

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 G6/2008

25 March 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">- 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

HB Error Awareness e-learning	2
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Appeals - Change of Processing Centre in the Midlands Area	3
Security Performance Measures 2007/08	4
Statutory Instruments	6
What's new on the web	7
HB/CTB Circulars issued this month	7
Other publications issued this month	7

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HB Error Awareness e-learning

- 1 We are aware that some LAs may have missed earlier articles in HB Direct about the launch of this product, so this bulletin gives you information about the e-learning package for LA benefit staff that DWP have provided free of charge.

Guide for Assessors

- 2 The first module of the Guide for Assessors was launched in November 2007, and so far over 1600 people from 270 LAs have looked at it. Feedback has been positive with several LAs working through the learning as a group and using it as a catalyst for discussion.
- 3 The learning focuses on the most widespread mistakes that are made both by customers and by benefit staff. It suggests straightforward measures benefit staff can take that will make an impact on the amount of incorrectness in their caseload and the quality of service they provide. Not only will it help reduce error, but staff will spend less time re-working claims, recovering overpayments and dealing with frustrated customers.

Calendar

- 4 As we are encouraging staff to be proactive and note predictable future changes, we have developed an electronic Calendar to help them calculate future dates. This is available on the e-learning website (see below), where there are instructions on how to download it to your desktop.

Manager's Toolkit

- 5 Launched in February, this module has already been accessed by over 160 people from around 100 LAs.
- 6 For managers and supervisors, time is at a premium, so the Manager's Toolkit is less interactive than the Guide for Assessors, and contains more quick links to useful information. It is aimed primarily at those with responsibility for managing staff, and particularly for managing work, and takes a more strategic view of reducing incorrectness.

Who can access the e-learning?

- 7 There are no restrictions on who can access the package - anyone can access either or both strands of the e-learning. LA staff are asked initially to state their Region and LA and this personalises the package each time they use it thereafter.
- 8 Non-LA employees can also use the e-learning by registering under the 'Guest' option.

How to access the e-learning

- 9 We recommend that you read the **Technical Checklist** before your LA tries to access the e-learning for the first time. You will find this under the 'Error Awareness' link on the DWP web-site at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/secure/fraud-error.asp>

- 10 Both e-learning packages (Guide for Assessors and Manager's Toolkit) are located at www.learningpool.com/housingbenefiterror where you will first have to create an account. The LearningPool web-site contains instructions on how to do this.

How to use the e-learning

- 11 Learners can work through tutorials, scenarios or topics at their own pace, and can see at a glance whenever they log on which ones they have already completed. They can also use the package for reference, either to dip into modules they have worked through, or to access the resources listed at the bottom of every screen.
- 12 Some LAs have allowed their benefit teams to work through the learning at their own pace, and others have devoted a few hours to training everyone together. If you have system downtime for year-end processing, that could be the ideal time to have your team work through the learning.

Further information

- 13 Further information can be found under the 'Error awareness' link on the DWP web-site at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/secure/fraud-error.asp>
- 14 Access to the e-learning is through LearningPool at www.learningpool.com/housingbenefiterror
- 15 If you have any queries about this subject, please contact Fraud-Error-Policy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Appeals - Change of Processing Centre in the Midlands Area

- 16 As you may be aware the Tribunals Service is undergoing organisational change. Part of this change is the creation of a Multi-jurisdictional Administrative Support Centre (ASC) for the Midlands area. It will be located near to Birmingham city centre and will open in October 2008.
- 17 Preparation for this change is underway and part of it affects some of the HB/CTB appeals currently processed in our Nottingham SSCSA Tribunals Service office (Pearson Building).
- 18 From April 2008, any new HB/CTB appeals that meet the criteria set out below will be registered and processed here at Birmingham SSCSA Tribunals Service office.
- 19 The following information is important as it tells you whether your office is affected by this change. You will be affected only if
- you normally send HB/CTB appeals to Nottingham SSCSA Tribunals Service (Pearson Building), **and**
 - those appeals are normally heard at any of these eight venues
- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Nottingham | Derby |
| Chesterfield | Northampton |
| Lincoln | Leicester |
| Boston | Kettering |

20 If the above does not apply to you then please continue to send your appeals to the Tribunals Service office that you normally do.

21 If you are affected, then from and including 28 March 2008 please send all new HB/CTB appeals to Birmingham SSCSA Tribunals Service to

SSCSA Tribunals Service
Midlands Area
3rd Floor
Auchinleck House
Broad Street
Birmingham
B15 1DL

Telephone number 0121 634 7248

Fax number 0121 634 7201

Minicom VII 0121 634 7218 (Helpline for the deaf and hard of hearing)

www.tribunals.gov.uk

22 Any appeal you send before this date should go to our Nottingham office as usual, to be registered and processed to conclusion there.

23 Any not duly made appeals you have sent to Nottingham before 28 March 2008 and subsequently decided as valid will be processed at Nottingham. As such, any associated submission and papers must be sent there.

24 Please **immediately** order a stock of envelopes with the Birmingham address to include with the TAS 1 forms sent out to appellants on or after 28 March 2008. These can be ordered in the usual way, eg from iON. The order code you need is TSDL1BR5682 for 1st class business reply envelopes.

25 If you are not sure how to order, contact iON on 0845 850 0475. Further information can be found on <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/cat1/pubsorder.asp>

26 The information in this bulletin wholly replaces that in letters you may have received dated 7 and 10 March 2008.

Further information

27 If you have any further queries regarding this subject, please contact Rob Day, Birmingham Tribunals Service District Manager on 0121 634 7248.

Security Performance Measures 2007/08

Introduction

28 In G3/2008 published on 7 February 2008, we updated you on the latest position regarding measurement of the Security Performance Measures. In this update, we give you further information on the measurement of PM10 and PM16 for 2007/08

PM10 revised measurement 2007/08

- 29 DWP will measure PM10 over the period 1 April to 30 September 2007. Each LA's target for this period will be reduced accordingly as described in the bulletin mentioned above.
- 30 Although almost half of all LAs will now achieve or exceed their PM10 target, we have been approached by a small number of LAs who consider that they are able to demonstrate a higher score over the full year than that being measured by DWP. This is as a result of initiatives they have implemented between October 2007 and March 2008.
- 31 For those LAs subject to Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2008/09, their CPA score will incorporate the 2007/08 Benefits score from DWP's Performance Standards. In a small number of cases, the DWP measurement of PM10 may have a detrimental effect on the overall LA score.

PM10 proposal

- 32 Whilst CPA remains within the remit of the Audit Commission, the Benefits score is the responsibility of DWP. Accordingly, we have agreed with the Local Authority Associations (LAAs) that DWP will draw up a process for considering exceptional cases.
- 33 The process is likely to apply when an LA can demonstrate that their full year score would have been better than the score announced in G3/2008. This process will be subject to consultation with the LAAs, and we will give you further information about it in due course.

Measuring PM16

- 34 In G3/2008 we advised you that PM16 would also be measured over the period 1 April to 30 September 2007. This was because we understood that many LAs' potential to achieve sanctions in the latter half of the year had been hampered by the absence of data matches and the Risk Scored Review List from HBDMS.
- 35 Historically, LAs achieved on average 45% of their successful sanctions in the first two quarters of any given year, with the remaining 55% of successful sanctions being achieved in the third and fourth quarters. For this reason we will score LAs' performance from 1 April to 30 September 2007 against 45% of the annual target.
- 36 A number of you have queried this rationale as, unlike PM10, we will have statistics for all LAs for the whole year. We have decided that, for each LA, we will carry out a 'better off' calculation by
- scoring the number of successful sanctions achieved in the first two quarters against 45% of the annual target
 - comparing this with the score for the number of successful sanctions achieved in the whole year against 100% of the target (the normal methodology)
- 37 For each LA, we will use whichever calculation results in the higher score.

38 In this way, we can accommodate those LAs whose PM16 score has been affected detrimentally by the absence of data-matches and the Risk Scored Review List, whilst recognising that this has not affected sanctions in other LAs.

Further information

39 If you have any queries about this subject, please contact Fraud-Error-Policy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Statutory Instruments

40 The following Statutory Instruments (SI) have now been laid

- 2008 No 624, The Occupational Pension Schemes (Non-European Schemes Exemption) Regulations 2008, coming into force from 6 April 2008
- 2008 No 627 (C25), The Pensions Act 2004 (Commencement No.11) Order 2008, coming into force from 5 April 2008
- 2008 No 637, The Discretionary Financial Assistance (Amendment) Regulations 2008, coming into force 7 April 2008
- 2008 No 641, The Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, coming into force 6 April 2008
- 2008 No 649, The Occupational Pension Schemes (Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2008, coming into force 6 April 2008
- 2008 No 650, The Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, coming into force 1 April 2008
- 2008 No 661, The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (General Levy) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, coming into force 1 April 2008
- 2008 No 664, The Pension Protection Fund (Prescribed Payments) Regulations 2008, coming into force 1 April 2008
- 2008 No 667, The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations 2008, coming into force 7 April 2008
- 2008 No 695, The Income-related Benefits (Subsidy to Authorities) Amendment (No.2) Order 2008, coming into force 1 April 2008
- 2008 No 699, The Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Dependency) (Permitted Earnings Limits) Order 2008, coming into force 9 April 2008

41 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>

What's new on the web

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
Circular HB/CTB A3/2008	Recovery from customers who have been declared bankrupt	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2008/a3-2008.pdf
Circular HB/CTB A4/2008	HB/CTB Right Benefit Performance Indicator from April 2008	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2008/a4-2008.pdf
Subsidy Guidance Manual 2007/2008	Update of subsidy guidance 2007/2008	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/manuals/guidance-manuals/2008/subsidy-guidance-manual-08.pdf
Bulletin G5/2008	Statutory Instruments Social Security Fraud Act (SSFA) 2001 Authorised Officers Disclosure of personal information – witnesses HBMS – on the move...	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/bulletins/2008/g5-2008.pdf
HB Direct issue 75 March 2008	Newsletter	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/2008/issue75-mar08.pdf
HB Direct LHA Special Issue Feb 2008	Newsletter	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/news/newsletter/2008/lha-special-feb08.pdf

HB/CTB Circulars issued this month

43 The following HB/CTB Circulars have been issued this month

- Circular A4/2008
- Circular A5/2008
- Circular S2/2008
- Circular F1/2008

Other publications issued this month

44 The following publication has been issued this month

- Discretionary Housing Payments Best Practice Guide (by email only)