's Performance Team approaches those LAs where it appears that performance has dipped in order to get up-to-date performance figures and offer help from the Performance Development Team. However, due to the lag in performance data we would urge you to proactively contact us if there is a drop in performance to discuss options for recovery. It is often easier to recover and more cost effective if action is taken promptly.

If you would like to discuss any HB/CTB performance issues or request help from the Performance Development Team please contact Phil Mercer on 020 7449 5399 or e-mail him at phil.mercer@dwp.gsi.gov.uk