

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

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<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

HB/CTB G21/2008

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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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Single HB Extract (SHBE) and Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) Return

- 1 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) data requirements for 2009/10 have now been finalised.
- 2 On 1 October 2008 local authority (LA) representatives, software suppliers and LAs with in-house software systems were issued with copies of
 - HB/CTB Single HB Extract Guidance April 2009 to March 2010 V1.0
 - HB/CTB Single HB Extract Specification 2009/10 V1.0
 - Housing Benefit Recoveries Fraud Guidance 2009/10 V1.0
 - Housing Benefit Recoveries Fraud Template 2009/10 V1.0
- 3 Any LAs requiring a copy of these documents should contact
 - Single HB Extract Guidance and Specification – hbsdiad-scan@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
 - Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud Guidance and Template – HBDataservice@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

The e-Transfer Project – Pilot exercise for the electronic transfer of the Local Authority Input Document (LAID)

Introduction

- 4 When a customer makes a new or repeat claim for a Jobcentre Plus primary benefit, ie Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB), Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) claim data is gathered on the Customer Management System (CMS) by Jobcentre Plus as part of an integrated claim process. Currently, the HB/CTB claim data is printed out on a clerical Local Authority Input Document (LAID) and is forwarded to the relevant LA. Transportation methods vary with post and courier being the most popular.
- 5 The e-Transfer Project will replace this manual transfer with an electronic transfer process. This will be piloted in a number of LAs from 5 January 2009, with national rollout commencing in February 2009 and completion of the bulk of installations by 31 March 2009.

Why change

- 6 The electronic transfer of the LAID will
 - provide a secure method of transfer of information between DWP and LAs
 - improve customer service and support an integrated claims process
 - improve efficiency and support changes within DWP and LAs

Pilot sites

- 7 There will be a phased introduction to the pilot with three sites going live in week commencing 5 January 2009 - Tameside, South Lanarkshire and Merthyr Tydfil. The remaining sites – Sedgemoor, West Somerset, Highland, Torbay, North Lanarkshire, Wyre Forest and North Kesteven will go live in week commencing 12 January 2009.
- 8 The e-Transfer project will be issuing detailed information packs to those involved in the pilot. These will provide details of the changes, anticipated impacts and any specific action needed or returns required.
- 9 Associated jobcentres will also receive detailed information of the changes and impacts on their business processes.
- 10 When pilot sites are also operating the new In and Out of Work process changes to process guidance will also be issued.

Dependency

- 11 The new process will use the GCSx\GSx network to transport the data and a new file server is required to enable receipt of the files. Connectivity to GCSx and procurement of the file server is being managed by Government Connect (GC). The e-Transfer Project's roll-out schedule will shadow the LA connectivity to GCSx. GC have started contacting the LA IT sections to discuss arrangements for installation of the servers.

What happens now?

- 12 Under the current process, jobcentres print out the LAIDs and send them by post or courier to the LA or in a small number of cases the forms are taken by staff to the LA.
- 13 In the majority of LAs the LAID is scanned and inserted into a Document Management System (DMS). Other LAs work directly from the clerical LAID.

The new process

- 14 In jobcentres, the LAID will no longer be printed out but will be sent by overnight batch across the new secure file transfer system to the new LA server.
- 15 At the LA, individual electronic LAIDs will be received together in a zipped file. The file will be available for access by 7.00 am the day after it is sent by DWP. The LAID will be provided in Portable Document Format (PDF) initially. An index file will accompany the PDF files, listing the NINOs of all the LAIDs included in the file.
- 16 Jobcentres will undertake the new process from the date their LA goes live.

The benefits of the electronic LAID

- 17 Sending the LAID electronically will
- speed up the claims process as the electronic LAID will be received in the LA the day after it is sent by DWP
 - reduce telephone enquiries in the LA and Jobcentre Plus
 - impact positively on the customer experience and overall processing time
 - eliminate the related postal and post opening costs
 - remove the need for manual scanning of LAIDs into in-house systems*
 - reduce the number of clerical HCTB1s issued to the customer pending receipt of the LAID at the LA

***Note:** LAs with DMS/ Document imaging processing systems should consult with their IT sections to consider how LAIDs can be uploaded directly to their systems.

Pilot evaluation and national rollout

- 18 The evaluation from the pilot in January 2009 will inform the planning of the national rollout schedule. The schedule is being developed in consultation with GC, Jobcentre Plus and LAs and we will advise of this schedule in due course.

Future phases of the e-Transfer Project

- 19 From April 2009, HB/CTB claim data collected by the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) will be transferred electronically. A further enhancement is planned from late 2009, which will include the data collected by Jobcentre Plus during a claim to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) also sent electronically to LAs.
- 20 DWP will also provide HB/CTB claim information in XML format from October 2009, implemented in LAs on a rolling basis until March 2010. This will enable the data to be directly loaded in to a LAs back-office processing system.

Contacts

- 21 If you have a query about this subject, the contact details are

Janet Croll - JANET.CROLL@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Diane Jones - DIANE.JONES4@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Patricia Keadin-Brown- PATRICIA.KEADIN-BROWN@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Paddy Wild - PADDY.WILD@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Customer Management System (CMS) Release 9

22 Release 9 of the Customer Management System was delivered on the 3 November 2008 and builds on the successful implementation of previous releases by introducing a number of initiatives that will have a direct impact upon LAs. These will include

- **Missing Information on LA Input Document**

All relevant questions that have been left unanswered will be output onto the LA Input Document. This will provide LA staff processing the claim with a more comprehensive picture of the customers' circumstances.

- **Establishing the relationship between the customer and landlord**

The current questions that ask the customer if they or their partner are related to the landlord or their landlord's agent will be amended. This will prompt the user to establish if the customer and/or their partner is renting from a former partner or their partner's former partner. This will help the LA decide if further action is required to establish if the tenancy is a proper commercial agreement.

- Further changes to support the Jobcentre Plus Standard Operating Model (SOM)

23 As a key stakeholder for CMS Release 9, Housing Benefit Strategy Division (HBSD) successfully negotiated the inclusion of these enhancements in this latest release.

24 We 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.

25 There are some additional Jobcentre Plus changes that will have an impact on the information that you receive within the LA Input Document. These included

- **Welsh Language Requirement**

New questions will be introduced to CMS to identify if the customer and the partner in a Joint Claim for JSA or appointees or potential appointees wish to conduct their business in Welsh. These questions will only be enabled when the customer has a Welsh postcode and the nationality selected is Welsh.

The following details will be output to the LA Input document:

Customer

If the customer wishes to be contacted in Welsh the text 'Welsh Preferred Language:' will be output on the front page of the LA Input document with the answer options: 'Written', 'Oral' or 'Written and Oral'. If the customer chooses not to be contacted in Welsh this new question will not be output.

OR

continued

Appointee / Potential Appointee

If the appointee wishes to be contacted in Welsh the text 'Welsh Preferred Language (Appointee):' will be output on the front page of the LA Input document with the answer options: 'Written', 'Oral' or 'Written and Oral'. If the appointee chooses not to be contacted in Welsh this new question will not be output.

- **Improve Education Information Gather so claims can be taken through CMS, this enhances the service for**

Care Leavers -

New questions will be introduced to identify if the customer is a care leaver aged under 20 and in full time education. These customers are entitled to claim benefits when they are 18/19 years, in full time education and have just left LA Care. Currently, these customers are not taken through the CMS process, because the system assumes nil entitlement, even though they may be entitled to claim IS while they complete their course.

The following details will be output onto the LA Input Document:

'Have you recently left the care of the local authority, or are you without a legally responsible adult to take care of you?' this new question and answer will be output in the Customer Details section.

Full time Students -

Full time students are not normally entitled to IS/JSA, even during their summer vacation. Because of this CMS has not previously gathered sufficient information about the education course being undertaken (eg education establishment, course name, course dates). New questions have been introduced to establish these details if the customer states that they are currently registered on a course of study. These details will be output onto the LA Input Document in the Customer Details section.

- **Working Tax Credit/Child Tax Credit**

Questions about Tax Credits have only been asked if the customer and partner were employed. This change ensures that all working age customers are asked if they are in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit. This information will be recorded on the LA Input Document under the heading:

Customer Work Details and where appropriate Partner Work Details.

Enquiries

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

New address for the Housing Divisions within DWP

- 27 This item first appeared in *HB Direct Issue 83* but is being repeated to ensure that the message is cascaded as widely as possible.

- 28 The Housing Divisions within DWP have always been based at The Adelphi building in London but over the next fortnight staff will be moving to newly refurbished accommodation so that we can be located within the same building as our Ministerial team.
- 29 HB Strategy and Housing Research and Analysis Divisions will be moving to their new location on 7 November 2008 with the Local Authority Performance Division (LAPD) relocating on 14 November 2008. You may find that because of these large scale moves that we will be difficult to get hold of on the Friday and Monday of the weekend that we move, although we will do our best to keep any disruption to an absolute minimum.
- 30 This means that whilst our email addresses will remain as they are now, our postal address and telephone numbers will change. We have already embarked on an exercise to update all of the telephone numbers in the contacts list that is found in the HB area of the DWP website.
- 31 Our new postal address will be
- First Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA
- 32 If you require further information please contact Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Government Connect, the GCSx Code of Connection – LAAs and POG Questions and Answers

Introduction

- 33 Representatives from the Local Authority Associations (LAAs) were joined by Practitioners Operational Group Housing Benefit representatives and corporate IT managers from individual member LAs at a workshop on 7 October 2008.
- 34 The representatives raised the following questions and concerns, mainly regarding the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx) Code of Connection (CoCo).
- 35 The following questions were asked by LAs and senior representatives from Government Connect provided the answers. It was agreed it would be useful to share the questions and answers that arose on the day. The answers will be of particular interest to LAs currently going through the GCSx approval process. If you have any questions not answered in this list please contact Government Connect at <http://www.govconnect.gov.uk/contact.php>

Government Connect

Questions and Answers

Q1 How can we be assured that different Regional Account Managers are providing consistent answers to the same question from different LAs?

A1 The Regional Account Managers are all experienced in providing advice to LAs on completing the CoCo and in providing the most appropriate responses to the CoCo controls for that LA. The advice on certain controls may differ slightly from LA to LA, depending on how the LA is responding to other controls within the CoCo. The essence of the CoCo is to ask LAs to demonstrate mitigation against security breaches and preventing (as far as possible) access to sensitive data and networks that carry sensitive data. Different approaches to certain controls may be acceptable in different LAs depending on how they are mitigating risks elsewhere.

Q2 You've said that we can't use privately owned PCs for homeworkers. My council prevents Members from using council-owned PCs. How do we deal with that?

A2 The controls ask for all Mobile Working solutions to be compliant with Memo 35 (CESG guidance on mobile working). This includes ensuring that any individual accessing a GSi connected network (which will include all connecting LA networks) must be using appropriate technology to do so; in its simplest definition using equipment owned and configured by the connecting organisation, authenticating using dual factor authentication, using suitable encryption for data both at rest and in transit.

In some circumstances, LAs may be able to demonstrate sufficient separation of LA services from the main (GSi connected) LA network by creating a DMZ (De-Militarised Zone) and allowing access for Member and certain officers to that separated part of the network only. If there are sufficient controls in place to restrict access beyond the DMZ, the use of personal equipment may be tolerated, but a full formal assessment by the GC Assessment Team is required to give a definitive response to any individual LA.

Q3 Does the GCSx Code of Connection or DWP/LA MoU require us to carry out Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff accessing CIS, or other staff in the LA?

A3 The CoCo asks that every officer who is accessing GCSx services must be cleared to the BPSS (Basic Personnel Security Standard). Any additional services/data that is then accessed over GCSx may require further checks (e.g. CRB for individuals before they are authorised to access that specific data. These checks should already be in place within the LA as business as usual.

Q4 Do individual PCs have to be physically secure? How do we keep PCs secure in an open-plan environment?

- A4** Physical security mainly focuses on access to the network. All computer rooms should be appropriately secured, as should terminals with access to the council's networks. PCs used in open plan offices/hotdesk areas should require user authentication onto the terminal with an appropriate control of users being provided access to the room itself (normal organisational swipe cards/signing in out etc. Concerns over data access within 'open environments' are more likely to be based on unintentional observation of information, which would primarily be a data protection as well as a need-to-know issue.
- Q5** We have help points in our reception area where customers can self-serve (complete an application form, sign it and apply for benefit electronically) - these are on our network. Is that allowed under the GCSx Code of Connection?
- A5** Public access terminals should be presented in the CoCo and drawn on the network schematic when submitted for formal assessment. The assessor will need to see these access points managed by the LA as untrusted networks, with no direct access to the LA network.
- Q6** Is the final sign-off of our Code of Connection done by Government Connect, or is there an independent, external approver?
- A6** Currently, the final sign-off is carried out by CESG, which is an independent Information Assurance and Accreditation arm of Government. GC works closely with CESG and their security specialists have a good understanding of what will and will not be approved by CESG. There is a formal assessment by the GC Assessment Team prior to submission to CESG. This is an iterative process, and further questions will be asked of the LA at every stage. Regional Account Managers are regularly briefed on feedback from the Central Assessment Team and should be LAs' first point of contact for all matters relating to the submission of CoCo. Once the CoCo is submitted for formal assessment, there will be direct liaison between the GC Central Assessment Team and the LA.
- Q7** The DWP/LA MoU applies to Housing and Council Tax Benefit services, but the GCSx Code of Connection applies to the whole council. Do we have to prevent the use of USB memory sticks, CD drives and floppy disk drives for every PC and laptop on the council's network?
- A7** The CoCo requires LAs to manage the risk of the use of removable media appropriately. This does not specifically deny use of USB sticks or other removable media; in fact some business areas within the LA are dependent on the use of removable media. LAs should demonstrate a recognition and understanding of the risks posed by removable media and the controls that they are using locally to mitigate against this risk. Appropriate use of removable media should be documented by a business case within the LA. The DWP's MOU for any officer accessing Housing Benefits information specifically denies the use of removable media for this service.

- Q8** Can we make part of our network CoCo compliant and worry about making the rest of the network secure at a later date (so that we can comply with DWP's deadlines for HB/CTB)?
- A8** It is possible to segregate specific parts of the LA network to enable very restricted access to GCSx for one particular service, however this approach demonstrates a recognition that the rest of the network is generally not secure, and is likely to be scrutinised further. In addition, this could specifically exclude LAs from accessing other data/services/applications over the GCSx network as and when they become available. Please visit www.govconnect.gov.uk for information on forthcoming available applications over GCSx.
- Q9** Does the GCSx Code of Connection insist on dual factor authentication for all remote workers, including homeworkers?
- A9** The control asks for all Mobile Working solutions to be compliant with Memo 35 (CESG guidance on mobile working). This includes ensuring that any individual accessing a GSi connected network (which now includes all connecting LA networks) must be using appropriate technology to do so; in its simplest definition using equipment owned and configured by the connecting organisation, authenticating using dual factor authentication, using suitable encryption for data both at rest and in transit.
- Q10** The MoU and GCSx Code of Connection seem to say different things about the use of privately owned PCs and laptops. Can we use them or not?
- A10** The control asks for all Mobile Working solutions to be compliant with Memo 35 (CESG guidance on mobile working). This includes ensuring that any individual accessing a GSi connected network (which now includes all connecting LA networks) must be using appropriate technology to do so; in its simplest definition using equipment owned and configured by the connecting organisation, authenticating using dual factor authentication, using suitable encryption for data both at rest and in transit.

In some circumstances, LAs may be able to demonstrate sufficient separation of LA services from the main (GSi connected) LA network by creating a DMZ (De-Militarised Zone) and allowing access for Member and certain officers to that separated part of the network only. If there is sufficient controls in place to restrict access beyond the DMZ, the use of personal equipment may be acceptable, but a full formal assessment by the GC Assessment Team is required to give a definitive response for any individual LA.

Further information

36 If you have any technical queries relating to GC about this subject, please contact: Government Connect at <http://www.govconnect.gov.uk/contact.php>

37 For all other queries contact

David Wright – email: david.wright1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Malcolm Mattack – email: malcolm.mattack@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Commissioners' cases

38 We are aware of the following cases that are awaiting decision by a Commissioner

- CH/3079/07 – Right to reside decided without an accompanying entitlement decision
- CH/765/08 – Overpayment – Payment of arrears of HB made to incorrect payee (tenant)
- CH/2366/06 – Satisfaction of the NINO test
- CH/412/07 – Relationship of winnings from gambling and the definition of 'income'
- CH/426/08 – Capital - money held in foreign bank accounts and beneficial owner
- CH/1601/07 – Recoverability of overpayment – claimant in possession of two properties
- CH/2408/08 – Timing and actual frequency of maintenance payments

39 Thank you to those authorities that have let us know about cases they are appealing. Please notify us of cases at the point that the application for leave to appeal is made to the Upper Tribunal (previously Commissioners') office, or the appeal is lodged following grant of leave by a First Tier Tribunal Judge (previously tribunal chairman). Please let us know if a case reference (CH/.. or CSH/..) has been allocated.

Queries

40 If you have any queries about cases before the Upper Tribunal Judges (previously Commissioners) or courts, please contact us by

- email at DMA-OFFICE-SUPPORT-L@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK, or
- fax on 0113 232484

Statutory Instruments

- 41 The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have now been laid
- 2008 No. 2675 (C.116), The Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act 2008 (Commencement No.4 and Transitional Provision) Order 2008, coming into force from 1 November 2008
 - 2008 No. 2656, The Child Support (Consequential Provisions) (No.2) Regulations 2008, coming into force 1st November 2008
 - 2008 No. 2767, The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No.6) Regulations 2008, coming into force from 17 November 2008
 - 2008 No. 2772, The Welfare Reform Act 2007 (Commencement No. 8) Order 2008, coming into force from 27 October 2008
 - 2008 No. 2776, The Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, coming into force 27 October 2008
 - 2008 No.2783, The Employment and Support Allowance (Transitional Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, coming into force 26 October 2008
- 42 Copies of SIs can now be downloaded 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>