

Local Authority Support Team

Customer Service Charter

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Abbreviations

CIS	Customer Information System
CSC	Customer Service Charter
CTB	Council Tax Benefit
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ETD	Electronic Transfer of Data
GG	Government Gateway
HB	Housing Benefit
LAs	Local Authorities
LAST	Local Authority Support Team
POG	Practitioners Operations Group

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Authority Support Team Customer Service Charter (CSC) documents the customer service standards and timescales that the Local Authority Support Team (LAST) will adhere to in performing its role of supporting the use of the Customer Information Service (CIS) and Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) by Local Authorities (LAs).
- 1.2 The CSC also sets out the commitments and responsibilities of LAs to ensure that the support mechanisms established within LAST can work effectively.
- 1.3 The CSC is a live document that is subject to change if necessary. Changes may be required for various reasons for example change in working practice or process alterations. Any proposed change will be agreed with Practitioners Operations Group (POG) members.
- 1.4 The CSC will be reviewed annually by LAST and any proposed changes agreed by POG members.
- 1.5 There will be a process for LAs to comment on the CSC and its value. This is detailed in section 4.

2. How LAST will support LAs

- 2.1 LAST is committed to providing excellent service including communications to all its customers. LAST will ensure its communication:
 - is honest and transparent
 - is issued timeously
 - is up-to-date and accurate
 - invites open dialogue
 - is written in plain english
 - can be identified as from LAST
 - is sent electronically wherever possible.
- 2.2 LAST will provide advice, guidance and support to LAs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (additional detail of the support for CIS to Northern Ireland can be found in the Service Delivery Agreement between LAST and, Northern Ireland Rates Collection Agency and Northern Ireland Housing Executive). The support will cover areas such as:
 - CIS system access
 - operational queries
 - liaising with LA staff on security incidents
 - provision of a contingency service for ETD if this service becomes unavailable

2.3 The table below details the types of communication and the timescales LAST will adhere to in order to continue to support LAs

Type of communication	Sample contents	Regularity
E-mail to Government Gateway (GG) User	CIS availability or loss of service updates re major CIS loss or contingency information.	As and when required.
General Information Bulletins	General Information, website updates etc.	Produced at least monthly Entry by LAST only if required.
Urgent Bulletins	Urgent notification of data problems on CIS and issue of ETD's.	When required detailing information requiring immediate action.
DWP website	Primary source of communication from LAST. Sections on What's new, Frequently Asked Questions, training, guidance and fault database.	Reviewed and updated for relevance and accuracy on a monthly basis.

- 2.4 LAs are responsible for arranging CIS contingency as part of their business continuity plan. (See section 7 of [LA CIS Guidance](#)). In the unlikely event that CIS becomes unavailable for a period of time, as defined in the Service Level Agreements LAs should contact their local Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service counterpart to implement the contingency arrangements. LAST will provide e-mails and urgent bulletins to provide details of faults. LAST will not provide CIS contingency.
- 2.5 LAST will invoke a business continuity plan of its own throughout any loss of CIS service. LAST will provide appropriate updates and continue to support LAs with issues relating to CIS such as management checks.
- 2.6 In the event of prolonged loss of ETD service LAST will try to provide ETD contingency subject to current security guidelines.
- 2.7 LAST will normally respond to forms received from LAs on the following timescales:
- LAST 5a within two working hours
 - LAST 5b within 6 working hours

- LAST 6 within 6 working hours
- LAST 4 within 6 working hours
- IP address change within 6 working hours
- Request for additional users within 6 working hours

All reference to working hours above relate to LAST hours of business:-
Mon – Thurs 08.30 to 16.30 Fri 08.30 to 16.00

- 2.8 LAST will arrange meetings with LAs to discuss the service and other items of mutual interest See Para 4.5.

3. How LAs will assist LAST

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of the LAs to regularly view the [DWP website](#), to ensure they are fully aware of the latest news and information.
- 3.2 LAs to promote the use of the website by their staff.
- 3.3 LAs must ensure that information that is passed to GG users via e-mail is actioned and cascaded urgently to all LA staff affected.
- 3.4 LAs must ensure that staff who receive e-mail correspondence [other than Mgt Checks] from LAST have in place a mechanism for ensuring the information contained is cascaded if that staff member is unavailable. This could be achieved by:
- e-mail redirection
 - delegate access
 - set up of group e-mail for multiple access.
- 3.5 LAs must ensure that assistants do not contact LAST unnecessarily particularly if the information has already been provided to the GG user or is on the web-site.
- 3.6 LAs will also provide the following completed forms in these timescales:
- LAST1 within two working days of receipt of the request from LAST
 - LAST 4 within two working days of the identification of security breach
 - LAST 5a or 5b as soon as incident identified (unless instructed by LAST not to be completed)
 - LAST 6 as soon as a change occurs where the information would be needed by LAST to continue the support for CIS.
- The forms and their uses can be found in the guidance and forms sections of the [website](#).
- 3.7 The LAs will make every effort to minimise disruption to LAST by making use of all available information including, website, guidance, desk aids before contacting LAST.
- 3.8 LAs should inform LAST if they feel LAST are not adhering to the standards explained in this CSC. See section 4 Document review and feedback process.

3.9 LAs will provide suitable representation at customer meetings organized by LAST. See Para 4.5.

4. Document review and feedback process

4.1 This CSC will be reviewed annually by LAST and sent for agreement by POG should changes be necessary.

4.2 LAST encourage feedback from LAs on the suitability of this CSC. In the first instance any issues relating to the content of this document should be directed to the LAST mailbox: LA-ST@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

4.3 All types of communication to support customer service from LAST will detail a feedback route on its content.

4.4 An annual customer service exercise will be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of this CSC.

4.5 Housing Costs Business Stream (HCBS) is developing discussion groups which will give LA representatives the opportunity to meet on a regular basis with LAST and other HCBS teams. These groups will discuss a variety of issues including LAST customer service as well as communication outputs and provide direct feedback opportunities. LAST will use the opportunity to engage with LAs to inform them of developments and progress with CIS and ETD.