

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 G2/2008

21 January 2008

Contact	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none">• technical content of this bulletin, contact details are shown at the end of each section• distribution of this bulletin, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tel: 0113 399 4040- Fax: 0113 399 4205- Email: orderline@cds.co.uk• bulletin in general, contact Kath Murphy<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Who should read	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
Action	For information

Contents

page

Council Tax Benefit awareness campaign.....	2
Civil proceedings in matters proceeding through confiscation hearings.....	2
Statutory Instruments.....	3
DWP Shared Services Debt Management	3
What's new on the web.....	5
Other publications issued this month.....	5

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Council Tax Benefit awareness campaign

LA publicity materials

- 1 This year we will again make flyers and posters available for Local Authorities (LAs) to use to promote CTB, as part of the annual awareness activity. In previous years many LAs have included the flyer in council tax bills and displayed the poster in council offices, which are simple and effective ways to raise awareness of the benefit among customers.
- 2 The updated publicity material now includes the 'DirectGov' web address, please ensure that the latest versions are used as products from previous years are now out of date.
- 3 Details of the campaign will be on the internet at www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/counciltax/. The publicity products can also be downloaded from here. Quark files are also available so that you can include your own logo if required.
- 4 The publicity materials will be available for download from 28 January 2008.

Further information

- 5 If you require any further information, please email Duncan Macgregor in DWP Communications, email duncan.macgregor@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Civil proceedings in matters proceeding through confiscation hearings

- 6 The Department's Financial Investigation Unit (FIU) seeks restitution and sanction by way of confiscation proceedings under Criminal Justice Act 1988 (as amended) and Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.
- 7 In cases when LA benefit has been included in the charges the FIU will make representation in these proceedings to recover moneys fraudulently overpaid on behalf of the LA.
- 8 It is important that in all cases where the Department's FIU are taking action on behalf of a LA that the authority does not start civil proceedings in relation to any amounts that are under consideration in these proceedings. Commencement of civil recovery could prevent any criminal confiscation order being made resulting in a loss of funds to either or both DWP and the authority.

- 9 In all cases when LA benefit has been included in the charges (and taken into consideration cases (TICs))
- the Financial Investigator will issue a form COMP 1 to seek permission to obtain compensation for the LA in any confiscation proceedings
 - the LA should ensure that all parties within the authority are content for this to occur including authority to proceed against HB and CTB separately when they are administered separately by the authority
 - when either party does not wish the action to take place this should be clearly stated in the COMP 1 and this part of the loss will be omitted from the confiscation proceedings
 - once agreement has been given no further civil recovery must take place. If any authority is unsure of their status in this matter they must contact the financial investigator named on the COMP 1
- 10 The relevant paragraphs of the appropriate legislation are attached as Annex A to this bulletin for your information and consideration.

Queries

- 11 Any officer who has any doubts or queries should contact the officer named on the COMP 1 in the first place or to Amanda Hillman by email on the following address: amanda.hillman@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Statutory Instruments

- 12 In HB/CTB G17/2007 we explained that from November 2007 we would stop issuing hard copies of Statutory Instruments (SIs). Instead details of recently laid SIs would be included in the General Information Bulletins.
- 13 The following two SIs have now been laid
- SI 2008 No. 13 - Social Security. The Jobseeker's Allowance (Joint Claims) Amendment Regulations 2008, coming into force from 25 February 2008, and
 - SI 2008 No. 14 - Social Security. The Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) Amendment Regulations 2008, coming into force from 7 April 2008
- 14 You can download copies of these SIs from
- DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/docs/lawvols/bluevol/>, and
 - the website of the Office of Publication Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

DWP Shared Services Debt Management

Update to LA action on overpayment referrals for Debt Management

- 15 DWP Shared Services Debt Management currently recovers overpayments of HB and CTB on behalf of LAs when the LAs are unable to recover the overpayment from the benefits they administer and another Social Security Benefit is in payment to the debtor.

- 16 Currently Debt Management recovers overpayments and reimburses LAs using two methods
- Via PAC's Account Payables, known as Third Party Payment system (TPP), payable every four weeks.
 - Local IT system, payable every thirteen weeks via Local Payment System (classed as **Non TPP**)
- 17 Over the weekend of 2/3 February 2008, we are transferring existing Non TPP overpayments from our current local IT systems to our new IT system 'Debt Manager'(DM), and subsequently any new non TPP referrals will be administered on DM. This is phase 1 change.
- 18 The impact for LAs has been detailed below and we ask that all LAs referring overpayments make a note of the information and take action accordingly. There are no changes to the principles involved, processes undertaken in making referrals or methods of paying recovered HB and CTB to LAs.

Additional information

- 19 To register referrals onto DM a Local Authority Office ID code must be included on the referral. It is a mandatory piece of data and without it we cannot load the referral and will have to return it. A full list is attached for your information as Annex 1 to this bulletin, but further copies may be obtained from your usual Debt Management contact.
- 20 When we accept a non TPP referral and begin recovery you will be notified, however our contact details for non TPP cases will now be relevant to each debtor and could be anyone of the offices listed below. You should note your individual debtor's records with the relevant contact details when you receive our notice of recovery. Please use these details when making any enquiry relating to that overpayment and debtor.

Bradford	Telephone number:	0845 600 8653
Corby		0845 850 0293
Dearne Valley		0845 600 8656
Nuneaton		0845 602 3881
Trafford (Manchester)		0845 600 8654

- 21 Should you have any queries relating
- to this communication
 - about an existing overpayment we are currently recovering
 - about a new referral for which you have not received notice of recovery with contact details

please get in touch with your usual Debt Management HB Team contact as follows

Bradford	Telephone number:	01274 302543
Corby		01536 442042
Dearne Valley		01709 765202
Nuneaton		02476 648078
Trafford (Manchester)		0161 88628234

- 22 We expect to make a number of further changes in a phased approach, but seek to minimise any disruption to you or our customers and ultimately improve the service we provide. We will naturally inform you of future changes as and when they are made.

What's new on the web

23 The following items can be found on the website link shown

Document Type	Subject	Link
Circular HB/CTB A16/2007	Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit: 2008 Uprating	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2007/a16-2007.pdf
Bulletin G21/2007	Access to tax credits data Housing costs Roadshows Current HB/CTB Circulars What's new on the web Other publications issued this month	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2007/g21-2007.pdf
Bulletin G1/2008	Locality review in London The Pension Service liaison	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2008/g1-2008.pdf
HB Direct issue 73 January 2008	Newsletter	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/2008/issue73-jan08.pdf

Other publications issued this month

24 The following publications have also been issued this month

- Circular A1/2008