

October 2006

moredirect

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DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Welcome to this edition of **moredirect**.

When you read this, Parliament will be returning from summer recess, ready to continue its drive to reduce benefit fraud and error. Clearer processes, improved training, analysis and monitoring – and working together, will go a long way to achieving this.

This edition focuses on the Department’s work, particularly in the Housing Benefit area, to further improve prevention and detection of fraud and error.

Our cover story features the Financial Investigation Unit and the use of financial sanctions on defendants who abuse the benefit system. **Moredirect** also looks at a fraud awareness training package, and improvements in fraud and error through successful engagement and a clear counter-fraud strategy – as illustrated by Derby City Council.

Finally, read about one of your own who has experienced efforts to combat Housing Benefit fraud from both sides of the fence.

Please let us know what you think about **moredirect** – your comments and ideas are always welcome.



Wendy Fisher,
Wendy.Fisher@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Thank you for the opportunity of introducing this edition of **moredirect** as it enters its third year. We are also entering an exciting but challenging time ahead as we take forward the welfare reform agenda.



The Government has ambitions to eradicate child poverty, to increase employment rates to 80%, and to enhance our support for pensioners. I believe that Housing Benefit plays a key role in helping us achieve our ambitions. I think the changes that have already been made, coupled with our plans for the future, will turn Housing Benefit into a key enabler rather than an obstacle to employment.

We have come a long way in improving the structure and delivery of Housing Benefit but there is obviously a lot more that we need

to do. Whilst I am reassured by the latest estimates which show that level of Housing Benefit fraud is reducing and the levels for official error remain unchanged, I am concerned about the further increase in customer error. That is why my Department is developing a strategy to tackle both customer and official error, not just in Housing Benefit but across all benefits. So I am pleased that this issue of the magazine is focusing on this.

Because Housing Benefit is delivered by you – local authorities – it is one area where genuine partnership working between us is vital. I am committed to that partnership and I look forward to further positive outcomes from it.

John Hutton
Secretary of State, Department
for Work and Pensions

News

Fraud and error figures

The latest Housing Benefit fraud and error figures have been published, showing mixed results.

For the period up to September 2005 we are seeing the same basic trend as before: a decrease in fraud, stable official error and increased working age customer error. This is set against a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target of reducing working age fraud and error by 25%. This reduction in fraud is very encouraging and highlights the real improvements local authorities have made.

One common customer error contributing to the increase has been people failing to disclose earnings from undeclared employment and income from new tax credits or, in some cases, both. Another cause for concern is the loss resulting from customers failing to report an increase in their declared earnings. We have developed a suite of initiatives, such as targeted data-matches, to identify and correct the relevant working age cases. Local authorities will be asked to focus on this work during the rest of 2006–07, and you should have received guidance on what this will involve by the time you read this.

In the longer term, the Department is developing a comprehensive strategy to address error across all DWP benefits and the Department plans to publish the strategy towards the end of 2006. We have been talking to your Associations about the impact on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and we hope to run workshops to advise you in the autumn.

Putting paid to fraud and error

From March 2006, we have extended the information on the DWP website to include councils' performance on interventions and data matching. Information has been available on security performance, such as prosecutions, since 2004. So councils can now compare performance across the full range of data.

The data

To ensure that councils have systems to detect and reduce fraud and error, and that they are taking action against fraudsters, we publish quarterly performance data on the DWP website. Local authorities can now use this data to compare their performance with others.

Working together

The role of the Local Authority Performance Division includes monitoring the data and working with councils where there are concerns about performance. Our team has been working with authorities on claims administration performance for a few years, during this time councils have achieved significant improvements. For example, the average time to process new claims has improved from 56 days in 2002–03 to 36 in 2005–06.

Last year, the team extended performance improvement work to include fraud and error. Members of the team, who have fraud operations experience, are working with councils and the Performance Standards Team to develop more improvements. The Performance Standards Team aims to give councils a clear steer on what we

expect from them if they are to succeed in tackling fraud and error.

Clive Singleton, LAPD Team Leader said, "Our aim is to raise the profile of fraud and error work and drive up performance across the board. We achieve this by working with councils to offer advice and help identify support for the work they do."

He added, "We also contact councils that have failed to submit all the necessary data. We feel the monitoring process can only be fully effective if all LAs submit their returns on time.

"In the last nine months, we have seen a remarkable improvement in performance on sanctions. All of

the councils we engaged with initially have either improved or submitted plans for improvement. The focus is now moving to interventions and some more detailed analysis of data matching work."

A success story

Derby City Council transformed its benefit service in response to a critical BFI report published in May 2002, and in 2005–06 it was one of the best performing councils for interventions and counter-fraud activity.

Don McLure, Assistant Director, Revenues and Benefits since May 2002, introduced a range of improvements including the development of a counter-fraud strategy. Implementing this strategy has led to significant improvements in the council's overall performance. All its performance indicators are showing continuous improvements. The authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) score for benefits is 3 (good service), and for security, a maximum 4 (excellent).

Derby's counter-fraud policy, which contains prosecution and sanctions guidelines, was updated in 2004 to bring it closely in line with DWP policy. This provided greater opportunities for joint

"We have a very clear objective of eliminating deliberate benefit fraud in Derby."

*Don McLure,
Assistant Director,
Revenues and
Benefits*

investigations and sanctions with colleagues in DWP where Derby now has excellent relations.

Derby's benefit service also has a high performing visiting team which carries out intervention visits. The introduction of targeted interventions enabled them to prioritise high risk cases. As a result, they have seen a decrease in the number of fraud referrals. Despite the drop in referrals, Derby has still managed to almost double the

number of sanctions over the last two years following a successful approach to risk-based interventions.

Don said, "Our investigators are all professionally trained and highly proficient. We have a very clear objective of eliminating deliberate benefit fraud in Derby but, in the course of the investigation, they also ensure that our customers are claiming their maximum entitlement to benefits."

Don McLure, Assistant Director, Revenues and Benefits



Focusing on deliberate fraud

To ensure 100% resolution of data matches within the two months target, an Interventions Officer sifts Housing Benefit matching service matches to distinguish between potential fraud cases and claimant error. Derby also operates an electronic risk assessment procedure. Fraud referrals that don't meet the investigation criteria are considered for an intervention visit. That way, resources can be concentrated on deliberate fraud.

The fraud staff's expertise has enabled them to deliver high performance on sanctions. This acts as a strong deterrent to those people tempted to commit benefit fraud. In 2005–06 Derby produced its best ever results including applying 5.11 sanctions per 1,000 caseload.

Don said, "From where we were four years ago, the council's Housing Benefit service has made great strides. This is due to an overall team effort, including clear direction and leadership through our approved strategy – but mainly due to our committed and enthusiastic workforce. However, we are in no way complacent. Our latest challenge is to go on improving while our staff get used to working with our new Capita Academy computer system which went live, on schedule, on 17 July 2006."

Want to know more ?

You can view the information at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/performance.asp



Graham Dove, third from left, with his Adelphi colleagues

A fresh perspective

Graham Dove has been seconded from Bath & North East Somerset Unitary Authority to the Adelphi in London. He works on the Fraud & Error Policy Team, responsible for developing and refining the strategy to reduce fraud and error in HB/CTB. Graham is at present working on strategies to further reduce loss through error.

Graham Dove first became involved with Housing Benefit back in 1984 when he worked for the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames. Later he left London to work for Bath City Council and in July 1987 established one of the first HB fraud teams in the south west of England.

Under local Government reorganisation, Bath City Council became Bath & North East Somerset Unitary Authority and the Revenues and Benefits sections were combined. In 2004, Graham became a Strategic Manager responsible for all areas of risk within the section.

However, on answering an advert in HB Direct, he soon found himself seconded part-time to the Adelphi, and since April 2005, has been seconded on a full-time basis. His role continues until April 2008.

"We already had a good relationship with the Adelphi and I answered the advert because the Department was looking for a senior person to join the Housing Benefit Security Division," said Graham. "Because of my experience, I was asked to look more at the fraud side of things."

Graham's role on secondment from a local authority (LA) includes reflecting the current concerns of the LA community and helping to establish true partnership working between DWP and LAs.

"I bring practical knowledge of how LAs administer HB and am a 'sounding board' and contributor to debates and discussions," he said. "I also translate DWP language into 'LA speak' and assist in making sure individual LA enquiries go to the right person."

"I think it's amazing that people here are able to adapt to change as an almost everyday occurrence if, for example, ministerial priorities change."

Graham had no preconceptions about his new role, but the move from a local authority to a nationally orientated operation did require a culture change.

"It quickly became obvious how many different areas of DWP impact on HB, such as Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service," he said. "I was impressed by the wealth of analysis undertaken and I think it's amazing that people here are able to adapt to change as an almost everyday occurrence if, for example, ministerial priorities change."

Among Graham's roles was attending forums held with LAs around the country, speaking to HB practitioners and seeing the different ways they administer HB. He has recently travelled to locations including the Midlands, Durham, Newport and Plymouth giving presentations featuring the latest Housing Benefit Review figures. "We trialled some ideas about how to combat error and got quite a lot of feedback," he said. "Everyone we spoke to recognised the complexity of the Housing Benefit system but they were equally anxious to improve claimants' reporting of their change of circumstances."

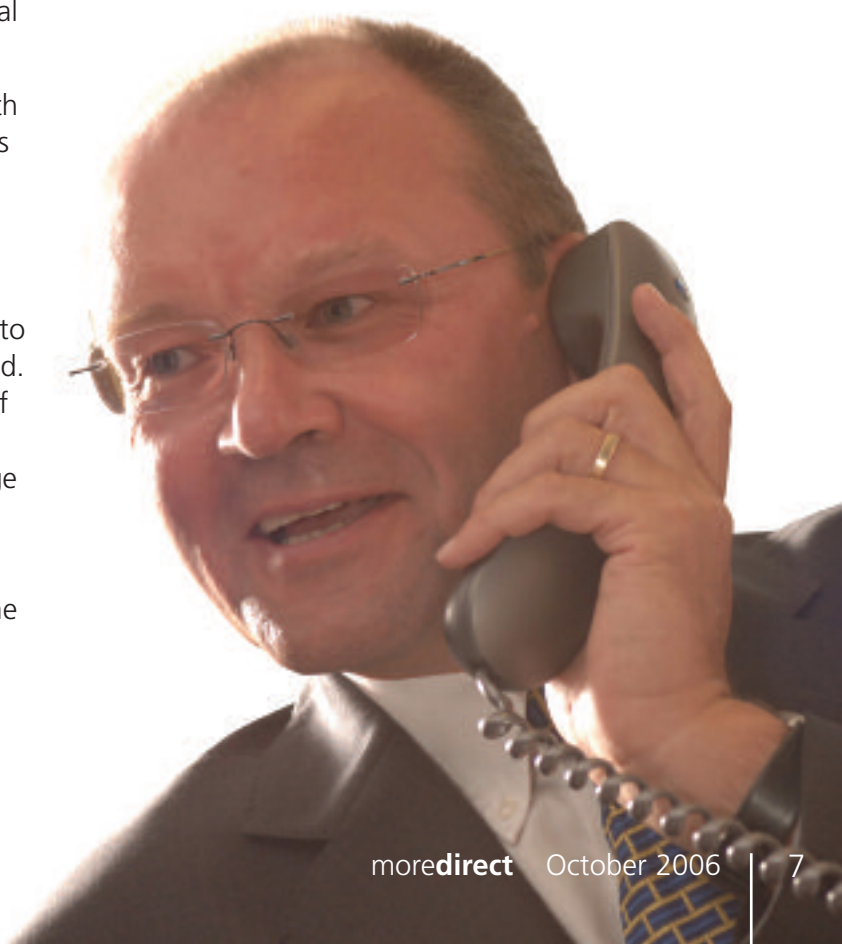
Graham's team is now looking at all the responses and developing them into a strategy document. "The document talks about better use of data matching, identifying training needs, and communication, for example, communicating awareness of error to Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service," he added.

A 'one-size-fits-all' approach for national benefits does not fit with HB, he commented. "There needs to be a much greater awareness within all the benefit agencies of the knock-on effect of error, particularly when 70 per cent of HB claimants are in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Pension Credit," he said.

The opportunity to directly influence policy on HB and have the chance to learn more about how central Government works and its impact on DWP have been highlights for Graham. He has met the HB Minister James Plaskitt, and has prepared briefings for debates in both Houses of Parliament. "Throughout, I have enjoyed the Civil Service culture of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality that is always exhibited," he said.

Are there any disadvantages to his role? "No matter how many friends and colleagues one networks with it is a tough job trying to keep up with all that is going on in LAs," said Graham. "I also live just outside Bath and the travel to and from London can be hard, especially on hot days. Plus, I have to learn a lot of new DWP acronyms!"

He added that he still had plenty to learn and hopefully more to contribute. "I'm immensely grateful for all the understanding and assistance I have received from colleagues at the Adelphi," he said.



Taking the cash out of crime

More**direct** caught up with Amanda Hillman, Senior Investigation Officer in the Financial Investigation Unit, who told us about the Proceeds of Crime Act (PoCA) 2002 and its use in the benefit environment.



What does PoCA do?

Since November 2003 the DWP has been implementing Proceeds of Crime legislation in its fraud and error strategy.

“Currently, the Financial Investigation Unit (FIU), part of Fraud Investigation Service (Organised), has a staff of 26 officers nationally who undertake financial investigations across all benefits,” said Amanda. “This includes local authority Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.”

DWP currently takes on cases where the estimated total over-payment is £17,000 or more or where the case is one of a capital data match (GMS) and all the charges post date 24 March 2003 (the effective date for Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – PoCA). The minimum is set at £5,000.

Where there has been a criminal conviction, PoCA allows for an

additional sanction in the form of a confiscation order to be made against the defendant whether or not they have repaid the over-payment. “It is considered to be part of the Government-wide initiative to take the assets out of crime and reduce harm in the community,” said Amanda.

“Financial Investigators are externally accredited to undertake this task and have far-reaching powers. In appropriate cases, they will seek to recover all the profits



gained by an individual's criminal lifestyle – which are sometimes far in excess of the overpayment of benefit."

She added, "It is a very effective deterrent because it takes the profit and associated status symbols out of crime."

The role of the FIU

The FIU considers every case on its merits. Amanda said, "We look first at the value and tenacity of the fraud: organised frauds are given a high priority as these are committed for the most part by career criminals who have no entitlement to benefits and whose income is derived from illegal activity including attacks on the benefit system."

Equally, collusive landlords and employers would be dealt with robustly because they create the environment for offences to be committed and in most cases the FIU would look to major lifestyle enquiries.

But these are not the only types of cases. Of the 166 cases leading to £6.8m worth of orders in 2005–06 only 10 per cent were made up of these serious cases. The remainder were high and medium value frauds where:

- either the defendant had amassed property and savings and other trappings of wealth
- or they had undeclared assets meaning that they could repay the overpayment in a single order.

How does the Department benefit?

DWP can see clear benefits to having an FIU:

- Confiscation of the profits of crime provides very visible reassurance to the taxpayer that Social Security fraud is unacceptable.
- Debt Management Unit do not have to chase the defendant in an often time-consuming process to get the overpayment repaid, thus reducing administrative costs.
- Wherever possible, compensation orders are sought for the amounts due to the local authority on joint prosecutions, thus ensuring that council taxpayers get their money back.

- Deterring would-be fraudsters reduces fraud and error in the system.

So what can FIU do for local authorities?

If you are working on a joint investigation with DWP Fraud Investigation Service, the FIU will automatically look to get compensation on any cases that are accepted for financial investigation on behalf of the local authority.

You can help us by not seeking recovery until the financial hearing has been completed.

If you use DWP Sol Prosecutions as your prosecutor you can ask the FIU to undertake a financial hearing on your behalf.

If you do not know how to refer to us contact the Referral Management section on 0845 377 7117.

We cannot at this time provide an independent service for local authorities who prosecute their own cases. However, if you want to undertake your own financial investigations we can help by telling you more about the legislation and about cases in your area. We can introduce you to the Asset Recovery Agency – the only source of training for all financial investigators – and we may even be able to provide your trainees with tutors for their accreditation.

Want to know more?

For further information about PoCA 2002 and/or DWP's FIU please contact Amanda Hillman, Unit Fraud Investigator for the FIU
Tel: 0845 377 7004



Learning outside the classroom

The DWP Performance Standards Fund has opened up access to a number of innovative products for local authorities. One such product is the training package 'Focus... on Fraud Awareness'.

This national initiative provides an interactive E-learning tool. It makes the process of delivering quality fraud awareness training to a large number of front-line staff both effective and efficient.

Covering a geographical area larger than Wales, The Highland Council needed to identify an effective alternative to classroom Fraud Awareness training. E-learning was the answer!

The Highland Council then developed this product supported by Meritec Limited, the solutions provider.

As well as covering all topics relating to fraud, the product also allows for some personalisation to reflect local priorities. It also includes details of the DWP website to remind authorities where fraud performance management information on all UK authorities can be easily obtained.

The result is a high quality product that has been very well received both in Highland and the UK.

The Highland's Client and Control Manager Allan Gunn said, "All 110 front-line staff located in 37 service points throughout Highland have completed this course. Management has access to a database that provides a range of information including who has completed the course and the test scores achieved."

More than 270 UK authorities now use this training package and Highland Council and Meritec Limited are keen to encourage even more to get involved. So much so, that in April of this year the DWP extended the funding to allow new users to sign up to the product for free until 31 March 2007.

You will get an opportunity to meet project staff at the IRRV National Conference from 10–13 October and the IRRV Benefits Conference on 6–7 February 2007.

Want to know more?

Meritec Limited is providing support throughout the life of the project. If you would like any information regarding this product, visit the company website at: www.meritec.co.uk/focus or telephone 0845 345 1144.



L-R: Gillian Petrie, Mark Blair, Anne McLean, Jackie Goodey and Allan Gunn

Mission... possible?

A team of brave souls from DWP and Local Authorities (LAs) has accepted a rather daunting mission – addressing the differences in verification regimes between The Pension Service and LAs.

Following a successful joint workshop bringing together representatives from The Pension Service, Housing Benefit policy divisions, BFI and LAs, the verification steering group agreed to focus initially on one main issue – verification of capital for pensioners claiming 'standard' Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.

Currently, local authorities are required to verify all capital (if the customer is not getting Pension Credit), even where it is less than £6,000 and therefore would not generate any tariff income in the HB/CTB assessment.

The Pension Service, however, does not verify capital for Pension Credit customers whose capital is declared as less than £6,000 as it would not affect entitlement. These kinds of discrepancies are confusing for staff and customers, and contribute to both customer and official error.

DWP is carrying out research over the next few months with a small group of LAs to establish the value of verifying capital for pensioners – does it really prevent fraud and error, or does it just consume valuable staff resources, and lengthen and complicate the process for customers?

Working with authorities to gather first-hand data on real cases will provide valuable evidence to help

us decide how to harmonise verification standards for these customers, without introducing more fraud and error into the system.

Melanie Scott, from Southwark Revenues and Benefits Client Unit, is involved in the research. She said, "The many differing rules around two verification schemes can often cause error, delay and confusion for staff within LAs and DWP.

"Yet we still expect our customers to be able to deal with and understand the differences. I believe that working together to make changes will also be a good basis for future partnership working and service delivery."

DWP reports on the outcomes from the research in the autumn. It is confident that this approach to policy-making – working with practitioners in local authorities, and drawing on their invaluable knowledge and expertise – will help achieve common verification standards for pensioners wherever possible.

Melanie added, "Together, we want to develop a scheme that meets our shared aims of delivering an efficient, joined-up, secure benefit service, and a simple and streamlined customer experience."



Keeping it simple – through automation

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) has the lowest take up of all the income-related benefits, particularly amongst pensioners. Because of this, a project was run between February and April this year, at the Glasgow Solution Centre, to develop options for delivering support for Council Tax liability as automatically, simply and securely as possible.

The project identified that better and greater use could be made of information already held across government departments about customers and their financial circumstances. This information could be automatically collected in order to identify potentially entitled non-recipients and create a customer claim profile – with details of household composition, benefits, income and capital.

The claim profile would then be matched against CTB eligibility rules and rejected automatically if these rules were not met.

If, however, the process identified that there might be eligibility to CTB, an electronic notification would be sent to the local authority giving details of the household composition, income and an outline assessment of capital.

How it would work

Local authorities could use this information to assess CTB in the normal way. The customer would

be sent a notification detailing their final Council Tax liability, the amount of Council Tax rebate and details of the information used to calculate their final liability. This is the first point at which the customer would be involved in the process.

There are two possible ways in which this could work:

- **Either** the single notification would require the customer to sign to say that the information used in the CTB award was complete – and that they accept the award.
- **Or** the customer would be required to respond only if the information was incorrect or if they wanted to opt out of the award. If the customer did not respond then the award would be made automatically.

In the meantime, the project also identified that the existing three-page HB/CTB form process for people claiming Pension Credit could be improved.



If The Pension Service asked the additional CTB questions (about children and non-dependants) as part of the Pension Credit application process, all the information required to assess CTB would be gathered at the first point of contact. The information would then be sent directly to the local authority to assess and award CTB. Therefore, the customer would not need to sign a three-page form or complete any additional forms.

Helping pensioners to claim CTB

Ministers have requested that further work is carried out to see what can be done for pensioners in the shorter term.

Following on from the CTB research project, feasibility work will be carried out to look at the shorter term options for automating HB/CTB for pensioners. This will involve:

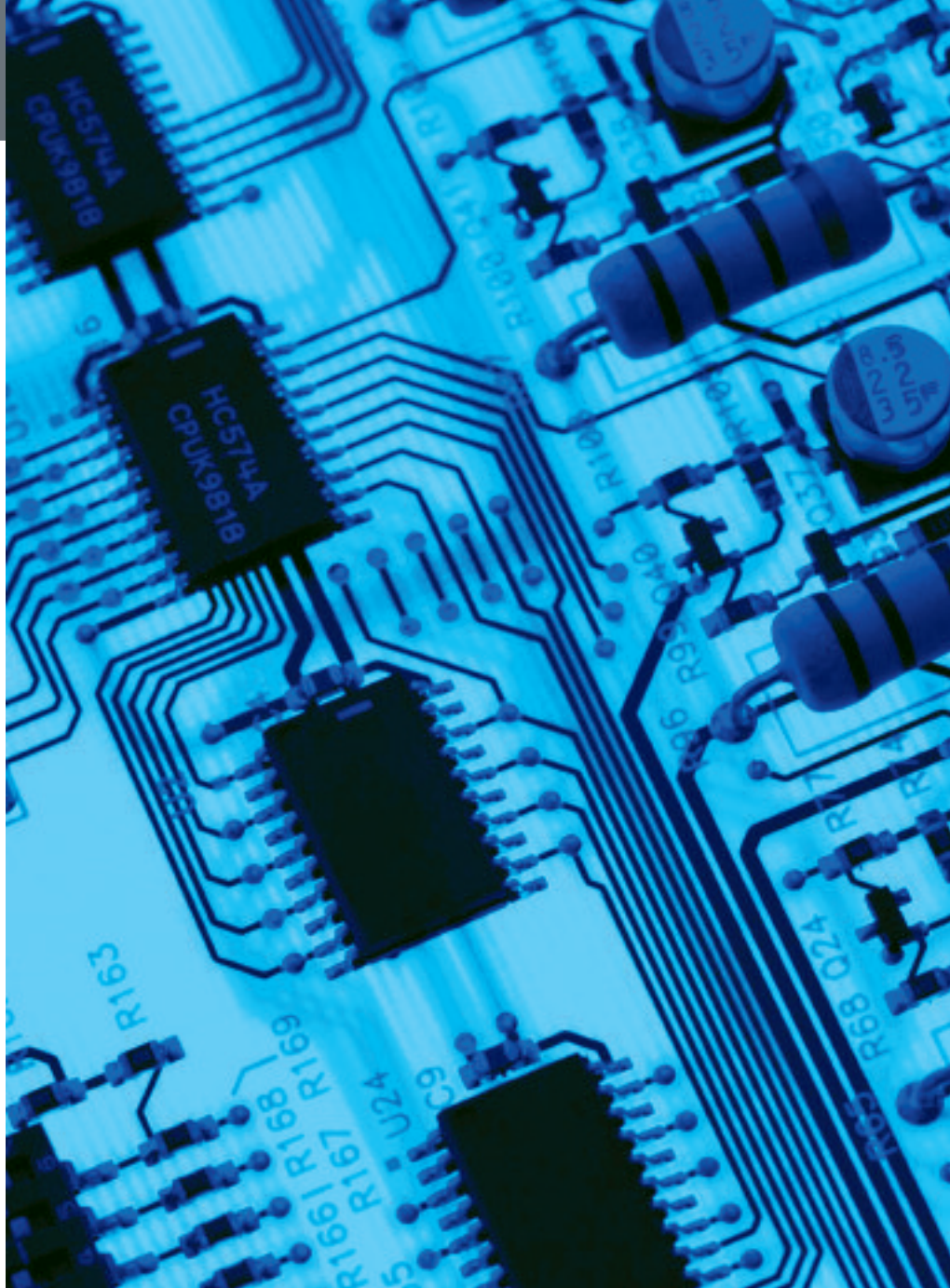
- building on the existing three-page process for Pension Credit customers
- looking at the viability of automating CTB for State Pension customers
- looking at the viability of HB in the automation process
- transferring relevant information direct to the local authority.

Results of the feasibility study will be reported to Ministers in October.

Data warehouse

Also taking place is longer term research on the feasibility of setting up a data warehouse to collect information, and match it against CTB eligibility rules. The aim is that this can be used to identify people who may qualify for CTB.

The Pension Service has been doing some work looking at the possibilities for automating Pension Credit. For example, how data that the Department already holds could be used to identify people who may be entitled to Pension Credit.



Housing Benefit Strategy Division and The Pension Service are working together to look at what data is available and how it can be used to reduce the amount of verification that is needed to support a claim. You can read more about this work on page 11 in this edition of **moredirect**.

We'll be doing some more research to test our assumptions about using existing data to determine how much, if any, verification a customer needs to provide when they claim Pension Credit and HB/CTB whilst

ensuring that there will not be an increase in levels of fraud and error. This will make the application process more streamlined and less onerous for the customer.

We will be keeping the local authority associations fully involved and normal consultation procedures will be followed before any changes are made.

Want to know more?

E-mail Jane Mapp, HBSD at jane.mapp@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Facts and figures – at your fingertips

Readers of more**direct** may not have heard of HoBOD, also known as the Housing Benefit Operational Database, but this is another tool developed by DWP for the benefit of local authorities. HoBOD is a database that contains Management Information Statistics (MIS) returns made by local authorities to DWP and the reported performance.



HoBOD is another step towards ensuring all our information is valid, consistent and up to date. The front page of the database is especially important as it outlines recent upgrades and data warnings. Users should read the data warnings and consider them when interpreting the figures given in any of the tables in HoBOD.

HoBOD, which can be accessed by going to www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hobod website link, was developed to:

- make Housing Benefit administrative data available to local authorities and the public to ensure transparency of authority services

- incorporate Housing Benefit statistics into mainstream publication of benefits administration data by DWP
- feed back information sent to DWP by local authorities and to encourage them to work with DWP to continuously improve the quality of administrative data.

Included in the database are the 19 performance measures from the Performance Standards. These measure performance in claims administration, security and user focus. The revised overpayments indicators have only been in place since April 2005, so this should be taken into account when viewing the data. Information is also provided by the policy teams working on Housing Benefit and the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate.

Within the database you can view information in the form of a number of functions:

- **Pen Picture** provides an overview of the selected local authority.
- **National Picture** gives a selected performance figure for any number of selected local authorities over any number of selected quarters.
- **Self-Assessments** give the figures returned by local authorities for the 2005 Performance Standards.

We are keen to work with you to ensure the validity and consistency of the data submitted. Therefore if you find any inaccuracies or you have any further ideas for the contents of the database please contact us via e-mail at iad.hobod@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

HoBOD was developed to make Housing Benefit administrative data available to local authorities and the public to allow transparency of authority services.

Radical reform rolls forward

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is at the heart of the Government's radical reform of Housing Benefit. On 19 June 2006 the Government published its response to the Welfare Reform Bill consultation.

With regard to LHA the response is as follows:

- The Government is happy to go ahead and implement LHA for private sector tenants. The changes will be those described in the Green Paper.
- Excesses will be capped at £15 per week. (That means a claimant's maximum Housing Benefit will be capped at £15 above their weekly rent.)
- The impact of LHA implementation will be reviewed after two years, when we will consider migrating existing Housing Benefit claimants on to LHA.

Finally, it has been decided not to extend the LHA approach to the social sector at this stage. However, you'll see in the Government's response that we remain committed to finding ways of addressing the high levels of worklessness and financial exclusion in this sector. In particular, we will explore options for gradually encouraging social sector tenants to manage their own rent payments.

As you'll see from the article on page 16 the Welfare Reform Bill was introduced on 24 July. Further details on the Bill and the Green Paper response can be accessed via www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform.

A definitive date for the LHA national roll out is yet to be agreed but it is likely to be in 2008. This may seem a long time off, but to ensure a successful implementation, we have already started planning.

What are we doing in advance of national roll out, includes:

- drafting the regulations that will give details of the scheme
- working with the current LHA authorities to develop and agree a clear, understandable migration strategy and smoothing their move to the new LHA model
- developing support materials such as best practice guidance and considering start-up funding to help all authorities achieve the successful implementation of LHA

- setting up the appropriate project management structures, including a local authority implementation committee, to ensure that LHA implementation is properly planned.

Want to know more?

For further information on LHA, e-mail LHAadvice@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.



New powers under welfare reform

The Welfare Reform Bill had its Second Reading in the House of Commons on 24 July. Measures in the Bill concerning Housing Benefit were discussed.

The Bill includes legislation to roll out Local Housing Allowance (LHA) across the private sector. It also supports our efforts to encourage more social sector tenants to manage their own rent payments.

Additionally, the Bill includes powers that will:

- improve rules for HB/CTB extended payments
- allow piloting of a scheme to reduce the Housing Benefit of those evicted for anti-social behaviour who do not engage in rehabilitation
- widen information-sharing gateways for Housing Benefit (and certain DWP administered benefits) in connection with Supporting People grants
- enable greater sharing and use of benefit information by authorities including, for the first time, English County Councils
- improve the Secretary of State's direction powers to take appropriate action where administration of HB/CTB is unacceptable
- clarify the local authority discretionary scheme in respect of War Pensions and make it easier to include relevant pensions
- allow local authorities to investigate and prosecute fraud against national benefits.

There will be a further debate when the Bill reaches the committee stage, expected to be in the autumn.

The text of the Bill is at: www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform and the debate can be found at: www.publications.parliament.uk.

Want to know more?

If you have questions about the Bill, e-mail john.cummins@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Stand & deliver

The DWP will be exhibiting once again at this year's Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) Annual Conference in Brighton, from 10–13 October.

The Housing Costs Business Stream will be sharing a stand with the Pension Service Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit Liaison Team, who will be promoting the next stage of their transformation plans and enhanced customer experience.

The Welfare Reform Bill will also be nearing Committee stage at the time of the conference so it will be a particularly interesting period for the Department.

A range of DWP officers will be on the stand to answer any questions. They will also be happy to pass on any queries and suggestions to officers who can't attend.

More details on who will be there can be found in the October 'Housing Benefit Direct' newsletter.

If you are going to the conference please do come and see us at our stand – number 27.

Want to know more?

Telephone Mont Goldman on 020 7962 8360 or e-mail mont.goldman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.



more**direct**

Contact details:

Wendy.Fisher@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

DWP Department for Work and Pensions