Customer Management System (CMS)

A Guide for Local Authorities

March 2010

Contents

1 Glossary

Abbreviation	Full Name
ACT	Automated Credit Transfer
BDC	Benefit Delivery Centre
CAM	Customer Account Management
CIS	Customer Information System
CMS	Customer Management System
CRN	Contact Reference Number
CS Agent	Customer Service Agent
CTB	Council Tax Benefit
DIP	Document Image Processing system(s)
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DMS	Data Management System(s)
DTA	Data Transfer Appliance
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EBC	Enable Benefit Calculation
ERM	External Relations Manager
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ETD	Electronic Transfer of Data
FA	Financial Assessor
FAM	Financial Assessor Manager
HB	Housing Benefit
HBEC	Housing Benefit Evidence Checklist
HBSD	Housing Benefit Strategy Division
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IDOC	Initial Date of Contact
IOW	In and Out of Work
IS	Income Support
IT	Information Technology
JSA[C]	Jobseeker's Allowance Contribution Based
JSA[C & IB]	Jobseeker's Allowance Contribution & Income Based
LA	Local Authority
LAID	Local Authority Input Document
LA-ST	Local Authority Support Team
NINo	National Insurance Number
NJI	New Jobseekers Interview
PA	Personal Adviser
PDF	Portable Document Formant
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOM	Standard Operating Model
TAM	Treat As Made
WFI	Work Focused Interview

2 Definition of Terms used

Customer Statement with Verification	Personal statement issued to the Customer which reflects the information gathered on CMS. For the purposes of this document we will refer to the “Customer Statement”.
Evidence	Documents in support of a claim to benefit that need to be verified.
HBEC	Checklist of evidence required to support a claim to HB and/or CTB made via the integrated claims process.
Information	Details supplied by the customer but not necessarily verified.
Interview	For the purposes of this document we will substitute the “Interview” for a WFI or NJI. NJI – Adviser interview with JSA Customers in order to help them back into, or closer to the labour market. WFI – Adviser interview with non-JSA Customers in order to help them back into, or closer to the labour market.
IOW	In and Out of Work processes - Closer working between Jobcentre Plus, HMRC and Local Authorities provides a single point of contact for customers, avoiding the need to deal with three separate organisations. Speeds up the processing time.
JCP25	A Jobcentre Plus form that is used to notify LAs of certain changes of circumstances and/or additional information.
Verification	The process by which Jobcentre Plus confirms the evidence supplied by the customer has been seen and is acceptable.

3 Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this document is to provide Local Authorities (LAs) with a comprehensive guide to the Customer Management System (CMS) and how it affects the administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB).

3.2 The Guide has been produced by Housing Benefit Strategy Division (HBSD) staff with input from Jobcentre Plus colleagues and representatives of the wider Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and LA communities.

4 An Introduction to CMS

History of CMS

4.1 Jobcentre Plus introduced CMS in summer 2003 to encourage customers to make contact via the telephone; although the process still supports face-to-face contact. It delivers a process that is customer focused, efficient and secure, using streamlined business processes that are delivered and supported by Information Technology (IT).

4.2 As part of the integrated claim process CMS gathers information to support an associated claim to HB/CTB. This information is presented on a Local Authority Input Document (LAID) which until Autumn 2009 was issued as a printed document to the LAs. From late 2009 LAIDs have been transferred to LAs electronically as PDF format documents, to be printed out or uploaded to DIP/DMS systems at the LA. CMS produces a document called a Customer Statement, which once signed by the customer, takes the place of a claim form.

New and Future Releases

4.3 CMS has been, and continues to be, developed through a series of releases in line with legislative changes and changing operating practices. This Guide incorporates the enhancements that have been introduced up to and including Release 11 (December 2009). It includes information that will help answer questions about Jobcentre Plus processes as supported by CMS.

4.4 Operational changes to the usage of CMS are often tested by pilot teams in differing nationwide locations and take place with consultation from HBSD and the affected LAs. This guide will be updated as a result of any adjustments that ensue. In addition details of future releases of CMS will be publicised via Housing Benefit Direct and General Information Bulletins, and this guide will be updated to reflect any changes.

4.5 The LA User Group has an important role to play. The group exists (in part) to identify and prioritise issues with the CMS process, to seek ideas, opinions and feedback on various initiatives and products. It allows HBSD the opportunity to disseminate information on our current work programme, although it is not a decision making forum.

4.6 CMS currently handles claims to JSA[C] made online via the Directgov web site. However, where they wish to claim HB/CTB with JSA[C] they will be redirected to claim via the telephony route through CMS. There are plans for JSA[C&IB] claims to be taken online. Customers will still be able to answers questions in support of an HB/CTB claim when claiming JSA[C&IB] online

4.7 DWP aims to increase its ability to meet customers' needs by expanding the use of online systems for benefit enquiries, updates and claims.

5 The Claims Process

5.1 Jobcentre Plus delivers benefits through three operational areas:

- *Contact Centres*. There is a virtual network of Contact Centres where Customer Service Agents (CS Agents) gather information from customers over the telephone in support of their claim for benefit(s).
- *Jobcentres.* These are the local customer-facing offices with a focus on getting customers back into work. Customers who are required to attend a Work Focused Interview (WFI) will be seen by one or two Jobcentre staff to complete the gather of information in support of the benefit claim. [Note: The initial JSA new claim WFI is known as a New Jobseeker's Interview (NJI). For the purposes of this document we will substitute "Interview" for a WFI or NJI].
  In these cases Jobcentre staff are responsible for gathering evidence to support both the primary benefit claim and the claim for HB/CTB and for checking that the information contained in the Customer Statement is complete and correct.
- *Benefit Delivery Centres (BDC).* This is where the gathering of any outstanding information and evidence takes place and where a decision on entitlement to benefit is made.

Action by the Contact Centre

5.2 A key element of the Jobcentre Plus service is the provision of an integrated, interactive, electronic information gathering process for working age customers to claim benefit by telephone.

5.3 CMS supports this process by gathering information and evidence to support new and repeat claims for the following Primary Benefits:

- Income Support (IS),
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA[IB]),
- Contributory Based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA[C]),
- Incapacity Benefit (IB), (linking claims only).

5.4 Where a customer makes a new or repeat claim for a primary benefit, details are taken to support claims for associated benefits and/or to determine eligibility for secondary benefit(s):

Associated benefits:

Housing Benefit

Council Tax Benefit

Secondary benefits:

Maternity Allowance

Bereavement Benefit

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Severe Disablement Allowance (under linking rules)

Carer's Allowance

5.5 Customers claiming any primary benefit under the rapid reclaim provisions can be taken through the CMS route. However, CMS does not capture details to support Rapid Reclaims to HB/CTB. Where a customer is claiming under rapid reclaim provisions and indicates they wish to claim HB/CTB Jobcentre Plus will provide the customer with the appropriate clerical claim form to complete and return to their local authority.

5.6 The CS Agent uses scripted questions to gather information from the customer and records their response on CMS. This is used to determine if the customer is within scope, i.e. that they are eligible to claim a primary benefit.

5.7 Customers who are not in scope will be advised to contact the appropriate organisation, for example someone of pension age will be advised to contact the Pension, Disability and Carers Service**,** where if applicable an associated HB/CTB claim may be made. If the customer is not in scope for a primary working age benefit, then subsequently there will not be an HB/CTB gather.

5.8 Once CMS has determined any potential eligibility to primary benefits, the CS Agent asks scripted questions to gather further information needed for the primary and associated benefit claims. The aim is to gather all the information needed to assess entitlement to the benefit claimed including the claim information for HB/CTB. (The exception to establishing potential eligibility is the 'fast path' process; for details please see paragraph 5.17)

5.9 Although CMS uses the information gathered to determine potential eligibility, this does not prevent the customer from continuing with a claim. For example although CMS may not indicate any potential entitlement to IS the customer could still decide to pursue the claim.

5.10 If the customer does want to pursue a potentially ineligible claim to a primary benefit, e.g. IS, the front page of the LAID will display "Continue with potentially ineligible claim for Income Support", rather than showing IS as the primary benefit.

5.11 Using scripted questions CMS routes the CS Agent to the next appropriate question depending on the answers already given by the customer. For example, if the customer states they do not have a partner, further questions relating to a partner will not be enabled.

5.12 Certain questions are dynamically worded so that for example the wording displayed will change depending on whether the question is being asked of the customer or the partner.

5.13 During the information gathering process, 'on-screen' help is available to the agent. Help Text has been developed to assist users of CMS. It is available to the user behind the screens that they are currently working on. The Help Text often allows the agents to provide the customer with:

- a detailed reason why a specific question is being asked,
- a definition of a term, and
- answers to general customer enquiries.

5.14 The agent then will arrange, where appropriate, an Interview at a Jobcentre. CMS will display a list of evidence the customer should take with them to support their benefit claim(s) which the agent reads out to the customer.

5.15 For JSA[C] claims with an associated HB or HB and CTB claim, the agent is prompted to request additional evidence that is required solely by the Local Authority. The CS Agent informs the Customer to bring additional evidence, where appropriate, to their Interview including proof of:

- partner's identity,
- partner's wages (5 weekly or 2 monthly payslips),
- partner's Bank/Building Society accounts (last 2 months),
- partner's other investments (e.g. shares, ISA, premium bonds),
- liability to pay rent, (e.g. Tenancy Agreement, Rent Book),
- non-dependant's income.

5.16 Please note that for JSA[C&IB] and IS[lone parent] claims, the customer will also need to bring proof of:

- liability to pay rent, (e.g. Tenancy Agreement, Rent Book).
- non-dependant's income.

5.17 Where an Interview is not appropriate (e.g. when a Lone Parent with a child under the age of 7 claims IS) then the statement is posted to the customer asking them to provide answers to any previously unanswered questions, make any corrections and return the signed statement with the requested evidence direct to the BDC.

5.18 Where the customer has stated they are under Threat of Eviction or asked for an Emergency Payment of their Jobcentre Plus benefit, their Interview will be 'fast tracked' and booked as soon as possible. The customer should be advised what evidence is required to support their benefit claim and that this evidence should be brought when they attend their Interview.

The Fast Path Process

5.19 Where a customer is unsure what benefits they may be eligible to, they will be taken through a series of questions that will help determine potential entitlement to primary and associated benefits and the results will help determine the most appropriate route through CMS.

5.20 Customer feedback however, indicated that some customers know at the outset which benefit they want to claim and on-line benefit services such as the Benefits Advisor Service mean that more people are likely to know in the future. The feedback suggested these customers wanted a quicker route through the claims process removing unnecessary questions.

5.21 As a result a fast path process through CMS was introduced for those customers who know which benefit they want to claim. This facility was originally introduced for JSA (C) and IB customers but was extended to cover IS and JSA (C & IB) customers in Release 11.

5.22 This however, is not without some risks and could lead to customers missing out on benefit they are entitled to. Following HBSD intervention such customers are therefore reminded that by choosing this route, eligibility to the benefit they are claiming or eligibility to any other benefit has not been considered.

5.23 However, regardless of taking this route, the majority of customers going through a fast path process are still given the opportunity to claim HB/CTB and where appropriate a full HB/CTB data gather takes place.

5.24 The exceptions are customers who choose to claim either JSA (C) only or linking IB only and bypass the eligibility route. There may, therefore be an increase in JSA (C) only customers who apply for HB/CTB directly to LAs.

5.25 The following paragraphs explain what customers, who claim through a fast path route, will be advised during the gather process.

JSA (C)

5.26 If the customer specifies that they wish to claim JSA[C] only via fast path the CS Agent will read out the mandatory text (MT) that has been linked to the question to ensure that the customer is aware that if they wish to make a claim to HB/CTB they will have to contact their LA.

***MT** - As you have chosen to claim Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance only, eligibility to this and other benefits, including Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, has not been considered.*

IB

5.27 If the customer specifies that they wish to claim (linking) IB <u>only</u>, again CMS will not take a claim for HB/CTB. The CS Agent will read out the MT that has been linked to the question to ensure that the customer is aware that if they wish to make a claim to HB/CTB they will either have to go through eligibility or contact their LA.

***MT** - As you have chosen to claim Incapacity Benefit only, eligibility to other benefits, including Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, has not been considered.*

IS and JSA[C&IB]

5.28 However if the customer specifies that they wish to claim either IS or JSA[C&IB], CMS will collect all the information needed for a HB/CTB claim where appropriate. The CS Agent will still read out mandatory text.

***MT** - As you have chosen to claim Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance Income Based, you need to be aware that you might not be entitled to the benefit as no checks have been made.*

Note regarding ESA:

5.29 From 27th October 2008 Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) was introduced to replace Incapacity Benefit and the IS top-up. Claim details for ESA are not gathered using CMS, but are gathered using the Customer Account Management (CAM) system. CMS is still used to gather IB for linking cases. Further information can be found at: - <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/employment-and-support-allowance/>

Action by the Jobcentre

5.30 For the majority of claims the Jobcentre is responsible for the process of completing the capture of information and for checking and verifying the claim details provided. Some of the more complex cases are identified by BDC staff as requiring preview action prior to the customer attending the Jobcentre interview. Cases are previewed to ensure that BDC staff have enough evidence to process the claim. BDC staff should then telephone the customer to remind them of the interview appointment and to bring in the required additional evidence. They will use a preview desk aide wherever there is a claim to HB/CTB.

5.31 When the customer arrives; Jobcentre Plus staff will:-

- verify the customer's identity and where appropriate the partner's,
- gather any outstanding information including evidence solely to support HB/CTB claim,
- confirm with the customer that all information is accurate,
- check that any amendments that have been made on the Customer Statement have been initialled and input into CMS,

- confirm on CMS that the Customer Statement is acceptable and has been signed by the customer,
- check whether the customer has signed the “Sharing Information with your landlord” section of the Customer Statement and update CMS,
- verify evidence in support of the primary benefit claim, and where such evidence is also required to support the HB/CTB claim, LAs should accept that Jobcentre Plus has taken the appropriate action,
- record on CMS the type of evidence and whether an original copy has been received,
- where there is a claim to HB/CTB Jobcentre Plus staff will photocopy the original evidence required solely for the LA, annotate the copies that the originals have been seen and record the details on CMS,
- complete a Housing Benefit Evidence Checklist (HBEC) and attach the HB/CTB evidence provided and send to the Local Authority,
- check and confirm on CIS benefits received by the customer and/or partner/children.

5.32 At the Interview the work-related aspects of the claim will be discussed and a decision made on whether the customer has met work-focused conditionality. If the staff have decided that ‘work focused conditionality’ is not satisfied, (i.e. the customer is not actively looking for employment), and there is an associated claim for HB/CTB the LA Input Document (LAID) will still be produced by CMS. However a new procedure to inform LAs that Work Focused Conditionality has not been met is now due to be incorporated into the integrated claims process. This will be a similar procedure as has already been implemented for Withdrawn claims, where Jobcentre Plus send a JCP25 to the LA detailing this fact.

5.33 In some instances a customer may be unable to provide evidence to verify their claim, for example they may be unable to return to their family home due to domestic violence. In such instances Jobcentre Plus staff will decide whether the customer’s explanation is acceptable and if so record why on CMS.

5.34 Jobcentre staff will access the verification screens on CMS and note that the evidence has not been verified. They will then enter in CMS case notes that a copy of the HBEC and the HBEC leaflet have been issued to the customer. This note is to remind staff of the outstanding evidence, and that the HBEC with copied evidence has been sent direct to the LA. The HBEC leaflet advises the customer that if they fail to send the information to the LA then their claim for HB/CTB may be unable to be assessed. LAs should allow time for a customer to send the additional HB/CTB related evidence in to them, before contacting the customer.

5.35 If the customer has not provided all the required information and evidence for the primary benefit claim(s) Jobcentre staff will advise the customer what is still required and ask them to send it to the BDC. Jobcentre Plus should update the LAs when the outstanding information and evidence have been received.

Action by the Benefit Delivery Centre

5.36 Staff in BDCs determine entitlement to primary benefits and it is the completion of this process and notification to the customer which subsequently triggers the Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD).

5.37 However the BDC are still responsible for pursuing any outstanding information and obtaining any evidence required for the primary benefit, before they make a decision on the claim.

5.38 The BDC should then provide, under separate cover, details of any changes, new information or evidence received to the LA.

Customers not requiring an Interview at the Jobcentre

5.39 The volume of claims not requiring an Interview (regardless of whether HB/CTB is claimed) is relatively small and includes customers claiming:

- IS on the grounds of receiving SSP,
- IS/IB (linking claims only), or
- IB (linking claims only).

5.40 Claims not requiring an Interview can be easily identified because the verification section is suppressed on the LAID.

5.41 Where an immediate Interview is not appropriate a ‘package’ of documents will be posted out to the customer. This includes a Customer Statement documenting all the information provided by the customer during the initial gather and details of the evidence they are required to provide in support of their **primary** benefit claim(s).

5.42 The customer is advised to provide details of any missing information, correct any incorrect information and sign and return the customer statement to the appropriate BDC. They are also told to send any evidence required to support their claim. The customer has a calendar month to return their statement; failure to do so will result in the customer’s details being removed from CMS.

5.43 In these instances the claim will have been transferred directly to the BDC upon completion of ‘gather’. As a result the LAID will be produced by the BDC, only when the customer has returned their signed statement.

5.44 Because of the reasons above and the fact that BDC staff do not update CMS:

- any amendments that the customer has made to the Customer Statement will not be reflected on the LAID,

- any new information provided by the customer will not be included on the LAID,
- CMS will not have been updated to reflect any evidence they have seen.

5.45 However guidance has been written advising BDC staff that they **must** notify LAs under separate cover of any changes, new information or evidence received.

Transfer of Information to the LAs

5.46 The standard practice is that HB/CTB claim details will be transferred to the LA on the LAID when the customer has either supplied all the required information and evidence in support of the primary benefit claim(s), or provided an acceptable reason why they do not have evidence.

5.47 However, any outstanding information at the end of the Jobcentre phase of the process will not be output on the LAID.

5.48 The HBEC, with any photocopied evidence attached to it, will be sent to the LA (usually by secure courier). As the LAIDs are now sent electronically overnight, the LAID will normally arrive before the HBEC. Following the transfer of the claims to the BDC and LA, any further changes or additional information will need to be passed to the LA on a JCP25.[1]

5.49 The LAID will be automatically generated at the point at which the claim information is transferred from CMS to benefit processing systems. This is at the stage where either:-

- the customer has completed their Interview, has signed their customer statement and provided their evidence at the Jobcentre,

or

- the signed Customer Statement has been received at the BDC, (where no Interview is required).

5.50 The LAID will then be saved in the CMS database ready for an overnight electronic batch transfer to a new Data Transport Appliance (DTA) server at the LA. The number of LAIDs received each day can be reconciled against the number of unique NINOs listed in the index file.

5.51 For cases where the customer is classed by Jobcentre Plus as being “Nationally Sensitive”, the LAIDs are printed and then sent out to the LA via secure courier.

5.52 Where the LA requires sight of the “Permission to disclose declaration”, it is recommended that this is sent with the HBEC; however this is up to

[1] The JCP25 is a Jobcentre Plus form used to notify LAs of certain changes of circumstances and/or additional information.

your local arrangements. If the LA does not require this declaration then it will be retained along with the Customer Statement.

5.53 For information on how to access the DTA server to extract the LAID, please refer to the DTA User Guide, which can be obtained from the Local Authority Support Team (LA-ST).

5.54 The LAID combined with evidence provided with the HBEC and/or a JCP25 should provide sufficient information for the LA to assess the HB/CTB claim without the need to contact the customer for further information.

5.55 Where it is not possible for the LAID to be transferred electronically, JCP will need to go into the printed output screen, re-print the LAID and send it direct to the LA. However this can only be re-printed the day following transfer as the LAID will be held in the batch file and will attempt to send this again the following night.

Changes of circumstance

5.56 CMS does not routinely handle changes of circumstance. However where a customer reports a change to Jobcentre Plus between claim details being gathered and the various Input Documents being sent to the processing sections details of the change will be recorded clerically on form JCP25. If the change is relevant to the HB/CTB claim, a copy of the JCP25 will be sent to the LA. Jobcentre Plus staff should also advise the customer to report the change direct to the LA. If the change is a change of address outside the LA boundaries, the HB/CTB claim is closed and the customer will need to make a new claim at a different LA. The onus is on the customer to ensure that they inform both JCP and the LA of any changes that will affect their benefit claim.

Withdrawal of the Benefit Claim

- **Prior to signed Customer Statement being received**

5.57 If the customer makes their claim via CMS, Jobcentre Plus and LAs require a Customer Statement to be signed, the claim is not valid until that form is signed and returned. If the customer statement has not been signed and the customer confirms they wish to withdraw their claim they will be told to pursue their claim for HB/CTB directly with their LA.

- **Following receipt of a signed Customer Statement**

5.58 Jobcentre Plus staff do not have the appropriate authority to make decisions on HB/CTB claims. Therefore if a signed statement is received withdrawing their claim the HB/CTB claim will always be referred to the LA for a formal decision to be made.

5.59 Prior to the national roll-out of the e-transfer project, where a primary claim had been withdrawn, the front page of the LA Input Document had to be annotated. As the LA Input Document is now electronically transferred to the LA via overnight batch, a new process has now been implemented to treat these withdrawn claims in the same way as a change of circumstance. A JCP25 showing that the claim has been withdrawn along with the details of whether proof of the customer's identity (S19) has taken place will be sent to the LA.

5.60 While this guide details the operational procedures of CMS, to achieve better customer service it cannot deal with local and specific operational issues. If LAs have anything to report relating to their experience of new claims made via this process HBSD would be interested to hear of your experiences. If so, please contact us at hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk (Please note: HBSD do not deal with individual claims to benefit therefore this email address is not appropriate for specific benefit enquiries. We regret that any such correspondence will not be answered.)

6 The LA Input Document

6.1 CMS populates the LAID with the relevant questions and customer responses that are appropriate to the HB/CTB claim. On occasions a customer may be unable to answer a specific question(s) before the LAID is produced, this is reported on the LAID as unanswered.

6.2 If the information is also required for the primary benefit claim Jobcentre Plus should continue to pursue and advise the LA of the outcome. Where the information is required solely for HB/CTB it will be up to the LA to gain the necessary outcome.

6.3 The LAID documents which information has been verified and details the type of evidence provided by the customer. Where Jobcentre Plus has accepted that the customer has a valid reason why they are unable to provide certain evidence the reason will be documented on the LAID. Where an Interview is not appropriate Jobcentre Plus do not capture details of any verification seen on CMS, and therefore such details will not be output on the LAID.

6.4 The LAID includes system data showing initial date of contact (IDOC) and the benefits the customer has claimed. It will also usually have information detailing the verification action that has taken place.

6.5 The customer's details remain on CMS for one calendar month following the transfer of the last claim to the relevant processing location. During this period CMS has a facility to produce a duplicate LAID (paper copy) if required. You should contact your Jobcentre Plus liaison officer to reach agreement on arrangements for obtaining duplicate documents.

Layout of the LAID

6.6 The first page of the LAID will show: -

- the address of the relevant jobcentre,
- the address of the LA that the LAID has been sent to,
- the date the LAID was generated,
- the customer's name, address & National Insurance Number, [2]
- the date of first contact, [3]

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[2] If the customer does not know their NINo and a trace is unsuccessful, or there are multiple matches and the CS Agent cannot confidently match the NINo, CMS will allocate a Contact Reference Number (CRN). A trace of the Departmental databases will be initiated, based on the information provided by the customer. The CRN will be used on all correspondence (including the LAID) until the NINo has been ascertained or allocated.

[3] The date of first contact is the date the customer first contacted Jobcentre Plus about claiming benefit, whether by telephone, in writing, or in person.

- the date the signed Customer Statement was received by Jobcentre Plus (not output for claims not requiring an Interview),
- primary benefits the customer has claimed,
- the date verification activity was completed [4] (not output where an Interview is not required),
- the tenancy type, [5]
- the customer's decision on giving permission to disclose information to their landlord,
- the end date, if benefit ended.

Interpreting the remainder of the LA Input Document

6.7 Wording given in the LAID can appear as a précis of the actual question(s) asked. For example, the question 'Do you, your partner or any of the children you are claiming for, have any National Savings Certificates?' appears in the LAID simply as 'National Savings Certificates?'

6.8 Some information will only be gathered depending on the answers given to previous questions. For example, if the customer states that they have no non-dependants all the other questions relating to non-dependants will be by-passed. On the LAID the answer 'No' will appear against the lead question 'Does anyone, except your partner and any children you are claiming for, live with you in this property?' and there will be no further information in this section

6.9 CMS asks some questions more than once, to ensure that all the relevant information is gathered; only when a 'No' response is achieved will the loop cease. For example the question 'Do you have a job?' if the customer answers "yes" then all the questions relating to the customer's first job will be asked and the answers recorded. The question then asked is 'Do you have any other jobs?' and details gathered if the response is yes. This continues until the customer states they have no more jobs.

6.10 In most instances CMS only accepts exact dates, e.g. 12/06/2007, not simply 06/2006. However there are a small number of questions within CMS that will allow users to record a partial date, i.e.: 'MM/YYYY' rather than 'DD/MM/YYYY'. If a partial date is given then text will appear under any partial dates, this will read: 'Full date not known'.

[4] If there is no date entered it means that the customer has been unable to produce all the required evidence and has provided an acceptable reason for this. The reason will be shown in the verification section of the LA Input Document in the row titled "Reason Unable to Produce".

[5] This shows whether the customer rents from the Council, a private landlord, a Housing Association, or 'other'. If the option 'other' is chosen further details should be provided. If no details are given this indicates that the customer is an owner-occupier and that the claim is for CTB.

6.11 All relevant HB/CTB questions that have been left unanswered will be output as 'unanswered' on the LAID. This will provide LA staff processing the claim a comprehensive picture of the customer's circumstances. Jobcentre Plus should continue to pursue evidence and information if it is required for the primary benefit. Once all outstanding information and evidence has been forwarded from the BDC, if there is still insufficient information to make a decision on the customer's HB/CTB claim, the LA will need to contact the customer, rather than Jobcentre Plus, for this missing information. The customer will have been advised at their Interview to send any outstanding evidence that is only required to support their HB/CTB claim direct to the LA. (Please see paragraph 6.45 onwards regarding Verification)

Customer Details

6.12 This section documents the customer's personal and contact details and the answers to many key questions relating to barriers to contact, current education and hospitalisation.

Residence

6.13 Included here are the questions relating to the revised Habitual Residency Test. The LAs can accept the outcome derived by Jobcentre Plus from these answers.

All non-British nationals plus British nationals without a right of abode in the UK are referred for a right to reside decision as well as being asked to bring in their immigration documents where they are non-EEA nationals.

Living and/or Working Abroad

6.14 Customers are asked if they have worked or claimed benefit outside the UK in the last 2 years. If they answer, "Yes" they are then asked for details of the countries in which they have worked or claimed benefit. The series of questions that follow elicit the appropriate information.

6.15 The wording of the question about claiming benefit whilst abroad currently appears on the LAID as "Did you claim benefit from this country while you were there?" The name of the country will have already been established and recorded on the LAID in an earlier question. It is safe to assume that it is the same country as recorded in the above question. If a customer has returned from more than one country, the LAID shows the information by identifying each country separately under a heading "Country 1", "Country 2" etc.

Sponsorship

6.16 Details relating to customers who are or have been supported while living in the UK under a sponsorship agreement are given here. Sponsored immigrants are required to send proof of immigration status confirming date they entered the country and the date the sponsorship undertaking was signed.

Partner Details

6.17 This section documents the partner's personal and contact details and the answers to many key questions relating to barriers to contact, current education and hospitalisation.

6.18 CMS does not support information gathering for customers who have polygamous marriages (i.e. the customer has more than one partner). If a customer is identified as having more than one partner the CS Agent will issue clerical claim forms.

Children Details

6.19 Details of all dependent children under the age of 20 living with the customer are captured here including details of the relationship of each child to the customer and partner. Also shown is the amount of time a child at boarding school spends at home, details of who is claiming Child Benefit in respect of each child and details of their care provider (where appropriate).

Other People in Household

6.20 The income of any non-dependant will be given as a gross amount. If the non-dependant has more than one source of income the amount and source of each will be given. Where there is more than one non-dependant the income of each will be given separately.

6.21 CMS users ask whether any other people in the household have a mental impairment, but this question is only asked of non-dependants. Jobcentre Plus do not establish if the customer and/or their partner are severely mentally impaired. If the LA consider this may be the case they should make further enquiries. If there is a severely mentally impaired adult living in the household then the customer claiming CTB may be entitled to a discount or an exemption in their Council Tax liability.

Customer's/Partner's Work Details

6.22 Earnings will be given as net amounts and will state whether payment is received as cash, cheque or via direct debit straight to a bank account or building society. The amount and type of any deductions (except for tax and NI) will be shown on the LAID in the form of a 2-column grid.

6.23 If the customer is working the sub-headings 'Job 1', 'Job 2' etc. will appear under the main section heading. This is to facilitate information being provided where the customer has more than one job. However, the sub-heading 'Job 1' will appear even if the customer has only one job. If there are no further sub-headings ('Job 2' etc.) this means that the customer has only one job. This applies equally to any partner who is working.

6.24 All customers of working age are asked if they are in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, this is displayed in this section of the LAID.

Self-employed

6.25 The LAID will contain information about the customer’s and/or partner’s self-employment. However, if the primary benefit does not provide a ‘passport’ to HB/CTB, the LA will need to ask the customer to provide proof of income and expenditure from self-employment if these details are needed to calculate HB/CTB e.g. where the primary benefit is IB or JSA[C].

Voluntary/Unpaid Work

6.26 If the customer or partner has any voluntary or unpaid work the customer will be asked a number of questions about any expenses/payments made in connection with this work. If such payments are made details of the type and amount of payment will be provided on the LAID.

Customer’s Education

6.27 Additional details of the customer’s attendance at a school or college will be shown when they have stated that they are on a registered course of study. This includes information relating to the establishment, course name and course dates. However Jobcentre Plus will not gather information about whether any of the customer’s income was taken into account when calculating their grant. LAs should therefore consider collecting this additional information where the customer has claimed IB only or JSA[C] only, or where the customer’s claim for IS/JSA[IB] has not been successful.

Receiving Other Benefit

6.28 The customer is asked whether they, any partner, or any children receive any other benefits or help with mobility. If any benefits are in payment, details of the type of benefit(s) and the person receiving payment will be shown in table format. CMS users will also have checked for other benefits using CIS. The ‘Verification Details’ section will show the amount, frequency of payment, payee and verification source. If the customer, partner or children receive no benefits, the word “no” will be displayed against the person’s name.

6.29 If the customer, partner and/or children are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) the CS Agent will establish which components (care and/or mobility) are in payment and the answer that the customer provides, will determine what information is recorded on CMS and subsequently output on the LAID.

Other Income

6.30 Local Authorities need to gather further information where there is any other money coming into the household for the customer and/or partner and/or children, to make an accurate assessment of the entitlement to benefits.

6.31 For example the customer is asked, “Does anyone owe you, your partner or your children any money?” If the customer answers “yes” to this question further information will be shown in a table format. The first column of the table is headed “Owed To” and will show the person to whom the money is owed. Other details include “How the money is paid”, “When the payments commenced” and “When the income is likely to increase”.

Capital

6.32 Details of the type and amount of all the capital/savings owned by the customer/partner/children will be recorded against the first question in this section (apart from shares, saving certificates and land/property which are given later). Information will be displayed in table format showing the type and amount of capital and who owns it. Currently capital under £6000 no longer needs to be, nor will be verified.

6.33 CMS does not have the facility to record a negative balance for a specific bank account. Also CMS does not have the facility to record capital held, or payments made, in a foreign currency. In such cases the CS Agent will record the details as a case note. The customer will be asked to supply proof of income or capital, which will be verified, converted into a sterling figure and entered onto CMS by the FA. The amount held/paid in the foreign currency will be recorded in the case notes on CMS and a new Customer Statement will be printed for the customer to check and sign. This information will then be shown in the LAID case notes. The LAID will give the amount in sterling and the LAID’s case notes section will give the amount in the currency in which it is held or paid. Details of any other capital or income held by, or paid to, the customer in sterling will be recorded as normal.

Property or Land

6.34 If the customer states that they have another property which is not their main residential address, but the name of the owner and the address of the property are missing from the LAID; LAs should contact Jobcentre Plus or the customer for the missing information.

Housing

6.35 Information about the property that the customer is claiming HB/CTB for is contained in this section.

6.36 The customer is asked if they share the rent with anyone else other than their partner. If they answer “Yes” details of the other people are recorded on CMS and will be output on the LAID in a 3-column grid. CMS has the facility to record as many joint tenants as necessary together with the relationships to the customer and/or partner, if appropriate. (See Appendix A for the layout of the Housing and Landlord Details sections).

Landlord Details

6.37 Name, address and contact details for both the landlord and their agent are given here where appropriate. Where there is a relationship between the customer, partner or their children and the landlord, their agent or their partners, this will be recorded here.

Getting or Claimed HB/CTB

6.38 This section displays details of previous claims to HB/CTB that the customer and partner have made. The details include previous names and addresses used for these claims and name of the previous LA.

Further Properties

6.39 This section displays details of other properties owned or rented by the customer or their partner, including where appropriate, the reason they do not live at this property.

Method of Payment

6.40 The first two questions in this section of the LAID shows:

- who the customer wants their HB to be paid to,
- how they want to be paid, and
- details of the relevant bank account.

6.41 The CS Agent is able to record different Bank and/or Building Society accounts on CMS for the payment of individual benefits. This means that if the customer wishes to have their HB paid by ACT into a different Bank or Building Society than where they want their primary benefit paying into, the details for the payment of HB will be output on the LAID. If only one account has been recorded, then this account will be presented here. Please note that a Post Office Card Account cannot be used for the payment of HB/CTB.

Backdating

6.42 During gather the customer is asked if they want to claim benefit from '***today's date'*** or the Initial Date of Contact if this is earlier. If the customer answers "no", this opens the appropriate backdating questions on CMS and allows the CS Agent to capture the date the customer wants to claim benefit from along with details about why they delayed claiming.

6.43 The initial date of contact will be shown on the first page of the LAID, with the backdating details contained separately within the backdating section. In instances where the customer wants to claim HB/CTB from a different date than that of their primary benefit the date appropriate to the HB/CTB claim will be recorded in the Customer Notes.

Appointees/Potential Appointees

6.44 Where the customer already has an appointee for a Jobcentre Plus administered benefit, or one is appointed as part of the current claim process, details will be shown on the LAID in the section headed 'Appointee Details'. Where a request for appointment is made as part of the current claim process and either Jobcentre Plus staff have not made a decision on the request, or they have made a decision **not** to make an appointment, details of the person requesting the appointment will be given in the section headed 'Potential Appointee Details'. LAs are reminded that all decisions in respect of HB/CTB rest with the LA, not with Jobcentre Plus, including decisions on appointment.

Verification

6.45 The first part of this section the **'Verification Item Details'** contains details of all the evidence the customer has been asked to provide to Jobcentre Plus. The following details will be given:

- the item requiring verification,
- the person the verification item refers to,
- whether the item has been received (see below),
- the date it was received,
- the reason why the customer was unable to provide the required evidence (if applicable),
- the date the item was verified,
- the status of the evidence, [6]
- the 'source' of the verification i.e. the customer, a relative, or the named representative,
- the type of evidence supplied for verification,
- the type of alternative evidence produced for verification,
- whether the evidence has been accepted or not,
- the reason why the evidence supplied by the customer has not been accepted, where applicable,
- any exemption reasons if an item has not been verified but is accepted as such,
- the date the item was returned to the customer,
- the method by which the item was returned to the customer (i.e. by hand, by post etc.).

6.46 The LAID has recently been improved to indicate whether the Verification Item has been 'Seen' or 'Not Seen'. This should be output to the Verification Received field within the Verification Item Details table on the LAID. This field will show "Seen" where the verification items are acceptable and complete. Where these items have not been actioned at all or are not complete or not acceptable the field will show "Not Seen".

6.47 Customers claiming Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit who are renting from a private landlord are now asked to provide proof of their liability to pay rent.

[6] *i.e. whether this was the original document, a photocopy, a photocopy certified as genuine by the authority issuing the original document; or that the evidence has not been seen (in cases where staff have confirmed the facts by telephoning the employer, LA etc.)*

6.48 A new verification item has been added to CMS and this now appears on the LAID as “Proof of liability to pay rent, (e.g. Tenancy Agreement, Rent Book)”.

6.49 The LAID currently gives details of the verification provided in support of a claim for HB/CTB.

6.50 In some LAIDs the words “Landlord Details” appear against the ‘item requiring verification’. This could be misleading, as it does not indicate that Jobcentre Plus have verified the landlord and tenancy information for the purpose of the HB claim. This information is used by Jobcentre Plus only to verify the customer’s address.

6.51 Jobcentre Plus do not verify a customer’s liability to pay rent they simply photocopy the evidence (e.g. Tenancy Agreement) and endorse the copy to confirm they have seen the original and it appears to be genuine.

6.52 <u>The second part of the Verification section</u> the **‘Benefit Verification Details’** section gives details of other benefits paid to the customer/partner/children that have been verified by Jobcentre Plus staff, where applicable. For each benefit details are given of the:

- benefit type,
- payee,
- date that details were verified,
- amount payable, [7]
- whether the benefit recipient has been overpaid or not,
- amount actually paid to the payee after any deductions,
- benefit payment frequency,
- benefit payday,
- period of payment,
- start date of benefit,
- end date of benefit,
- first date of sickness if appropriate.

6.53 Where evidence in support of a primary claim that’s also appropriate to the HB/CTB claim has been accepted and verified by Jobcentre Plus staff, and this is recorded on the LAID, LAs can accept this as being sufficient. Please note: Jobcentre Plus don’t verify information required solely for HB/CTB. This applies to evidence that the customer has been asked to supply and to details of state benefits verified by Jobcentre Plus staff. However, LAs should check the details for any

[7] *The amount that appears in this row is the gross amount of benefit, prior to any deductions being made. This means the amount shown might be different to the amount the customer receives, for example if there are deductions because the customer is repaying an overpayment of benefit.*

inconsistencies and, if appropriate, contact the customer direct for further information and/or evidence.

6.54 LAs are reminded that all decisions in respect of HB/CTB rest with the LA, not with Jobcentre Plus.

6.55 The final part of the Verification section shows where **'Enable Benefit Calculation'** (EBC) has been used.

6.56 Jobcentre staff undertake EBCs when a customer brings in items of evidence to verify and support claims for IS, JSA[C] and JSA[IB]. The EBC records the evidence detail that the customer has provided and uses it to make the relevant benefit calculations. For IB only cases there will not be any EBC pages.

6.57 Staff enter verification details onto CMS and providing all verification items have been received; they can then enable the benefit calculation to take place. For example where the customer has told the CS Agent that they have part time earnings of £30 per week and the customer brings in their 5 wage slips to be verified; an average wage is then calculated. It is this average wage (e.g. £32) as calculated by CMS[8], that is passed to the departmental processing systems. This amount will be entered on CMS and is printed on both the Customer Statement and the LAID under current work details.

6.58 The EBC pages of the LAID will show verification details of the information from each of the wage slips produced, the layout of which is shown in the example LAIDs. These can be found under the link to "CMS training" at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/customer-management-system/>

6.59 The verification information will be repeated for the number of wage slips brought in by the customer. So, if the customer brings in 5 wage slips the job number will show as '1' for each entry but the verification number will number the wage slips consecutively.

Job 1	Verification 1
Job 1	Verification 2 and so on.

6.60 There will only be one set of EBC information as this is the calculation performed to obtain the average wage. This process is repeated for each job the customer/partner may have.

Case Notes

6.61 This section is displayed on the LAID following the Verification and EBC section. Case notes were introduced to remove clerical documentation and to allow anyone with the necessary access to record free text notes relevant to the case, on CMS. Staff will indicate

[8] *Where the earnings are not suitable for averaging, jobcentre staff are responsible for calculating the average amount and inputting it into CMS.*

against the note to whom the details can be disclosed i.e. Jobcentre Plus, Local Authority or both. If either Local Authority or both is selected then the information staff have entered will be output to the LAID. A warning should have been entered in Notes to state where the HBEC and copies of verification items have been sent across to the LAs.

Sections 1(1A) and 1(1B) of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1992

6.62 The penultimate section of the LAID provides information on whether Jobcentre Plus staff are satisfied that the requirements of Sections 1(1A) and 1(1B) of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1992 (often referred to as ‘Section 19’) have been met in relation to both the customer and partner. See the “Regulations” section of this Guide for more information.

Print Log

6.63 The final section of the LAID provides details of the documentation issued to the customer including the date and time the documents were printed.

7 Escalation Procedures

Working with Jobcentre Plus

7.1 This guide focuses on the technical and procedural aspects of CMS. However, effective ongoing liaison with Jobcentre Plus will enhance the positive aspects of the system and will form a structured forum for the resolution of any issues arising.

7.2 Any liaison with Jobcentre Plus should recognise that issues can originate in any of the business operational areas. Liaison forums should therefore be representative of these areas.

7.3 For details of the "Jobcentre Plus & Local Authorities Partnership Agreement for Benefit Administration, Security & Fraud" please use the link <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/partnership-agreement.pdf>.

7.4 The link to the current version (for April 2008 to March 2011) can also be found at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/la-consultation-groups/>

District and Regional Operational Liaison

7.5 Jobcentre Plus External Relations Managers (ERMs) are responsible for the overall management of the local relationship with LAs on benefit and fraud issues. Effective operational level contact is achieved through a strategic framework geared towards avoiding and resolving issues. The ERMs are based both at a district and regional level and can help set up local liaison, if none exists, or bolster arrangements where existing liaison routes are proving ineffective.

Day-to-day Operational Liaison

7.6 Day-to-day operational contact from the LA is expected to be with your associated local jobcentre and/or BDC. HBSD recommends that at an operational level, contacts be established at each jobcentre and BDC associated to your office. It is suggested that the person best placed to fulfil the role of operational level contact at the jobcentre is the FA Manager (FAM). Whilst the best person at the BDC would be the processing team leader dealing with new claims. This level of liaison is usually able to address case specific issues.

7.7 Liaison will need to consider a wide range of issues, including:

- local working practices,
- performance standards and monitoring,
- issue logging, resolution and/or escalation,
- standard communication routes e.g. notification of contingency arrangements to be activated in the event of Jobcentre Plus operating CMS in a non-standard way,

- specific named operational contacts (and contact numbers) at each site,
- transfer arrangements for clerical CMS documentation from the jobcentre/BDC to the LA (in particular for Nationally Sensitive Record cases).

7.8 Operational management of the CMS process should be delivered in line with the nationally agreed Local Authority and Jobcentre Plus partnership agreement. Local procedures should be agreed to meet specific local requirements and to comply with effective partnership working. Agreements should be negotiated at the lowest operational level and, where appropriate, should be agreed through Joint Board arrangements.

7.9 Each operational area of Jobcentre Plus uses a detailed standard process referred to as the Standard Operating Model (SOM) to process claims. Jobcentre Plus is resourced to meet the component parts of this process. It may mean that, in some instances, Jobcentre Plus cannot accommodate some local working practices. Jobcentre Plus continuously examines ways to improve their operating model and often run pilots to test new methods of working which can adjust processes. If appropriate the LAs affected will be contacted and the adjustments and impacts explained.

7.10 It is accepted that the needs of LAs may differ; therefore no attempt has been made in this guidance to give prescriptive advice on specific issue resolution. Each LA should, in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus operate its own agreed framework for the management of claims made on CMS. This framework should be included as part of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and reviewed at regular intervals. The SLA will provide operational level detail of agreements between the LAs and Jobcentre Plus at a local level. It may also be useful to refer to the broader Partnership Agreement document. For details of the "Jobcentre Plus & Local Authorities Partnership Agreement for Benefit Administration, Security & Fraud" please use the link <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/partnership-agreement.pdf>.

7.11 The link to the current version (for April 2008 to March 2011) can also be found at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/la-consultation-groups/>

7.12 It is recommended that the escalation of issues should follow the route from informal operational contact and liaison meetings, to the district ERM, then the regional ERM and finally to the central HBSD team, who can be contacted using this email address: hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk (Please note: HBSD do not deal with individual claims to benefit therefore this email address is not appropriate for specific benefit enquiries. We regret that any such correspondence will not be answered).

Disruptions to the Operation of CMS

7.13 If CMS is unavailable, Jobcentre Plus has set procedures to follow depending on the amount of time that the disruption is expected to last. Should CMS become unavailable, different customers will be at different stages in the claim process. Detailed below are the actions that will be taken depending on where the customer is in the process and how long CMS is likely to be unavailable for.

7.14 If CMS is unavailable for an hour it is not reasonable to expect customers to wait, so CMS Contingency Procedures will be invoked.

7.15 The Contact Centre Manager and Jobcentre Delivery Manager would normally escalate the issue to Jobcentre Plus District/Operations Managers who then ensure their own Jobcentres, BDCs and Local Authorities are informed. LA staff should be contacted by telephone within one hour of contingency being invoked and appropriate liaison will have had to take place beforehand to ensure this target can be met in relation to local authorities.

7.16 LA staff should also be given some indication as to when the incident is likely to be resolved. Jobcentre Plus guidance makes it clear that it is vital that communication between all parties, including LAs, is maintained throughout the period of Contingency.

7.17 As soon as the decision to resume CMS operation has been made, Jobcentre Plus staff will be advised to stop following the CMS Contingency Procedures as soon as possible. However outstanding clerical cases will continue to be processed under the CMS Contingency Procedures until cleared.

Customer at Contact Centre Stage/The Clerical Process

7.18 Where contact is received from the customer when CMS is not available and a decision has been made to implement ‘Contingency’ then the appropriate clerical claim forms will be issued including where appropriate an HCTB1.

7.19 Once the CMS Contingency Procedures have been invoked and there is a need to follow the clerical process, all clerical claim forms issued will be marked ‘CMS Contingency’ and date stamped so LAs will be aware as to why a clerical form has been issued.

7.20 The customer will be advised that they should return the HCTB1 claim form direct to their local authority. Where an HCTB1 is brought in to Jobcentre Plus, the customer will be advised to send it to the Local Authority. Where an HCTB1 is posted in to Jobcentre Plus, staff will ensure the claim form is passed immediately to the Local Authority.

Customer at Jobcentre Stage

7.21 When the customer attends the jobcentre, the staff would normally add any missing information, amend any incorrect information and record any verification seen on CMS. They would then print off the Customer Statement for the customer to sign.

7.22 However if CMS is expected to be unavailable for a lengthy period and staff are unable to access or print off the Customer Statement, they will complete clerical claim forms, where appropriate an HCTB1 will be issued. The HCTB1 will be forwarded to the LA under normal procedures. Any clerical claim forms issued during contingency are annotated with 'CMS Contingency' and the initial date of contact.

Recovery procedures

7.23 When CMS becomes available, normal procedures should resume in Jobcentre Plus as soon as possible; however, customers are likely to continue to attend with clerical claim forms. These will be accepted and customers will not be expected to go through the CMS process.

7.24 Where LAs continue to receive HCTB1s from Jobcentre Plus they should escalate the issue to their local Jobcentre Plus liaison point where the manager will take action as outlined within the CMS Business Continuity Framework.

7.25 Where the LA receives a claim for HB/CTB direct from the customer, in advance of receiving the LAID, you should ask the customer to provide any information and evidence that will not be collected by Jobcentre Plus. **However, we recommend that you do not ask the customer to provide information or evidence that you know will be collected by Jobcentre Plus unless the claim is urgent**.

The LA-Support Team

7.26 The LA Support Team (LA-ST) are the principal point of contact for LAs on all aspects of CIS and DTA support. The team's priority functions are to:

- action reports of faults and data discrepancies, providing clear responses to LAs on their progress,
- provide assurance to DWP that LA staff are using the data on CIS correctly within agreed protocols.

7.27 The LA Support team:

- act as the first point of contact between the LAs and DWP for matters relating to access to LAID forms via the DTA server,
- monitor and report LAID and DTA faults,
- monitor and maintain LA use of ETD and LAID forms, and invokes the contingency plans for both where necessary.

7.28 Where there are discrepancies between the number of LAIDs in the index file and the number extracted by the LA, a query can be made to LA-ST who can compare with the numbers on their summary report.

Where appropriate please contact LA-ST by email:

LA-ST@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

8 The HB/CTB Right Time Performance Indicator

8.1 The right time performance indicator incorporates the time taken to process new claims and changes events for HB/CTB. As a general rule, new claims are measured from the day the claim is received at the LA's designated office until the day that a full decision is made on the claim. The period will therefore include any time taken by the LA to obtain any additional information or evidence needed to support the claim.

8.2 Where a new claim for HB/CTB is made via CMS all information needed in support of that claim will, in the majority of cases, be collected by Jobcentre Plus. However LAs may need to obtain additional information or evidence to support some claims, after allowing a reasonable period of time for the information to arrive.

8.3 The time taken to deal with each stage of the JCP Process supported by CMS from the point of first contact by the customer through to the LAID being sent to the LA will be captured by CMS.

8.4 However, there may be occasions when a customer makes a claim for HB/CTB direct to the LA instead of, or in addition to, making a claim via Jobcentre Plus. **In these circumstances measurement for the right time performance indicator must be calculated from the earlier of the following dates:**

- the date the claim is received at the LA's designated office,
- the date that the LAID is received at the LA's designated office.

8.5 Some LAs have designated their local Jobcentre Plus office for the purpose of receiving claims for HB and CTB. In such cases the number of days taken to process a new claim for HB/CTB should start on the day that the Customer Statement is received at the Jobcentre, not the date that the LA receives the LAID. This is because this is the date of receipt of the HB/CTB claim at the designated office.

For further information on performance indicators please contact CAXTONHOUSE.PERFORMANCE-FRAMEWORK@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK.

9 Storage and Retrieval of the Customer Statement

9.1 Jobcentre Plus will retain the signed Customer Statement. The customer statement will be transferred to a remote storage facility where it, and any supporting documentation, will be retained for a period of six years from the date of claim or 14 months after the Jobcentre Plus claim ends, whichever is the later.

9.2 LAs will be able to obtain either extracts of the original Customer Statement, a photocopy or the original Customer Statement from Jobcentre Plus. This might be, for example, if you are investigating an allegation of fraud. It is not anticipated that LAs will, as a matter of course, need either the original Customer Statement or a photocopy.

9.3 LAs should make any request for a Customer Statement to their associated BDC, even if the Customer Statement is likely to be in remote storage. You should make local arrangements for requesting, receiving, and returning documents.

9.4 Where the LA request extracts of the Customer Statement, the extracts should be information relating specifically to the HB/CTB claim. Where the LA requests the full Customer Statement (original or photocopy) the LA should give reasons as to why the document is required in its original format rather than simply being those areas relevant to the HB/CTB claim.

9.5 Where the LA requests a Customer Statement (extracts, original or photocopy) Jobcentre Plus should request the statement from remote storage and Jobcentre Plus should receive this within 2 working days of making the request. The Jobcentre Plus office should then ensure it is forwarded to the LA within a reasonable time as agreed locally.

10 Regulations

10.1 Several HB/CTB Regulations ensure that the JCP process supported by CMS is properly supported by legislation in the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 (HBR) and The Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006 (CTBR).

10.2 These regulations allow DWP staff to carry out LA functions in terms of the collection, holding, and verification of information needed **solely** by LAs for the administration of HB and CTB. They also permit, and in some cases require, the passing on of that information to LAs.

10.3 **Regulations 108 to 112 HBR** and **Regulations 91 to 95 CTBR** mean that DWP staff:

- may collect information relating to HB and CTB (for example, during the initial Interview with the CS Agent),
- may record and hold such information,
- must, once the information has been collected, forward a copy of such information to LAs or bodies acting on behalf of LAs, e.g. when HB/CTB functions are contracted out,
- may retain such information after it has been transferred to a LA (this allows DWP to retain the Customer Statement on which all details are recorded),
- must, under certain circumstances, pass to LAs information that is not required in the administration of HB/CTB. This applies when DWP holds HB/CTB information on a single document containing other social security information and the LA requires sight of that original document (for example, when the LA needs the Customer Statement as evidence in an appeal or a fraud prosecution).

10.4 **Regulation 83 HBR** and **69 CTBR** mean that customers who are claiming IS/JSA/IB can send or deliver a claim to HB/CTB to a DWP office and where a HB/CTB claim is made via CMS combined with IS, JSA or IB, LAs would have to treat the receipt of ‘relevant information’ from the DWP as receipt of a claim.

10.5 This means that under CMS, Jobcentre Plus can retain the HB claim and instead provide the LA with ‘relevant information’ **-** in other words, the LAID, to enable the LA to assess entitlement to HB and CTB.

10.6 To protect the customer’s date of claim for HB/CTB, these regulations also provide that:

- where a customer makes a claim to HB/CTB on the same claim form as a claim for a contributory benefit, (i.e. a claim to IB (repeat claims only) or JSA[C] on a customer statement), the date of claim for HB/CTB will be the date of first contact with the customer, providing that the Customer Statement is received at the DWP office within a month of that contact or such longer period as the LA considers reasonable,

- if the customer originally makes a claim for IS, JSA[IB] or ESA[IR] and the claim is subsequently unsuccessful, the date of claim for HB/CTB becomes the date of first contact with the customer, again, providing the Customer Statement is received at the DWP office within a month of that contact or such longer period as the LA considers reasonable,
- where a claim is made at the same time as, or within a month of a claim to IS, JSA[IB] or ESA[IR] which is awarded, the date of claim for HB/CTB will be the same as the first day of entitlement for IS/JSA[IB]/ESA[IR].

10.7 Amendment regulations came into force on 22 December 2008 to support the IOW processes which have now been rolled out nationally.

10.8 **Regulation 83** has been amended so that:

- when a claim for HB is made through DWP, the Department can request that the customer provides the LA with the necessary information to properly complete the claim, and
- if the information is received by the LA within a month of that request, or a longer period if the LA considers it reasonable, the claim can be treated as validly made.

10.9 **Regulation 86** has been amended so that:

- when a customer who receives JSA or IS notifies DWP of a change of circumstances which involves starting work, the Department can request that the customer supplies the LA with information and evidence that the LA will need to determine ongoing entitlement to HB.

10.10 **Regulation 88** has been amended to:

- allow a customer who is receiving JSA or IS to report to DWP that they, or their partner, has started work when a telephone number is supplied for that purpose,
- remove the onus on the customer to report to the LA that their JSA or IS has ceased in these circumstances.

Sections 1(1A) and 1(1B) of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1992

10.11 Jobcentre Plus staff will carry out checks to confirm whether or not the customer has satisfied the requirements of Sections 1(1A) and 1(1B) of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1992 (commonly referred to as Section 19 requirements, after the Section 19 of the Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997 which inserted the provision) for the purpose of the primary benefit claim(s). The same checks will be carried out for any partner.

10.12 Staff will record on CMS whether or not they are satisfied that S19 requirements have been met in respect of the customer and any partner. This information will be shown on the LAID.

10.13 Where it is indicated that the customer and any partner have satisfied the requirements of Section 19 in respect of the primary benefit claim, LAs can choose to accept the Department's verification of the customer's NINo and identity as sufficient for HB/CTB purposes. The evidence an LA is prepared to accept is a matter for the LAs and they will need to consider each case on an individual basis.

10.14 Where it is indicated that the customer and any partner have not satisfied the requirements of S19 in respect of the primary benefit claim(s), LAs must consider whether they wish to contact the customer for more information and evidence or whether they have sufficient information and evidence to make a decision on the claim. There will also be Section 19 checks in respect of the customer's partner.

10.15 For further information please email the following address: - hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk (Please note: HBSD do not deal with individual claims to benefit therefore this email address is not appropriate for specific benefit enquiries. We regret that any such correspondence will not be answered.)

11 Overpayments

11.1 Any overpayment that has been caused by a mistake made by Jobcentre Plus can be classified as a Departmental official error, for example if they have input incorrect amounts of income or savings.
If the customer has provided incorrect information or evidence and Jobcentre Plus have not identified it during the verification process, the overpayment would be classified as customer error or even Fraud in certain circumstances.
This is because the customer has contributed to the mistake that has caused the overpayment.

11.2 For further guidance on the causes and classification of overpayments see the HB/CTB Overpayment Guide, Classification and Recoverability and the HB/CTB Subsidy Guide, Section 4.

11.3 For further guidance on the causes and classification of overpayments see: HB/CTB Overpayment Guide which can be found on the DWP web-site at:
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/op-guide-amd2.pdf>.

Appendix A (extracted from the CMS Release 11 LAID template)

Housing Details

Do you and / or your partner pay rent for or own the place where you are living?
Is it a co-ownership or shared ownership scheme?
What are your living arrangements?
Are you liable for paying the rent on the whole property?
Are you liable for paying the mortgage?
What is the name of the person who is liable for paying the rent and/or mortgage?

Name	**Relationship to Customer**	**Liable For**
Title Forename Surname		

Have you and / or your partner moved house in the last 12 months?
What was the previous address or addresses and who do they relate to?

Person Moved	**Previous Addresses**
	Address Line 1 Address Line 2 Address Line 3 Address Line 4 Address Line 5 Postcode Status

Who receives the council tax bill for your home?

Who do you and / or your partner rent from?
Does anyone else share the rent with you (and your partner)? Yes/No
What are their names and relationship to you (and your partner)?

Name	Relationship to Customer	Relationship to Partner

Which council do you and / or your partner rent this property from?
What type of tenancy do you and / or your partner have

for this property?
When did you move in to this address?
When did your partner move in to this address?
When did you and / or your partner become liable for paying rent?
How much rent do you and / or your partner pay?
How often is this paid?
When is the rent next due to change? — Date OR Don't Know

Has the rent been registered as a fair rent by the rent officer?
How many weeks (if any) are there when the rent does not have to be paid?
Are you / your partner behind with the rent? — Yes/No, Number + Frequency

Is anything else included in with the rent?

Rent Item	**Amount**	**Details**

What sort of property do you live in?
Is your home: furnished, partly furnished, minimally furnished, unfurnished?
Does your home have central heating?
Does your home have a garden?
How many floors are there and which floor(s) do you live on?

Number Of Floors	**Floor Number(s) Lived On**

Do you occupy all the building?
Whereabouts in the building do you live?
How many of the following do you have?

Type of Room	**Whole Property**	**Number of Exclusive Use Rooms**	**Number Shared Rooms**
Living Rooms			
Bedsitting Rooms			
Bedrooms			
Bathrooms			
Toilets			
Kitchens			
Other Rooms			

Who is responsible for decorating the home?
Are service charges paid for this property?
How often is it paid?

What does this payment cover?

Service Type	Amount

Landlord Details

Landlord’s details
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Post code
Phone number
Does the landlord have an agent?
Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Postcode
Phone Number
Are you, your partner or any of the children related to the landlord or their partner or are you or your partner, the former partner of the landlord or the landlord’s partner?

Name	Relationship (to Landlord)

Name	Relationship (to Landlord’s Partner)

Are you, your partner or any of the children related to the landlord’s agent or their partner or are you or your partner, the former partner of the landlord's agent or the landlord’s agent’s partner?

Name	Relationship (to Landlord’s Agent)

Name	Relationship (to Landlord’s Agent’s Partner)

Getting or Claimed HB

Have you ever claimed or received Housing Benefit?
When did you claim?
Was this for a different address?
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Postcode
Which LA did you claim from?
Have LA been told you've moved?
Application in any other name?

Partner Getting or Claimed HB

Has your partner ever claimed or received Housing Benefit?
When did your partner claim?
Was this for a different address?
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Postcode
Which LA did your partner claim from?
Have LA been told your partner has moved?
Application in any other name?

Getting or Claimed CTB

Have you ever claimed or received Council Tax Benefit before?
When did you claim?
Was this for a different address?
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Postcode
Which LA did you claim from?
Have LA been told you've moved?
Application made in different name?

Partner Getting or Claimed CTB

Has your partner ever claimed or received Council Tax
Benefit before?
When did your partner claim?
Was this for a different address?
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Postcode
Which LA did your partner claim from?
Have LA been told your partner has moved?
Application made in different name?