

Housing Benefit Circular

Department for Work and Pensions
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ADJUDICATION AND OPERATIONS CIRCULAR

WHO SHOULD READ	Local authority Housing Benefit Managers
ACTION	For information
SUBJECT	Real Time Information Bulk Data Matching Initiative – guide for local authorities

Guidance Manual

The information in this circular does not affect the content of the HB Guidance Manual.

Queries

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Real Time Information Bulk Data Matching Initiative – guide for local authorities

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Real Time Information Bulk Data Matching Initiative - guide for local authorities

Introduction

1. Real Time Information (RTI) is Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) new system for collecting Pay as You Earn (PAYE) information from employers and pension providers who are now required to provide HMRC with income details immediately after each payment they make.
2. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC have a joint Fraud and Error Strategy and we seek to collaborate where possible, especially where one department's assets are of value to the other. RTI is an example of such an asset and provides new opportunities to identify fraud and error across all social security benefits including Housing Benefit (HB). The RTI data is a richer and timelier solution than the existing data sources being used to identify fraud and error across DWP systems in respect of earnings and Non-State Pension (NSP).
3. DWP is planning to carry out an exercise matching HMRC RTI against data held on six social security benefits; Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, HB, Employment and Support Allowance, Pension Credit and Carers Allowance. To identify cases where claimants have either failed to declare or have under-declared earnings and NSP.
4. This project is scheduled to commence delivery from 6 October 2014 and will result in referrals being issued to local authorities (LAs) where DWP has information that earnings or NSP have not been correctly declared for the purposes of HB.

Background

5. This proposal is part of the Spend to Save initiative announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2013 and is estimated to realise Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) savings of £114 million in 2014/15. These savings need to be delivered in accordance with the government's Spending Review 2010 (SR10) and includes £15 million attributed to HB only cases based on the estimated cost of future overpayments.
6. DWP currently matches the DWP benefit caseload to information collected by HMRC on earnings via the P14, P45 and P46 forms, with the aim of detecting overpayments relating to incorrect earnings declarations. However, this only relates to end of year income (in the case of P14 forms) and changes in employment (in the case of P45 and P46 forms). This implies the information provided may be up to 18 months out of date when compared to HB awards.
7. These rules have been running for a number of years now, but it is estimated that there is still considerable fraud and error in the system despite this activity.

8. The initiative will target 300,000 high value overpayments, out of which a figure of approximately 223,000 referrals will relate to HB only cases.
9. Each case will only be referred once for action and the matches will be staggered over a number of monthly tranches starting from 6 October 2014, running until February 2015. For each tranche the data provided by HMRC will be fully refreshed prior to the data match being run and the referral created. This will ensure that all RTI information will include the latest and most up-to-date payments made by employers and pension providers. For further information regarding the forecasted volumes per month please refer to Annex 8.

Purpose

10. The purpose of this guide is to provide LAs with details and examples of the data set that may be sent to the LA as part of this bulk matching initiative. The intention of the guide is to help LAs prepare for the work and provide an opportunity to ask questions. It has been written based upon DWP's understanding of the RTI referral process as of early September 2014. Because this process is new, some assumptions have had to be made regarding certain aspects of the process. If during the test phase any of the assumptions prove to be incorrect a further circular will be issued to update this guidance.

Consultation

11. Following the decision by Ministers to pursue this initiative the project has been working in consultation with Local Authority Data Sharing (LADS) team (part of Housing Delivery Division) to learn more about the impact for LAs and to identify and develop solutions.
12. Additionally the RTI project has consulted the Local Authority Associations Steering Group and the Practitioners' Operational Group (POG). Members from the latter have helped form the LA Implementation Working Group, set up to assist in the delivery of the RTI solution for LAs and to minimise the impact upon existing business practices.
13. From a technical perspective LADS has been working with the LA IT Suppliers to develop and agree requirements to ensure safe passage of the data between DWP and the LAs. Further details about this process and how the data will be presented are explained later in this guide.

Approach

14. Rollout will include a test phase, that commenced 19 September 2014 for one week, where the data set and transition methods will be tested using live data. Participating LAs include: Barrow, Gateshead, Kensington & Chelsea and Liverpool.
15. When the Project officially commences from 6 October 2014, scans will be run on live data that may impact upon any LA. Until these scans are run the RTI project has no way of identifying the actual level of impact on each LA.

16. In line with LA requests to minimise the impact upon end of year activities the majority of cases will be progressed for action between October 2014 and January 2015 (inclusive). A reduced number of cases will be passed to LAs during February; with no intention to send any more cases to the LAs from this point as part of this initiative.

Support for LAs

17. In response to LA concerns we have agreed a package that will help LAs process the RTI referrals. The package includes the provision of IT solutions and new burdens funding as described below:

- the project commissioned LADS to implement a secure process for sharing the RTI data with LAs that would enable LA IT Suppliers to upload the data into the LA IT systems for administration by LA staff
- details of the new burdens were provided to LAs in the New Burdens Letter issued to LA Chief Executives on 4 July 2014. New burdens funding will be paid based on the 223,000 referrals. This includes an amount to compensate LAs for the additional burden associated with processing these referrals, including an amount to contribute towards the cost of debt recovery action. Payment details will be provided separately via a subsidy circular
- the project has negotiated a grace period of four weeks from the point the RTI information is received by the LA before the error is treated as 'Local Authority Error and/or Administrative Delay'. This will minimise the impact on the calculation of the 'Local Authority Error and/or Administrative Delay' subsidy and will provide LAs with a window in which to manage their caseload and deal with competing priorities.

18. LAs need to ensure their LA IT systems calculate the grace period by referring to the appropriate LA IT Suppliers guidance.

19. In accordance with current procedure, where an LA is waiting for further information in order to process a change, there will usually be no subsidy penalty until the customer responds with sufficient information. However, where an LA is waiting for further information and has reason to believe the claimant is being overpaid, it may consider suspending payment in whole or in part in order to reduce the risk of a future overpayment occurring. See paragraph 2.70 onwards of the HB Overpayments Guide for more information about how an LA may ensure it doesn't contribute to the creation of overpayments.

20. Examples of how this will work follow:

Example 1

- LA receives a referral with sufficient information to reassess a claim on the 6 October 2014
- Subsidy easement runs until 3 November 2014
- LA processes the referral on the 21 October 2014
- The overpayment is not treated as LA error

Example 2

- LA receives a referral with sufficient information to reassess a claim on the 6 October 2014
- Subsidy easement runs until 3 November 2014
- LA processes the referral on the 26 November 2014
- The overpayment is treated as LA error from the Monday following the 3 November 2014 (i.e. 10 November 2014)

Example 3

- LA receives a referral with insufficient information to reassess a claim on the 6 October 2014
- Subsidy easement runs until 3 November 2014
- LA writes to the customer for further information on 8 October 2014
- Customer responds with all information on 15 October 2014
- LA processes the referral on 21 October 2014
- The overpayment is not treated as LA error

Example 4

- LA receives a referral with insufficient information to reassess a claim on the 6 October 2014
- Subsidy easement runs until 3 November 2014
- It is not clear whether the claimant is being overpaid so the LA writes to the customer for further information on 15 October 2014
- Customer responds with all information on 14 November 2014
- LA processes the referral on 26 November 2014
- The overpayment is treated as LA error from the later of:
 - Monday following the end of the subsidy easement 3 November 2014 (i.e. 10 November 2014); or
 - the Monday following the day the customer responds with all the information
- In this case the overpayment is treated as LA error from 17 November 2014

21. Finally it has been agreed, where possible, to reuse established processes that exist between the DWP and the LAs. As such the Monetary Value of Adjustment (MVA) and potential savings will be extracted from the existing Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) returns.

Managing the RTI referrals

22. LAs will receive no more than one data match per HB claim during the life of this initiative (2014/15). Referrals will be sent to LAs in tranches and will be issued on a monthly basis. Existing Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) referrals will be excluded from the RTI referred cases ensuring there is no duplication of information/data from DWP to LA, see Annex 3, Para 4, Duplicates, for more detail.
23. For each HB claim matched LAs will receive RTI records for the claimant and, where appropriate, their partner, or both.
24. HMRC began RTI, as a pilot during tax year 2012/13 so it is possible that some RTI data may date back as far as April 2012. However, the majority of employers and pension providers did not join RTI until 2013/14. If you receive records for 2012/13, these should be treated with special care as described in the following paragraphs.

2012/13 tax year records

25. HMRC has made enhancements to the RTI data set since 2012/13. This means that the RTI records for the 2012/13 year may not appear as complete as later records.
26. The occupational pension indicator did not exist during 2012/13. This means that the value for this field will always be blank for 2012/13 records, regardless of whether the income reported is non-state pension or from employment.
27. Additionally the year to date employee contribution fields did not exist during 2012/13. Individual pay records will, however, show pension contributions made for each specific period throughout the year. We therefore advise LAs not to use the year to date figures for employee pension contributions for the 2012/13 tax year. DWP are currently taking steps to address this problem and plans are in place to remove this data from the referrals with effect from the end of October.

Trivial Commutation Payments

28. The RTI data contains information about Trivial Commutation Payments (TCP). Typically, these one-off payments are used if the regular payments would be very small. These need to be handled with care; please refer to Annex 6 for further information regarding these cases.
29. It is anticipated that the majority of RTI referrals will contain sufficient historic data to enable the LA to reassess HB entitlement without contacting the claimant. However, there will be occasions where this is unavoidable. This may occur where an RTI referral identifies employment or NSP which commenced before the employer or pension provider joined RTI.

30. DWP will be referring the RTI information to the LA benefit processing teams in the first instance, for consideration/action against the existing HB award. However normal business processes should be followed and where a claim hits a trigger point for fraud these cases should be passed on in the usual way.
31. All referrals should be processed by the LA. If after checking the referral against records held the LA believes no action is required, the referral should be rejected. Please see your LA IT supplier's guidance for details on how this should be done.

Occupation Pension Indicator

32. DWP has recently discovered that the Occupation Pension Indicator may not be correctly completed in a number of cases. HMRC has confirmed that this is caused by some pension providers not setting the indicator correctly on their payroll systems. As a consequence LAs may receive referrals which suggest that a NSP income is earned income.
33. DWP is working on a solution to correct as many of these indicators as possible. However, this solution will not be ready to be deployed until late autumn 2014 and in the meantime you may continue to receive referrals for NSP which appear as earnings.
34. LAs can undertake a number of checks to confirm whether income has been reported as earnings correctly. Firstly the employer name may suggest that the income is from a pension fund. Secondly, national insurance contributions (NICs) are not paid on pension income, so their absence may suggest that the income is from a pension.
35. It should be noted that LAs should still process referrals where staff believe the indicator has been incorrectly set. This is because all remaining data in the referral will still be high quality and is not affected by this issue. For instance, LAs will still be able to trust the fact that the referral shows an individual has been receiving payments of £100 per month, even though the referral may incorrectly suggest this is earnings instead of pension.

Self employed income

36. HMRC does not include self-assessed income such as self employed earnings on the RTI feed. Therefore you should only receive details of payments made from employers or pension providers. However there is a possibility that a small number of RTI referrals may identify a source of income as being from employment where the LA has decided to treat this same income as being from self employment. In these circumstances it will be for the LA to determine the appropriate method for treating that source of income, in light of the information available.

Data transfer

37. Files will be transmitted to LAs via encrypted email to the same named contact who currently receives the HBMS referrals. This will ensure secure delivery of the data in line with DWP security policy. Once received within the LA the data files will be uploaded into the LA IT systems from the same or similar point used for the HBMS referrals. In the event that there is no referral for a particular LA an email will be sent to the named contact to advise this. As such can LAs please ensure that contact details held by DWP are up to date and that changes are notified swiftly in the future.
38. This approach has been chosen in consultation with members of the LAA Steering Group and POG and reflects LA requirements to utilise existing processes where possible.
39. If HBMS referrals are currently sent directly to the fraud team in your LA please consider making arrangements for the RTI referrals to be promptly passed on to the HB processing team.
40. Files should be uploaded to LA IT systems within 24 hours of receipt and the original file must be destroyed once uploading is complete.
41. The LADS team has worked with LA IT Suppliers to ensure the data is presented in a useable format and provides the information needed to recalculate the award.

LA IT system enhancements

42. The Project envisages that the number of pay records accompanying each referral may be high and that processing these clerically would be cumbersome. The LADS team has been working with LA IT Suppliers to develop software solutions which will negate the need for re-keying and will enable LAs to handle the RTI data more efficiently.
43. Whilst full scale automation along the lines of Automated Transfers to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) was considered for this initiative it was ruled out early in the project because historical as well as current data will be sent with the RTI referrals. This decision was taken following advice received from POG and the LA IT Suppliers.
44. The four main LA IT Suppliers (Capita, Civica, Northgate and Northgate Orbis) have developed enhancements to their HB processing systems that will allow their software to:
 - upload the RTI referral files sent to LAs
 - allocate referrals to the relevant HB claim(s)
 - display the 'payslip' data accompanying the referral
 - allow users to use the 'payslip' data to form an average or averages of income over user defined periods, without the need to re-key information
 - calculate assessed income (e.g. net of tax, national insurance and half of pension contributions) wherever possible

- notify users where the RTI data requires further investigation by the LA
- collect management information to be submitted to DWP via SHBE.

45. DWP has not been able to engage with workflow and document management system (DMS) providers. This is because LAs currently use over 50 different suppliers and workflow procedures are not standardised. LAs who would like to explore DMS integration should check the guidance issued by their supplier as the processing system may offer the opportunity to export work items or tasks to DMS.

Use of earnings Information

46. On receipt of a data match LAs will be required to amend the HB award in accordance with HB legislation and usual business practice. See HB Guidance Manual section BW2 for working age claimants and Section BP2 for claimants over the qualifying age for State Pension Credit.

47. RTI does not require employers to provide HMRC with details of the number of hours worked and as such LAs may need to write out to claimants in order to ascertain this information when considering which disregards apply.

48. Where the RTI referral identifies an increase in earnings already declared LAs are encouraged to assume hours are the same, unless it is not reasonable to think so. Where RTI identifies a new employment LAs will either need to assume minimum hours to award the lowest income disregard or contact the claimant as necessary. LAs will need to advise the claimant of any assumption(s) made in this regard and provide the claimant with opportunity to challenge anything they believe is incorrect. DWP does not expect any overpayments to arise where an LA makes an assumption based on the above guidance because the lowest income disregard will always have been awarded.

49. LADS have impacted the recent Upper Tribunal decision regarding attribution of earnings against the RTI software, developed by the LA IT Suppliers. Suppliers have confirmed that the software solution is flexible enough to allow LAs to interpret the decision as they see fit. Further information regarding the Upper Tribunal decision was provided in bulletin G8/2014.

Data sharing with LAs

50. DWP will provide LAs with RTI data for the limited purposes of administering HB and any specific service or provision of a prescribed welfare service or local Council Tax reduction scheme, as covered by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). All LAs administering HB are signatories to the MoU between the DWP and LAs 2013/14 for the access, handling, exchange and protection of DWPs and HMRCs data.

51. In handling and processing data received from RTI LAs must comply with the terms and conditions detailed in the current MoU.

52. In context the term HB administration includes any contact with customers relating to a HB claim or award (or potential claim or award); the handling of

appeals, the recovery of HB overpayments, or the investigation of suspected HB fraud (including fraud relating to DWP benefits).

Issues resolution

53. Any issues and/or incidents arising with the RTI information throughout the course of the project should be directed in the first instance to the LA Support Team (LA-ST) via phone: T: 01253 689422 or by email: LA-SST.HDD@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK using a LAST9 RTI incident management form, which will be made available on Huddle. Annex 7 refers.

Claimant disputes

54. Please refer to Annex 4 for guidance on how to deal with claimant disputes or queries about LAs using RTI data.

Management Information

55. In order to judge the success of this initiative, DWP will collect management information regarding:

- outstanding referrals
- referrals where intervention activity has started but is not complete
- referrals which have been completed
- the MVA attributed to each completed referral. (The MVA is the difference between the previous weekly HB award and the new weekly HB award).

56. Following advice from POG, DWP agreed to collect this information via SHBE. This will be done using R Records and T Records.

57. It should be noted that DWP has worked closely with LA IT Suppliers to ensure that when you are using their RTI software, as much information as possible is populated on SHBE automatically. However, LA staff will still need to enter some information for each case depending on its outcome. Please also consult the guidance issued by your LA IT Supplier to ensure your SHBE is compiled correctly.

58. LAs should return an R Record for each referral which has been received until it is completed.

59. Specific fields of the R Record should always be completed as follows:

- Field 173 (Reason for fraud and error detection activity) should be completed with code 4 = Non-HBMS risk score / match
- Field 317 (HBMS Rule ID) should be completed with one of the following rule numbers, depending on whether the referral identified a discrepancy in:

- reported earnings – HBRT001
 - reported NSP – HBRT002
 - both reported earnings and NSP – HBRT003
- Field 319 should only be completed if the referral does not result in a financial adjustment to the claim. If this occurs, please use one of the 17 existing result codes currently used for HBMS referrals, e.g.
- code 3 = Retrospective Change
 - code 4 = Information held in backlog of work
 - etc.

60. Specific fields of the T Record should always be completed as follows:

- Field 250 (Type of change) should be 2 = All other changes;
- Field 254 (How was change identified) should be 8 = LA intervention: review

61. Where an LA has to undertake intervention activity before completing the referral, field 172 can be used to identify the method of fraud and error detection activity as normal.

62. It is important that staff complete these details correctly when dealing with RTI referrals. Examples are provided at Annex 5 of what DWP will expect to find on a completed SHBE return.

About this guide

63. Annexes 1 to 3 of this guide contain explanations and examples of RTI summary data fields and detailed data fields. It is intended that this guide will help LAs to interpret the more complex RTI data fields in the event an LA may need to deal with these cases clerically.

64. As stated earlier in the guide the Project has funded changes to LA software to enable an automated upload of the data into LA IT systems for administration by LA staff and as such strongly supports the use of this process. LA IT Suppliers have developed their own guidance on how to use this software and this should be shared with you in the usual manner.

65. In the event of an LA needing to adopt a clerical process, either by exception or choice, then the LA should contact LAST to request guidance and support on how to follow a clerical process.

66. Please note that this document does not include guidance on the following self explanatory data fields:

- Claimant NINO

- Claimant NINO Suffix
- Claimant's Surname
- Claimant's First name initial
- Partner NINO
- Partner NINO Suffix
- Benefit Type
- Employer Name 1
- Employer Name 2
- Employer Trade Name 1
- Employer Trade Name 2.

67. The guide is separated into three distinctive parts and is displayed as follows:

- 1) Summary level data
- 2) Detailed data
- 3) General notes.

68. The main LA IT Suppliers have received similar guidance and have taken this into account when designing their software. LAs should therefore refer to LA IT Supplier's guidance for an explanation of how the IT systems will handle specific data items.

Annex 1

Part 1 - Summary Level Data – Claim File

1. The Claim File contains summary level data regarding each claim. The information in this file is mainly used by DWP as part of the data match process and by LA software to identify and allocate a referral. Therefore in this guidance information has only been given about data item(s) which we think are of particular use to LA staff.

Case Type

2. The reference codes in this table indicate which type of case the record refers to.

1. Claimant has employment earnings	9. Claimant has earnings & partner has NSP
2. Claimant has NSP	10. Partner has earnings & claimant has NSP
3. Claimant has both earnings and NSP	11. Both claimant and partner have earnings & claimant has NSP
4. Partner has employment earnings	12. Both claimant and partner have earnings & partner has NSP
5. Partner has NSP	13. Both claimant and partner have NSP & claimant also has earnings
6. Partner has both earnings and NSP	14. Both claimant and partner have NSP & Partner also has earnings
7. Both claimant and partner have employment earnings	15. Both claimant and partner have both employment earnings and NSP.
8. Both claimant and partner have NSP	

Annex 2

Part 2 - RTI Detailed Data Fields – Raw File

1. The Raw File contains a list of the payment submissions showing on the RTI feed. This can be considered as the file which contains individual 'payslips'. The data appearing in this file has come directly from employers' or pension providers' payroll systems and has not been altered by HMRC or DWP in any way.

LA IT Systems

2. The LADS Delivery Team has worked closely with the four main LA IT Suppliers (Capita, Civica, Northgate and Northgate Orbis) to develop software which handles these data items correctly. This means that where files are uploaded to your main processing system assessed income for benefit purposes will be calculated automatically in most cases, meaning that a decision maker will only need to check the calculation. Staff are unlikely to have to manually derive income from multiple fields as described below. However, you should read this section in conjunction with the guidance issued by your LA IT Supplier.

File Name

3. You will be able to identify this file by its file name, which will conform to the following convention:

RTI_<LA_ID>_RAW_YYYYMMDD_ggg.txt

4. Where:
 - <LA_ID> is the numeric LA Identification code reported via SHBE
 - YYYYMMDD is the tranche date in the international date format
 - ggg is a unique zero padded sequence number.
5. So for example a Raw File produced on 6 October 2014 for an LA with an ID code of 123456 would look like this:

RTI_123456_RAW_20140922_001.txt

6. HMRC Office Number

Meaning: The employer or pension provider's HMRC office number is the first 3 digits of the employer's PAYE reference.

Example: If the employer's PAYE reference number is 123/A246 then the HMRC office number is **123**.

7. Employer PAYE Reference

The employer's reference number is used by HMRC to identify the employer or pension provider and is made up of two separate sets of characters:

HMRC Office Number

Example: 123

The second set of characters can be a mixture of numerical and alpha characters:

Reference Number

Example: A246

Therefore the actual employers PAYE reference from the above example is **123/A246** (office number combined with the reference number).

8. Payment Date

Meaning: This is the date the claimant/partner receives their payment and will be displayed as `yyyymmdd`.

9. Unique Employment Sequence Number

Meaning: This identifies different open employments or NSPs. Every new source of income has a sequential number which starts at 1 for each person e.g. 1,2,3,4 etc. and is an indicator as to how many jobs the individual has held historically.

Note: A single employer may operate multiple PAYE schemes. Additionally an employer can employ a person to do more than one job under the same PAYE scheme.

Example: A county council may operate a monthly payroll for central office staff under one PAYE scheme and another for non-teaching staff who work in schools. An individual may have two distinct jobs under the latter, i.e. school crossing assistant and lunchtime supervisor. In such a case the records will present two Unique Employment Numbers e.g. 16 and 17, this tells you that even though they are for the same employer there are two separate jobs and in this example the indication is that the claimant has held 15 previous jobs.

10. Employment start date - date employment, contract, NSP or taxable benefit starts

Meaning: This is the date the claimant/partner started working for the employer and should only appear once.

Note: If there is no start date present at all during the current tax year the job may have started in a previous tax year. The start date may not reflect the true employment start date; it could be the date that the claimant was set up on the payroll rather than the date they actually started work.

11. Employment end date - date employment, contract, NSP or taxable benefit ended

Meaning: This is the date that the claimant/partner stopped working for the employer or receiving a non state pension.

Note: There have been some instances where the employer has failed to complete this field. If this is the case there may not be an end date recorded, but no payments will have been made for some weeks. This may occur where an employer fails to close an employee's payroll record properly and has not issued a P45.

12. Total tax to date in this employment

Meaning: The total of tax paid to date in this employment within the tax year (from 6 April).

Note: Will not include tax deducted from any previous employment.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be treated as income tax and deducted from gross income for benefit purposes. A refund would appear as a negative amount.

13. Total taxable pay to date in this employment or NSP – including payroll benefits in kind

Meaning: This is the total claimant/partners taxable pay to date for this employment/NSP within the tax year (from 6 April).

Note: The amount is cumulative and includes the following:

- All pay, including wages, salaries, fees, overtime, bonuses and commission
- Pensions from registered pension schemes
- Employer-financed retirement benefits schemes
- All statutory payments (e.g. statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay etc.)
- Payroll benefits in kind

Note: The figure is minus any authorised deductions under the 'net pay arrangements' for superannuation contributions, or payroll giving schemes.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be treated as gross income for benefit purposes, unless a TCP has been made. Please see separate guidance about TCP at Annex 6. A refund would appear as a negative amount.

14. Taxable pay in this pay period for employment or NSP including benefits in kind

Meaning: The claimant/partner's taxable pay in this pay period for this employment/NSP and includes:

- All pay, including wages, salaries, fees, overtime, bonuses and commission
- Pensions from registered pension schemes
- Employer-financed retirement benefits schemes
- All statutory payments (e.g. statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay etc.)
- Payroll benefits in kind

Note: Figure is minus any authorised deductions under the 'net pay arrangements' for superannuation contributions or payroll giving schemes.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be treated as gross income for benefit purposes, unless a TCP has been made. Please see separate guidance about TCP at Annex 6. A refund would appear as a negative amount.

15. Pay frequency

Informs the frequency by which a claimant/partner is paid as follows:

W1	(Weekly)	M6	(Bi-annually)
W2	(Fortnightly)	MA	(Annually)*
W4	(4 Weekly)	1O	(One Off)*
M1	(Calendar Monthly)	IR	(Irregular)*
M3	(Quarterly)		

*MA - Many low value occupational pensions are paid annually

*1O - A 'one-off' is where a claimant has been employed to do a one-off piece of work, for one week or month, and only receives one payment

*IR - Payments of a frequency that exceeds 3 months for things such as casual or seasonal workers.

16. Tax week no.

Meaning: The tax week number in which the payment was made.

17. Tax month no.

Meaning: Where payments are made monthly, or in multiples of month, this is the tax month in which the payment was made.

18. Income tax year to which the submission relates

Meaning: The tax year to which the payment relates. Each tax year runs from 6 April to 5 April.

Note: The relevant tax year will be displayed as 12/13, 13/14, etc.

19. Number of earnings period(s) covered by payment

Note: This figure will be **(1)** - If the claimant is paid at regular intervals, i.e. weekly, monthly, multiples of weeks or months.

If the payment is paid in advance or in arrears or for more than one earnings period, this will show the number of earnings periods covered.

Example: If the claimant is paid 1 weeks' wage plus 2 weeks wages in advance for holidays the number of employment periods paid will show as 3.

20. Indicator that the payment is a payment made after the date of the notification of the contract ending

Note: Will be 'Y' if payment was made after claimant has left employment but has not been re-employed.

21. Tax code operated on this payment

Tax code of claimant/partner will be either:

1. Numbers followed by a suffix letter (L,T,P or Y), for example 870L
2. K followed by numbers, for example K73
3. BR, 0T, D0, D1, NT or FT

Note: As the data is submitted in real time each record will show the tax code as it was when the payment was made you may see changing tax codes over time for the same employment.

Where the tax code is not a standard code this may indicate to the LA that further action or investigation is required. For instance, a non-standard tax code could indicate other sources of income. It should be remembered however that this may not always be the case as tax codes can vary for many reasons.

22. Value of payments not subject to tax or NICs in pay period

Meaning: The value of any other payments that have been made to the claimant in this pay period that are not salary or wages and are subject to neither tax nor NICs.

Example: Season ticket, loan, advance and certain travel and subsistence costs, salary sacrifices for childcare or charity or non-taxable redundancy payments, etc.

Note: This field will also contain any amount paid in respect of a redundancy payment as payments up to a value of £30,000 are made tax-free. Where a large value is present and coupled with an employment end date it could be a redundancy payment.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field may be treated as gross income, disregarded as income or treated as capital (which may also be disregarded).

Because HMRC's RTI feed has been primarily designed to administer the tax system and does not collect all the information required to process claims for HB it does not provide any further detail regarding why these payments are not subject to tax or NICs.

In most instances items appearing in this field will need to be checked by the LA to establish whether they should be treated as gross income for benefit purposes, disregarded or treated as capital. It should be noted that any amount appearing in the 'not subject to tax' or 'national insurance' field could comprise of amounts which should be treated differently, e.g. season ticket loan and salary sacrifice are recorded on the same 'payslip'.

Example 1: The file shows a pay submission with £1,250 in this field. The LA queries the details with the claimant and establishes that a season ticket loan of £1,000 was included with the payment, along with a childcare voucher salary sacrifice of £250. The LA therefore disregards £1,000 of this payment as it is a loan which the claimant has used to buy a season ticket but includes the £250 salary sacrifice when calculating gross income for benefit purposes.

A negative amount would indicate the employer/pension provider had reversed an earlier payment which was treated as not subject to tax or NICs. Repayment of items such as season ticket loans would **not** appear in this field.

Example 2: In May 2014 an employee is paid a season ticket loan by their employer of £1,200. The employer will recover this by deducting £100 each month from the employee's pay from June 2014 to May 2015. This will show on the RTI feed on the May 2014 pay submission as a payment of £1,200 not subject to tax and NICs, but the repayment will **not** show anywhere on subsequent RTI pay submissions.

23. Value of employee pension contributions paid under 'net pay arrangements' in pay period

Meaning: The amount of pension contributions the claimant paid in this pay period under 'net pay arrangements'.

Note: The value of this deduction has already been deducted from taxable pay entry.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be counted towards gross income for benefit purposes.

However, pension contributions should be deducted from gross pay.

Example: The file shows a pay submission with £100 in this field. When calculating income the LA:

1. Adds this £100 towards gross income shown elsewhere, such as taxable income or statutory payments and
2. Also deducts 50% of this amount (i.e. £50) from the gross income as this is a pension contribution.

A negative amount would indicate a reversal of a pension contribution.

24. Value of employee pension contributions that are not paid under a 'net pay arrangement'

Meaning: The amount of deductions made for pension contributions in this pay period that are not made under 'net pay arrangements' in this pay period.

Note: The value of this deduction has not been deducted from the taxable pay entry.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should only be counted as a pension contribution deducted from gross pay.

Example: The file shows a pay submission with £100 in this field. The LA deducts 50% of this amount (i.e. £50) from the gross income as this is a pension contribution.

A negative amount would indicate a reversal of a pension contribution.

25. Amount of tax deducted or refunded from this payment

Meaning: The amount of tax deducted from or refunded to the claimant/partner from the payment.

Note: If the value is a tax refund it will show as a minus, e.g. - £25.00 is a tax refund of £25.00.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be treated as income tax deductions from gross pay.

26. Employees NICs due on all earnings in this pay period

Meaning: The total of claimant's/partner's NICs due in this period.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be treated as national insurance deductions from gross pay.

A negative amount would indicate a refund.

27. Employees NICs due on all earnings year to date

Meaning: The total of claimant's/partner's NICs payable year to date.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be treated as national insurance deductions from gross pay.

A negative amount would indicate a refund.

28. NIC Refund

Meaning: This field will always be blank and should be ignored. It was discovered during the design process that the data in this field would not provide sufficiently reliable information for the assessment of HB.

29. Unique Payment Identification

Meaning: A unique reference number given to each payment.

Note: Occasionally an employer or pension provider may make a mistake when running their payroll. In these instances the employer/pension provider may choose to resubmit the RTI data. The amended payment will show as having been made on the same pay date and covering the same period but will have a greater sequence number. In these cases the payment with the lower sequence number should be disregarded.

If two payments are made on the same pay date but for different periods they should both be counted.

Very occasionally duplicate payments with exactly the same details may appear on the RTI feed. This is due to the way payroll employers or pension providers may submit the RTI data twice. In this instance, payments will appear to be duplicated.

Steps have been taken in conjunction with LA IT Suppliers to ensure that where a duplicate payment or a correction has been made by an employer or pension provider the software will only display the correct results. See Annex 3, Duplicates for more detail.

30. Occupational Pension Indicator

Meaning: Will be 'Y' when the payment is for an occupational pension or annuity.

Note: In a number of cases employers have set this indicator for employees. HMRC has procedures in place to advise employers to correct their records.

31. TCP type A, B or C

Meaning: The amount of TCP.

Application: These amounts should be treated as capital. See Annex 6 for further details.

32. Value of Statutory Payments

- Value of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) year to date (YTD)
- Value of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) YTD
- Value of Ordinary Statutory Paternity Pay (OSPP) YTD
- Value of Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) YTD
- Value of Additional Statutory Paternity Pay (ASPP) YTD.

Note: Statutory payments are always provided as YTD values. You should deduct the latest YTD figure from the previous YTD figure to determine the latest in-period amount.

Example: Statutory Payments are included within the total taxable pay figure.

Employer Name	Taxable Pay	Payment Date	SMP YTD
ABC Corp	£330.45	5/5/2014	0
ABC Corp	£150	12/5/2014	75
ABC Corp	£150	19/5/2014	150

In the above example the claimant is paid weekly and receives £150 taxable pay each week of this £75 is SMP.

Note: HMRC is no longer collecting YTD SSP specific data from April 2014. This means LAs will only receive details of SSP payments made prior to the 2014/5 tax year. However, SSP will continue to appear as normal income in other fields as taxable income.

33. Value of employee pension contribution paid under ‘net pay arrangements’ YTD

Meaning: The amount of pension contribution the claimant/partner has made under ‘net pay arrangements’ to date in this employment within the tax year.

Note: The value of this deduction has already been deducted from taxable pay entry. This field will always be blank for records during 2012/13 tax year. Therefore LAs will not be able to use this field for entries made in this year.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should be counted as both gross income for benefit purposes and a pension contribution deducted from gross pay.

Example: The file shows a pay submission with £1,000 in this field. When calculating income the LA:

1. Adds the £1,000 towards the gross income figure shown elsewhere, such as taxable income or statutory payments
and
2. Deducts 50% of this amount (i.e. £500) from the gross income as this is a pension contribution.

A negative amount would indicate a reversal of a pension contribution.

34. Value of employee pension contributions that are not paid under a 'net pay arrangement' YTD

Meaning: Amount of pension contributions to date not made under 'net pay arrangements' in this employment, within the tax year.

Note: The value of this deduction has NOT been deducted from the taxable pay entry. This field will always be blank for records during 2012/13 tax year. Therefore LAs will not be able to use this field for entries made in this year.

Application: Amounts appearing in this field should only be counted as a pension contribution deducted from gross pay.

Example: The file shows a pay submission with £1,000 in this field. The LA deducts 50% of this amount (i.e. £500) from the gross income as this is a pension contribution.

A negative amount would indicate a reversal of a pension contribution.

35. Merger Indicator

Meaning: This shows that HMRC has identified an individual has multiple RTI records (possibly because the employer was using a temporary NINo) and that action is currently being taken to merge these records. HMRC only removes the merger indicator when it is fully satisfied it has correctly merged all an individual's records.

Note: DWP has taken steps to ensure you will not receive referrals which are currently undergoing merger activity. However you may receive cases with an historical merger indicator.

Application: Merger indicators are provided for information only. In the highly unlikely event that you receive a referral with a merger indicator present on the latest payslip, you should not work on it and reject the referral using result code 14: DWP/External Data Source Error.

36. Paper filer

Meaning: Where the value of this field is 'Y' HMRC has allowed the employer/pension provider to file their RTI returns by paper. This means HMRC may allow the organisation to submit details of the payments they have made less frequently.

Note: The income shown for paper filers may not have been paid at the frequency shown. For instance, paper filers are likely to submit returns quarterly when they actually pay the individual weekly. The RTI feed may therefore show that the individual is only paid one week in every quarter, but the one payment issued is large and is actually a sum of all the weekly payments issued during the last three months.

Paper filers are also likely to show less up to date information when compared with other RTI records as there may be a time lag of several months between payments being made and HMRC being advised. Therefore you should not assume a source of income from a paper filer has ended just because no payments have been issued recently.

Less than 1% of employers and pension providers are paper filers.

Example: An individual directly employing their own carer has HMRC permission to submit a paper RTI record four times a year. They pay their carer £100 every week but the RTI feed shows they are paid £1,300 every three months with a frequency of weekly. The RTI feed also does not show a payment has been made within the last two months but the employment has not ended.

Annex 3

Part 3 – General Notes

Cumulative YTD values

1. Cumulative or YTD values start at '0' for a new employment or at the start of a new tax year. YTD figures do not carry over from one employment to the next. They increase each period by adding on the amount from the corresponding field in the current period to the corresponding field in the previous period. If the pay period and YTD values are the same it indicates either a new employment or the start of the tax year.
2. **Example:** When a job carries over tax years.

Taxable Pay	Taxable Pay YTD	Tax in pay period	Tax YTD	Tax Week
200	17,250	10	350	52
100	100	10	10	1
100	200	10	20	2
150	350	15	35	3

3. **Example:** A new job. The first payment is beyond tax week 1 but the first record shows the pay period and YTD values are the same. As such the YTD amounts will reset to zero at the beginning of each new employment period commencing after the start of the new tax year.

Taxable Pay	Taxable Pay YTD	Tax in Pay Period	Tax YTD	Tax Week
100	100	10	10	21
100	200	10	20	22
150	350	15	35	23

Occupational pension indicator

4. In early submissions to RTI the occupational pension indicator was incorrectly applied to earnings records in a number of cases. These can be identified for working age claimants by the presence of NICs as these are not payable for pensions. However, records for State Pension Age customers will not show NICs as once they reach State Pension Age they will stop paying NICS on earnings. Any cases with an occupational pension indicator set and NICs recorded should therefore be treated as employment earnings.

Corrections

5. If an employer makes a mistake when entering the RTI data this can be rectified either by re-submission of the same period or by correcting in the next pay period. You may see entries for the same period with higher or lower figures. Either the higher or lower values may be correct as the employer may have over or under reported previously. Where more than one entry exists for

the same pay period the correct value can be identified by selecting the latest Unique Payment Identification.

6. **Example:** Same date correction – two entries for 6/09/2013. The one with the highest Unique Payment Identification is the corrected one, in this case **455119473. The previous one, 451782197, should be ignored.** YTD values as you can see are corrected when the in-period value is re-submitted.

Taxable Pay	Taxable Pay to Date	Payment Date	Unique Payment Identification
100	100	30/08/2013	431071225
100	200	06/09/2013	451782197
80	180	06/09/2013	455119473
100	180	13/09/2013	467824314
100	380	20/09/2013	468196148

Duplicates

7. An issue has been identified with a particular type of software used by some employers to submit RTI data when they have to correct an employees payment details. In these cases the software forces a full payment submission to be made each time the employer makes a correction. Therefore an employer with 1,000 employees who corrects one employee's record will resubmit all 1,000 employee records for the pay period. As above use the latest Unique Payment Identification to identify the correct value payment.
8. **Note:** LAs should use the Unique Payment Identification number to establish the correct record as shown in the example above.

Annex 4

LA lines to take - for staff working with RTI**1. What do I do if I get an enquiry from the press or any other media?**

All responses to enquires from the press or other media require a collaborated response between the LA and DWP. You should contact your press office who will in turn consult with DWP via the LAST team.

Press Office – Should advise DWP of all RTI press or other media enquires (in the first instance) by contacting the LAST team.

No team or individual should release information concerning the RTI Bulk Match initiative to the press or media.

2. What do I do if I get an enquiry from a Local MP or a Parliamentary Question?

Local MP or Parliamentary enquiries require a collaborative response between LAs and DWP. You should contact the LAST team in order to confirm responses.

3. What do I do if I receive a Freedom of Information (FOI) request?

All FOI requests should be handled as per current LA business as usual processes.

4. What do I advise the claimant if asked where our department got the information used to calculate benefit entitlement?

Advise the claimant that we have used data provided by DWP and HMRC. The information was initially provided by either an employer or pension provider.

5. What contact number do I provide if the claimant asks for a HMRC contact number if they are disputing the income used in their benefit assessment?

Under no circumstances should a claimant be directed to contact HMRC. Advise that you will be able to help with their enquiry. If you are unable to help you should contact DWP via LAST.

6. What address do I provide if the claimant asks for a HMRC address as they are disputing the income used in their benefit assessment?

Under no circumstances should a claimant be directed to contact HMRC. Advise that you will be able to help with their enquiry. If you are unable to help you should contact DWP via LAST.

7. What should I advise the claimant if they say the amount of income used to calculate benefit entitlement is incorrect?

You should follow normal business procedures for when a claimant disagrees with a decision, such as asking the claimant to request a revision of the decision by supplying their own evidence, i.e. payslips.

8. What should I advise the claimant if they ask if it is legal for HMRC to share information with DWP and LAs?

You can advise that the supply of RTI data by HMRC to DWP and LAs to use for social security purposes is permitted by section 127 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

9. What should I do if the RTI data is incomplete or appears corrupt?

You should raise an incident via LAST who will ensure the incident is escalated through the issues resolution process on your behalf.

Annex 5

SHBE Scenarios

1. Example 1 (fictitious dates used for example purposes only)

- RTI referral created by DWP on 22 September 2014
- LA decides to write to claimant on 25 September 2014 for further information
- Extract 1 created 29 September 2014
- Claimant responds and referral is completed on 15 October 2014

Field	Description	Extract 1	Extract 2
	extract date	29-09-2014	27-10-2014
1	record type	R	R
2	HB reference	10001001	10001001
171	start date of activity	25-09-2014	25-09-2014
172	method	3 = postal check	3 = postal check
173	reason	4 = Non-HBMS risk score /	4 = Non-HBMS risk
174	full review?	Y = full review	Y = full review
175	completion date		15-10-2014
176	outcome	4 = Not known / not	2 = benefit
316	RMS number		
317	HBMS rule ID	HBRT001	HBRT001
318	date of HBMS match	22-09-2014	22-09-2014
319	reason for no adjustment		

Note: A T Record (and E Record if applicable) would also be created as normal during Extract 2 and signifies the referral is complete.

2. Example 2

- SHBE extract taken 15 August 2014 shows claimant not working
- On 20 August claimant reports to LA he started work on 1 July 2014
- LA actions the change on 22 August 2014
- RTI referral identifies undeclared earnings and sent to LA on 22 September 2014
- LA checks the referral but finds no change to benefit as claimant has reported the change in circumstances

Field	Description	Record 1
1	record type	R
2	HB reference	10001002
171	start date of activity	
172	method	
173	reason	
174	full review?	
175	completion date	

176	outcome	
316	RMS number	
317	HBMS rule ID	HBRT001
318	date of HBMS match	22-09-2014
319	reason for no adjustment	3 = Retrospective change

3. Example 3

- LA receives RTI referral 22 September 2014
- LA actions referral without needing to gather any further evidence on 30 September 2014

Field	Description	Record 1
1	record type	R
2	HB reference	10001002
171	start date of activity	
172	method	
173	reason	4 = Non-HBMS risk score / match
174	full review?	
175	completion date	
176	outcome	
316	RMS number	
317	HBMS rule ID	HBRT002
318	date of HBMS match	22-09-2014
319	reason for no adjustment	

Note: A T Record (and E Record if applicable) would also be created as normal during Extract 2 and signifies the referral is complete.

Annex 6

Trivial Commutation Payments

Background

1. A TCP and some other lump sum pension payments are one-off lump sums that pay-off or are paid in place of a small pension, so that there is no need for the pension provider to make the usual weekly, monthly or annual payments. Typically, these one-off payments are used if the regular payments would be very small.
2. These are not lump sums paid as death benefits or for serious ill health.
3. Early analysis undertaken by DWP of the RTI data received from HMRC has shown that TCPs will appear on approximately 0.1% of payment submission records.
4. HMRC asks pension providers to categorise TCPs into one of three types for tax administration purposes. This distinction is not relevant when calculating income and capital for HB purposes so all TCPs should be treated in the same way, regardless of their type. However, for information purposes, a description of each type is provided below:
 - Type A – Trivial lump sum (TCLS)
 - Type B – Other lump sum (from personal pension schemes)
 - Type C – Other lump sum (from occupational/public service pension schemes)
5. In accordance with Regulation 41(11) of Housing Benefit (State Pension Credit) Regulations 2006, all TCPs made to pension-age claimants should be treated as capital.
6. It is understood that very few working age claimants ever receive TCPs. For this group of claimants there are no specific regulations. DWP recommends that these lump sum payments are treated as capital.
7. TCPs must be categorised by the employer as either taxable or non-taxable income. As such they will always also appear on the pay submission in other fields, raising the possibility that income is double counted.

RTI submission examples

8. TCPs can be treated as either fully-taxable or partly-taxable/partly-non-taxable. The following examples demonstrate both scenarios.
9. Please note that while these examples refer to TCP type A, the situations documented could equally be applied to types B and C.

10. Situation 1:

A pension provider has already made standard payments from the pension before making the trivial commutation or lump sum payment, therefore the pension already exists in RTI. The lump sum will effectively be a full and final payment of the total pension, i.e. no further payments will be made. In this example, the pension provider is also paying a month's standard pension *at the same time* as the lump sum payment.

- Total Lump sum is £9,400
- Standard in-month final pension payment is £475

Date of Leaving = 09/11/2013 (date that final lump sum payment is made)

Tax code operated = 1050P

Occ Pen indicator = Y

Trivial Commutation Type = A (Trivial Lump Sum TCLS)

Trivial Commutation Payment = £9,400.00

Taxable Pay to Date = £13,200.00 (includes earlier standard pension payments of £475 per month)

Taxable Pay in the Period = £9,875.00 (includes the trivial commutation figure of £9,400 which is being taxed plus final £475 monthly standard pension payment)

Tax Deducted to Date = £1,985.80

Tax Deducted in pay period = £665.80

Note: No non-taxable element of lump sum is available in situation 1 as previous pension payments have been made.

Treatment by LA: In this example, the RTI feed will not allow the LA to establish how much tax was deducted from the standard pension payment and how much was deducted from the TCP. These cases will need to be handled with care.

In the first instance, DWP recommends that the LA looks at earlier pension payments made in the same tax year to establish what the deductions from the standard pension are. Where this is not possible, the LA may need to contact the claimant to confirm details.

11. Situation 2:

A pension provider has not made any earlier standard payments and the TCP is the first and only payment from the pension. Therefore no RTI pension exists prior to submission and no continuing payments will be made.

- Total Lump sum is £9,400
- No previous monthly payments

Date of Leaving = 09/11/2013 (date that payment is made)

Tax code operated = BR

Occ Pen indicator = Y

Trivial Commutation Type = A (Trivial Lump Sum TCLS)
Trivial Commutation Payment = £9,400.00
Taxable Pay to Date = £7,050.00
Taxable Pay in the period = £7,050.00
Tax Deducted to Date = £1,410.00
Tax Deducted in pay period = £1,410.00
Non-tax or NIC field = £2,350.00 (non-taxable portion of the TCP)

Note: Non-taxable element is 25% of the total lump sum and this can only apply to situation 2, i.e. one off payment made with no previous pension payments paid.

Treatment by LA: In this example the LA should treat the net figure paid (i.e. £7,050 - £1,410 + £2,350 = £7,990) as capital.

RTI Forecasted Volumes

1. As explained in this circular the RTI bulk data matching initiative will identify an estimated 223,000 HB referrals. Analysis has been carried out to determine the likely number of referrals that might be issued to each LA and these were provided to HB Managers in July of this year. It must be emphasised that those figures were based on HB caseloads.
2. The referrals generated as a result of the data matching activity will be staggered over a number of monthly tranches.
3. We recently provided information on the testing that will be undertaken by four LAs - Barrow, Gateshead, Kensington & Chelsea and Liverpool. Since that update Calderdale and Sedgemoor LAs have joined the test group in order to test their in-house IT solution.
4. Test sites received the first data on 19 September 2014 which will be used to test the LA IT Suppliers' software and give them the opportunity to use the data, assess the quality and test the end to end process. During this period guidance developed to support implementation of the RTI Bulk Data Match will also be used and where necessary amended following feedback from the test sites. The first tranche of referrals will be issued by 6th October to all LAs.
5. Discussions with the LA Implementation Working Group agreed a preference for a flat profile schedule, with lower volumes output in February in order to manage capacity demands. Volumes have been scheduled at national level and the expected volumes, national profile percentages and expected delivery dates are shown below. Therefore applying the national percentage to your forecast volumes will provide an indication of the number of referrals. However, please note that these are **forecasts** and actual volumes may vary.

Month	Estimated National Volumes	National Profile Percentages	Timetable of Delivery Dates to LAs	RTI Data Available to Users
September	41,000	19%	30 September – 6 October	6 October
October	42,000	20%	15 October – 21 October	21 October
November	41,000	19%	19 November – 25 November	25 November
December	34,000	16%	17 December – 23 December	23 December
January	41,000	19%	14 January – 20 January	20 January
February	13,000	6%	18 February – 23 February	23 February

NB Percentages subject to rounding

6. Following the first data matching exercise the actual volume generated for September is 55,000. DWP are working to impact the increased volumes on future tranches; but the total number of referrals issued during the period of the exercise will not exceed the overall figure of 223,000.
7. The 'Timetable of Delivery Dates' reflects the staggered approach that will be adopted from issuing the files and uploading them into the IT systems. The final column, 'RTI Data Available to Users' reflects the latest date referrals should then be sent to your named contact.