

# Housing Benefit Direct issue 175 March 2017



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## Editorial

I know that this will be just one of quite a number of communications that your local authority (LAs) will have received from us in recent days and weeks and, as ever, I thank you for your patience and efforts in successfully landing changes as we drive further reforms forward. There is always a flurry of activity in the run up to the end of the financial year and the start of a new one; with new policies being introduced, funding settlements confirmed and of course your annual billing and uprating. We endeavour to streamline these messages where we can but it is not always possible due to dependencies; whether they be ministerial, financial or otherwise. That said, if you have any comments or suggestions on how we can improve on the way we communicate with you then please let my [LA Gateway Team](#) know.

We have a timely reminder that the deadline for both your HB initial final subsidy claim and the DHP final claim is 30 April. The final claim for 16/17 HB subsidy remains 30 November. I know many of you will have attended one of our subsidy workshops which were tailored for newcomers and experts. Thanks to everyone who attended and for your feedback which shows these have been very well received.

We have also included a link so you can access the minutes of the consultation forums which Local Authority Associations attend with us. One of the issues discussed recently by the Practitioners' Operational Group was the rollout of Wider Use of Real Time Information (WURTI). As a result of the experience of the six trail blazer LAs and our discussions with this group on some of the practical implications of implementation, we have reflected on our rollout schedule. As a result the Real Time Information service will start to be rolled out from April 2017. We will keep you updated on the implementation of the fluctuating earnings alert as soon as we can.

We have information on the new Money Manager Tool which we are introducing in collaboration with the Money Advice Service. This new tool supports the introduction of a multi-channel approach to Personal Budgeting Support for Universal Credit Claimants but all claimants will be able to access the tool on GOV.UK.

Finally, we expect to move to a new mass mailing service from April and we'll be using the opportunity to carry out housekeeping on all of our mailing lists. We particularly want to totally refresh our restricted Fraud circular mailing lists to ensure these communications are better targeted within the LA.

**Clare Elliott**  
Head of Housing Delivery Division

[Distribution and newsletter enquiries](#)

## **Update: Wider Use of Real Time Information Service rollout**

The DWP Wider Use of Real Time Information (WURTI) project has consulted with both the LAA Steering Group and POG and it has been agreed that the RTI Service will be rolled out to LAs from April 2017. The proposed schedule for rollout has already been shared with Revenue and Benefits Managers in a letter dated 14 February 2017.

This RTI Service will provide you with desktop access to HM Revenue & Customs' Pay As You Earn information for earnings and non-State Pension information for customers who are in receipt of HB or HB and Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR). You should note there is no legal gateway for LCTR only cases at this present time.

The project will work with a Single Point of Contact, nominated by your Revenues and Benefit Manager to manage the implementation of the service into individual LAs and will work closely with these individuals; providing support for rollout via conference calls and start-up packs (including training materials, good practice guidance and Frequently Asked Questions).

If you have any questions regarding the content of this article you can email [rtiprojects.portfolioqueries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rtiprojects.portfolioqueries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Reminder: Subsidy/Discretionary Housing Payments final claims deadlines 30 April 2017**

### **Subsidy claims**

The deadline for LA submission of the 2016/17 HB initial final subsidy claim is 30 April 2017. All LAs should take appropriate action to ensure that this deadline is met. Usual subsidy withholding arrangements will apply for any LA which does not meet the deadline and extensions will be granted in exceptional circumstances only. The subsidy related deadline for referral of cases to the Rent Officer is also 30 April 2017. The deadline for auditor certified final subsidy claims is 30 November 2017.

### **Discretionary Housing Payments claims**

The deadline for the submission of the 2016/17 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) final claim is 30 April 2017. Again, LAs should take appropriate action to ensure that this deadline is met.

The deadline of 30 April 2017 for subsidy and DHP claims helps to ensure that wider governmental accounting arrangements are satisfied and HM Treasury requirements are met.

Any enquiries should be emailed to [linda.hayes@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:linda.hayes@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## New online Money Manager Tool

DWP has been working in collaboration with the Money Advice Service to design and develop a new online Money Manager Tool. On 13 February 2017, this was implemented into all Universal Credit jobcentres meaning there will now be a multi-channel approach for Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) around money advice for Universal Credit claimants.

This online facility is not intended to replace the face-to-face provision provided by Universal Support via the LA, as claimants who are vulnerable and/or hard to reach and have no digital skills will still need this type of money advice.

The service provides personalised, independent advice to help people manage their budget and monthly Universal Credit payments. It was tested last year in 12 jobcentres and received positive feedback from work coaches and claimants.

The service is the first of its kind for DWP and the new Money Manager Tool offers:

- the opportunity to access budget support flexibly 24 hours a day 7 days a week
- private and confidential help and advice
- money saving hints and tips
- personalised support with lots of practical information
- signposts for further help including urgent support or specialised debt advice

DWP work coaches will decide with claimants which channel is most appropriate, that is, online or face-to-face. Claimants with moderate PBS needs and who are digitally capable will be referred to the online Money Manager Tool which can be found on [GOV.UK](#)

There is no change to the process for Alternative Payment Arrangements.

## LA Practitioner's Operational Group

The joint DWP and LA Practitioners' Operational Group (POG) discusses operational issues relating to Housing Benefit (HB) and reports to the joint DWP and LA Associations (LAA) Steering Group. Both of these Groups meet separately on a bi-monthly basis and summary minutes of those meetings are published on GOV.UK regularly. They can be found through the following links:

- [www.gov.uk/government/groups/dwp-and-local-authority-associations-steering-group](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/dwp-and-local-authority-associations-steering-group)
- [www.gov.uk/government/groups/dwp-and-local-authorities-practitioners-operations-group](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/dwp-and-local-authorities-practitioners-operations-group)

If you have any questions please email [mont.goldman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mont.goldman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Housing Benefit communications products

Over the coming weeks we expect to move to a new mass mailing provider, as part of this move we would like to change the way we keep you updated with advice and guidance. Currently we send our routine communication products (listed below) directly to your mailboxes by email but we also publish all of these routine communications on our LA pages on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

- Housing Benefit Direct Newsletter
- General and Urgent Information Bulletins
- Housing Benefit Adjudication and Subsidy circulars

We are seeing a considerable increase in demand from LA staff and various third party providers to be added to our mailing lists. Whilst we are pleased to receive such high levels of interest it is becoming increasingly more impractical to provide the products directly to your mailboxes and maintain bulky contact lists.

As the routine communication products are freely available on GOV.UK we have taken the decision that from April 2017 we will not duplicate this by also sending them by email. You will, for the next few months only, continue to receive an email from us to let you know that one of our routine communications has been published, this email will include a link to the relevant page on GOV.UK. But it is our intention to move away from sending these bulk mailings and ask you to set up an email alert subscription on GOV.UK instead so that you will continue to know when new items have been published.

To set up an email alert subscription on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), all you need to do is

- provide your email address
- set the frequency of emails (immediately, daily or weekly)
- provide a password, but this is optional

You will receive details of all DWP announcements as it isn't possible to send you Housing communication alerts only but these can be deleted if not relevant.

We will continue to send all other non-routine, urgent or restricted official communications to LA Chief Executive Officers, Chief Finance Officers and Revenues and Benefits managers as we do now so please continue to let us know about any changes. We will also shortly be carrying out a major refresh of the Fraud circular contact list as it is extremely out of date.

We will keep updated on any developments via this newsletter and the General Information Bulletin but in the meantime if you have any further enquiries please email the [LA Gateway](#) team.