

# Housing Benefit: Right Benefit Toolkit

Introduction and Overview

**DWP** Department for  
Work and Pensions

# Background

Most Housing Benefit overpayments are caused by customer error. Statistics show that over 80% of incorrectly paid Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit results from changes in customers' circumstances occurring after the start of the claim and not reported to, or picked up by local authorities (LAs).

Many customers find the HB rules too complicated and are confused about what to report, to whom, and when. Social research carried out in 2007/8 indicates that LAs that most effectively reduce the amount of incorrectness in HB/CTB educate their customers about the need to report changes of circumstances in a timely manner. The full report on this research can be found on the DWP website at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2007-2008/rrep457.pdf>

While educating your customers is important, this is only one element of a well designed strategy for improving reporting of changes of circumstances. It cannot tackle all reasons why customers fail to report changes. Engagement and education should form part of a balanced portfolio of activities including use of, for example, data matches, diary dates, reviews and anti-fraud activities. This toolkit is designed to help you plan activities, engage with customers and evaluate the results of what you do.

## Acknowledgements

The toolkit has been developed in consultation with LA representatives, and a number of local authorities that took part in the research, and whose input was invaluable. We offer particular thanks to the following local authorities:

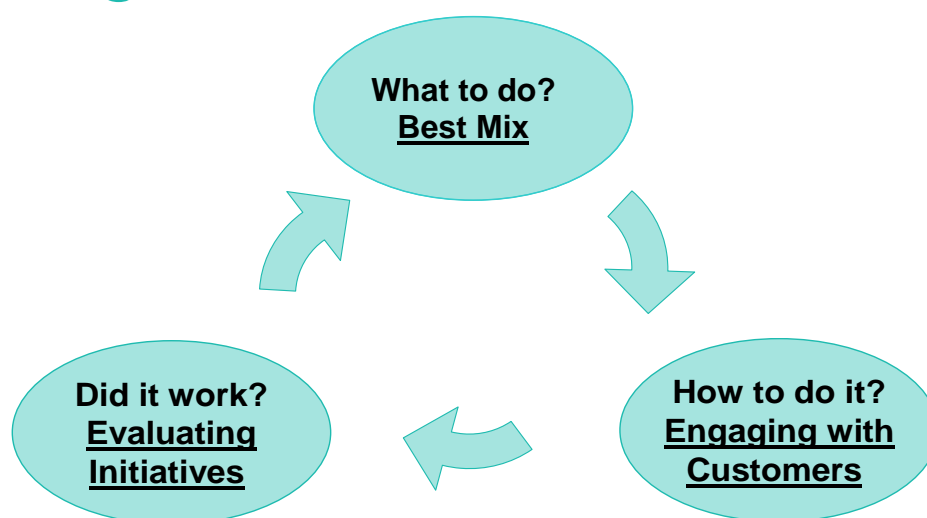
Borough Council of King's Lynn and  
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Leeds City Council North East  
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Renfrewshire Council  
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Wandsworth Council  
Waveney District Council  
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## Contacts

If you have ideas or materials that you would like to contribute to the toolkit, please contact us at: [fraud-error-policy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fraud-error-policy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).

# Using this toolkit



The toolkit contains a number of products to help you plan what to do, implement your plan and then evaluate the success of your initiatives. These products are complementary and can be used in any order. They can be accessed by following the links provided.

[Best Mix](#) will help you to choose the most appropriate mix of activities for your authority to achieve good performance against the Right Benefit Indicator.

[Engaging with Customers](#) will help you to engage with and educate customers. It provides a framework based on good practice, with real examples of approaches used in LAs across the country.

The [Example materials](#) document provides examples from a number of LAs, illustrating good ideas from leaflets, websites and other information sources for customers. It also provides a checklist to help you review your materials and messages.

[Evaluating Initiatives](#) provides guidance on how to evaluate your initiatives to determine how successful they have been, and which activities offer best value for money.

The [Tracking Template](#) can be used to monitor progress, analyse performance to date and plan future work programmes.

Throughout the toolkit we have described examples of activities and approaches used by LAs across the country to improve reporting of changes of circumstances. Because there has been little formal evaluation of these it is not possible to provide definitive guidance on which work best in which circumstances. However the LAs concerned found them useful as they address issues identified by research as important, and are in line with good practice.