

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, The Adelphi, 1 - 11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

HB/CTB G11/2008

9 June 2008

Contact	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none">• technical content of this bulletin, contact details are given at the end of each article• distribution of this bulletin, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: orderline@cds.co.uk• bulletin in general, contact Kath Murphy<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Who should read	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
Action	For information

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Access to Tax Credit Data

- 1 The Housing Benefit Information Flows Programme has been working in partnership with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to provide Local Authority (LA) HB/CTB staff with direct access to Tax Credit data on the Customer Information System (CIS).
- 2 Tax Credit Data will begin to transfer on to CIS from 30 June 2008. However, due to the size of the caseload the transfer will take up to five days to complete. **Therefore, LAs should not attempt to use Tax Credit Data obtained from CIS until 7 July 2008.**
- 3 The LA Support Team will be issuing the training and guidance material required to support LAs by email during week commencing 9 June 2008. **LA staff must not view Tax Credit data on CIS without first undertaking the Tax Credit training and reading the guidance.** If an LA hasn't received the training material by 16 June 2008 please contact the LA Support Team.
- 4 The material will comprise
 - Deskaid 10 – Tax Credit Screen Reference Guide (including glossary of terms)
 - a Training Scenario Power Point presentation
 - Implementation Note
- 5 The training presentation is self study and should take a maximum of 30 minutes to complete.
- 6 The existing LA CIS Guide will be updated to include information on the display of Tax Credit Data on CIS.
- 7 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will continue to generate a 1% random check on accesses to CIS, in addition HMRC will be conducting an independent evaluation of all accesses made in respect of Tax Credit data.
- 8 HMRC will continue to support LAs with Tax Credit data queries. However from 7 July 2008 LAs will be expected to access CIS before contacting HMRC.
- 9 Please note DWP and HMRC staff will not have access to the Tax Credit data on CIS.
- 10 The LA Support Team will be available to support LAs with any queries or faults as they do with DWP data.
- 11 If you require any further information please contact
 - Jo Wood (jo.wood@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or
 - the LA Support Team (LA-ST@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Local Authority Omnibus Survey, Summary report for wave-16

- 12 This item first featured in Issue 78 of HB Direct. The **summary report** for wave-16 of the Local Authority Omnibus Survey will be **available for download** from the DWP website on **Tuesday 10 June 2008**.
- 13 Please use the following URL address which points to the location of the wave-16 summary report
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/summ2007-2008/501summ.pdf>
- 14 The survey sections for wave-16 were
- Section A: Backdating and Paying Housing Benefit**
- Section B: Information (HBSD-IAD & HBMS scans)**
- Section C: Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**
- Section D: General counter-fraud and error work**
- Section E: DWP Prosecution Division**
- Section F: Decentralisation and Contact Information**
- 15 If you have any queries please contact
Email: richard.zaluski-zaluczkowski@dwp.gov.uk

Customer Management System (CMS) Release 8

- 16 Release 8.0 of the Customer Management System is scheduled for delivery on 9 June 2008 and builds on the successful implementation of previous releases by introducing a number of initiatives that will have a **direct impact upon LAs**, by introducing
- support for legislative changes including the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance
 - further changes to support the Jobcentre Plus Standard Operating Model (SOM), and
 - business improvements including CMS script enhancements, many of which are being introduced as a direct result of feedback from colleagues
- 17 As a key stakeholder for CMS Release 8, the Housing Benefit Strategy Division (HBSD) successfully negotiated the inclusion of the several enhancements in this latest CMS release.

- 18 With support from an LA secondee, we also wrote the detailed business requirements for the HB content of this release and have worked closely with Jobcentre Plus colleagues to ensure that the requirements have been fully understood and correctly interpreted at each stage of the design process. To this end, we have also been involved with rigorous testing of the new requirements to ensure that the improvements to CMS will operate effectively for our customers.

Introduction of Local Housing Allowance

- 19 The introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) in April 2008 simplified the complex HB rules for private tenants and so we have revised the housing section of the CMS script by reducing the number of questions asked of private tenants. It also makes associated changes to the information presented on the Local Authority Input Document.

CMS Script Improvements

- 20 HBSD identified a number of business improvements to the gathering of information for HB and/or CTB claims. LAs can therefore expect to see the following changes as a result of these improvements

- When a customer has said that they are already 'receiving' or are 'waiting to hear' about a claim for **either** HB or CTB, but would now like to claim the **other** benefit, for which they are not in receipt, then a claim for the second benefit in this scenario will now be enabled by CMS.

We believe this is a significant improvement for LAs and will assist Jobcentre Plus in gathering data more effectively and subsequently issuing a more complete set of HB and CTB claims information.

- Script improvements have also been included that ensure the appropriate trigger questions are asked and thus to ensure that further questions relating to HB/CTB claims are activated correctly.

As well as improved customer service at the initial point of 'gather', this change will now ensure the completeness of the information passed to LAs in all cases.

- Customers who rent from a private landlord or Housing Association will be advised that they will need to provide their tenancy agreement, and details of any non-dependents living in their household.

Again, this will assist Jobcentre Plus in improving the quality of the information being passed on to LAs via the Local Authority Input Document.

New CMS questions that will directly assist HB/CTB claims

- 21 Following analysis undertaken with the CMS LA User Group, we have sponsored the introduction of several new scripted questions that will have a direct impact on the quality of the information recorded on the Local Authority Input Document.

Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay

- 22 Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) and Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) were introduced under Section 2 of the Employment Act 2002. LAs need to collect information on whether a customer and/or partner are receiving SAP and/or SPP as they are counted as income for the purpose of calculating entitlement to HB and CTB. Collecting this information more effectively will reduce the number of customers, with these circumstances, being overpaid benefit and as a consequence will improve rates of fraud and error.
- 23 The new questions that will be asked are
- 1 Are you getting any Statutory Adoption Pay?
 - 2 Is your partner getting any Statutory Adoption Pay?
 - 3 Are you getting any Statutory Paternity Pay?, and
 - 4 Is your partner getting any Statutory Paternity Pay?
- 24 All associated changes to the Local Authority Input Document will be affected by this release.

Other money coming into the household

- 25 LAs require more information than is currently being gathered in the CMS scripts regarding other money that is coming into the household. In order to improve the quality of the information gathered for '**Other Money**' three new questions will be asked of the customer and/or their partner and/or their child/ren, when there is an associated claim to HB/CTB.
- 26 The new questions that will be asked are
- 1 How is this paid?
 - 2 When did this income start?, and
 - 3 When is this income likely to go up?
- 27 All associated changes to the Local Authority Input Document will be affected by this release and should also improve rates of fraud and error.

How customers and/or their partner's wages are paid

- 28 LAs need to collect information on how a customer and/or their partner's wages are paid. The following new questions will therefore be asked of the customer, and their partner if appropriate, when there is an associated HB and/or CTB claim
- 1 How are your wages paid?
 - 2 How are your partner's wages paid?
- 29 For each question responses such as cash, cheque, bank account and building society will now be recorded on CMS. Again, it is expected that the introduction of these new questions will enhance the content of the Local Authority Input Documents; providing comprehensive information that should improve the claims process for HB and/or CTB claims whilst improving rates of fraud and error.

Guidance Updates

- 30 In light of the many and varied recent changes in this and other related areas, and to assist users in navigating around the Housing Benefit pages of the DWP website, there is currently a review of the layout and formatting of the pages. You will soon see improvements in content and the tools with which to navigate around the site and this valuable resource will be brought right up-to-date.
- 31 The CMS LA Guide, which is available through the website, is also under review and an updated version which will include changes up to and including CMS Release 7.5 will be available shortly. We plan to ensure that the Guide reflects all of the changes in CMS Release 8 and that of any future releases as soon as possible.

Enquiries

- 32 For further advice and information about these changes please contact HBSDMP.WWEG@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Summary and Final reports for, 'Reporting Changes in Circumstances: Tackling Error in the Benefits System'

- 33 This item first featured in Issue 78 of HB Direct. The **summary and final reports** for the publication, 'Reporting Changes in Circumstances: Tackling Error in the Benefits System', will be **available for download** from the DWP website on **Tuesday 10 June 2008**.
- 34 Please use the following URL address which points to the location of the summary report
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/summ2007-2008/497summ.pdf>
- 35 Please use the following URL address which points to the location of the final report <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2007-2008/rrep497.pdf>
- 36 Following is brief supportive information by Annie Irvine, Jacqueline Davidson and Roy Sainsbury.

Reporting Changes in Circumstances: Tackling Error in the Benefits System

- 37 Since 1997 successive governments have pursued a range of policies to reduce the amount of money lost to the social security budget through fraud and error. While levels of fraud have consistently decreased, the problem of error has persisted and its reduction has therefore become an important policy objective.
- 38 Qualitative research was carried out by the Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York in 2006-07 to explore benefit claimants' knowledge and understanding concerning changes in circumstances and obligations to report them. This research was based on a longitudinal panel of 51 claimants who were interviewed three times over the course of nine months.
- 39 The objectives of the overall study were focused on the key areas of
- how claimants experience changes in circumstances
 - their knowledge and perceptions about reporting changes in circumstances
 - their sources of knowledge
 - their experiences of reporting changes
 - experiences and responses to overpayment recovery due to error
- 40 If you have any queries please contact
Email: richard.zaluski-zaluczowski@dwp.gov.uk

Reminder for the attention of appeals officers

- 41 Please note there has been a change in the process for ordering TAS1 HB and TAS1HB R. These should now be ordered from a company called iON.
- 42 To place an order, complete the order form and
- fax to: **0845 850 0479**
 - post to
**iON Contact Centre,
2nd Floor,
One City West,
Gelderd Road,
Leeds.
LS12 6NJ**, or
 - email to: ion-pass@xerox.com
- 43 For queries regarding delivery, condition or content of orders ring **0845 850 0475**.
- 44 In addition to the contact details above, links have also been provided to access the page giving details about placing an order and the correct order form for ordering the appropriate TAS1
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/cat1/pubsorder.asp>
http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2007/iON_order_form.pdf
- 45 If you still encounter any difficulties with your order after contacting the iON Contact Centre, please contact Tony Murphy, Advice and Guidance Unit Manager at the Tribunals Service on 0121 634 7275.

Updated contacts list

- 46 An updated HB/CTB contacts list has now been published directly to the HB area of the DWP website; we will no longer be issuing updated contacts lists as part of the General Bulletin.
- 47 Please use this link which will take you directly to the contacts list
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/contact/contact-list.pdf>

Statutory Instruments

- 48 The following Statutory Instrument (SI) has now been laid
- 2008 No 1242, The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Modification) Order 2008, coming into force 18 June 2008
- 49 Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from
- DWP's own website
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/docs/lawvols/bluevol/>
 - the website of the Office of Publication Information
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

DVLA Photocard Driving licence update - 10 Yearly Photo Renewal

Note: This item is being published on behalf of the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

- 50 Do you know that photocard driving licences need to be updated every ten years?
- 51 If you use the driving licence in your LA, either to confirm identity or to check entitlement to drive, you need to be aware of the requirement to update the photocard driving licence with a new photo every 10 years. Whilst the UK driving licence is not intended to be used as an identity document, the DVLA is aware that it is accepted by a number of organisations to help evidence identity as well as driving entitlement.
- 52 The photograph on the photocard driving licence is only valid for 10 years; therefore the licence needs to be updated with a new photograph every 10 years. As the first photocard licences were introduced in July 1998, photographs will begin to expire from July 2008. From then on, drivers who hold a photocard licence will need to renew their photograph at the ten year point.
- 53 Under UK law, it is a mandatory requirement for the photograph to be renewed. Customers must ensure that they comply with this requirement by renewing their photograph before it expires. Failure to do so may result in a fine of up to £1000. It is the responsibility of the licence holder to ensure that their documentation is up to date, however DVLA will prompt drivers with a reminder before their photograph is due to expire.

- 54 The expiry date of the photograph is printed on the front of the photocard driving licence at item 4b. However, there can be exceptions in the case of a medical driving licence or where the last photocard driving licence was issued to a driver when they have passed 60 years of age. In such cases DVLA will contact the licence holder when the photograph needs to be renewed.
- 55 If you are presented with a photocard driving licence with an expired photograph, you will need to consider the implications of accepting that document in whatever context it may be being offered.
- 56 Over the years, DVLA has proactively enhanced the security of the driving licence to combat threats to the integrity of the driving licence itself and the centrally held record it represents. The physical security of the driving licence was further enhanced in June 2007 with the introduction of the new polycarbonate photocard licence incorporating state of the art security features. Any licence holder who updates their licence will be issued with the new, more secure driving licence.
- 57 For further information DRIVERS can go to www.direct.gov.uk/photorenewal
- 58 For further information BUSINESSES can go to www.transportoffice.gov.uk/photorenewal
- 59 If you require any further information about Ten Year Renewals please direct your query to angela.lewis@dvla.gsi.gov.uk