

Housing Benefit

General Information Bulletin

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

ISSN 2054-2836 (Online)

HB G4/2017

20 April 2017

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 housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Who should read	All Housing Benefit (HB) staff
Action	For information

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Discretionary Housing Payments: end of year returns 2016/17

1. In the March issue of [HB Direct](#) we provided you with advance notice that the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) 2016/17 end of year monitoring arrangements would be due for completion. These returns continue to improve the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) understanding of how DHPs are being used to support people affected by the welfare reforms.
2. In line with the mid-year format, local authorities (LAs) are asked to record if a successful DHP applicant had been affected by one of the welfare reforms together with the main outcome expected from that award.
3. The last monitoring period spanned 1 April to 30 September 2016. You are now asked to supply information in respect of the complete financial year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. We are only seeking details of DHPs paid during this period, please do not include DHPs committed which are due to be paid after 31 March 2017. Further details can be found in the [DHP Guidance Manual](#) paragraphs 7.9 to 7.14 and the notes tab of the DHP monitoring form.
4. In line with the approach taken previously, the monitoring form asks for the value of DHP paid, broken down into welfare reform impact and purpose of the award. For example, award made as a result of implementation of the benefit cap with the purpose of helping the claimant secure and move into alternative accommodation. If the information relating to the purpose of the award is not available, LAs are asked just to record the total DHP paid in respect of the welfare reform listed.
5. Please complete and return the monitoring form, provided separately as Appendix A, by **Friday 12 May 2017**. The monitoring form should be submitted to dhp.monitoringinbox@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

2016/17 certification guidance to auditors

England and Wales

6. HB COUNT is the approach followed by auditors undertaking certification work on HB final subsidy claims (form MPF720A or C).
7. Module 1 for 2016/17 sets out the HB COUNT approach, including guidance on testing (for example, sample sizes, error types and amendments) and the format of qualification letters to be issued to DWP.
8. Module 1 has been agreed by DWP and issued to the auditors. Any LA that would like a copy of the 2016/17 Module 1 guidance information can request it from your appointed auditor at the preliminary meeting to set up the HB COUNT work for 2016/17.

Scotland

9. Module 1 does not apply in Scotland as Audit Scotland issues its own technical guidance which is available on Audit Scotland's website.
10. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article you can email michael.mina@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Update: Real Time Information service

11. All Revenues and Benefits Managers have received a Real Time Information (RTI) Service Business Readiness Approach document. The RTI service is initially being rolled out on 24 April 2017 to six LA test sites in Tranche 1:
 - Flintshire
 - Gateshead
 - Glasgow
 - Kensington and Chelsea
 - Leeds
 - Wrexham
12. Initial contact with the LA Implementation Single Point of Contact commenced on 27 March 2017 for all sites in Tranche 1.
13. Following Tranche 1 rollout there will be a review period to assess the success of this proposed approach. Rollout will then continue across all LAs from 22 May 2017 by geographical area. Each area will introduce the service based on the agreed schedule provided at Annex A.
14. Some preparation activities will be required by each LA in the lead up to your rollout, this includes obtaining access to the RTI service via Employee Authorisation Services.
15. For RTI rollout we have negotiated and agreed that the Customer Information System downtime will be reduced from 5 days to 1 day.
16. Detailed instructions for HB assessors to access the RTI service was issued to LA Sponsors and LA agents via the National Registration Authority Hub on 24 March 2017. It can also be found on Glasscubes.
17. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article you can email rtiprojects.portfolioqueries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Modernisation of the General Referral Matching Service

18. As the General Referral Matching Service contract is due to end, DWP Data and Analytics (D&A) will, in future, generate fraud and error referrals to LAs using data held in their data warehouse.

19. Although the outputs generated from the D&A data warehouse use different IT hardware and software, LAs will continue to receive the data as you do now.
20. Six LAs will test the new DWP generated outputs in May 2017, with the plan to move to this new service for all LAs in June 2017.
21. If you have any questions about the content of this article you can email mark.browne@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Tax-Free Childcare Scheme

22. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is bringing in a new Tax-Free Childcare Scheme from April 2017. The scheme allows parents to create an account where they can set aside money to pay for childcare provision for their children and from which the payments are debited to a registered childcare provider. HMRC will top up these payments on an 80/20 basis up to a certain limit. For example for every £8 paid in, HMRC will add £2. They could receive up to £2,000 per child, or £4,000 if the child is disabled.
23. The scheme is open to working parents with children aged under 12, or under 17 if the children are disabled. Tax-Free Childcare can't be used at the same time as childcare vouchers or tax credits.
24. More information about the scheme can be found on GOV.UK

Impact on HB

25. For HB claimants the 80% contribution into the childcare account by a claimant should be treated as the claimant's capital. The remaining 20% provided by HMRC is not available to the claimant and can be disregarded.
26. If you have any queries about this article please send an email to housing.benefitenquiries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

HB decisions by the Upper Tribunal

27. Decision Making and Appeals Leeds is aware of the following HB cases that have been decided by the Upper Tribunal (UT):
 - CH/659/16: Removal Spare Room Subsidy (RSRS). Claimant appeal dismissed. Nelson followed
 - CH/2418/15: Claimant lost entitlement to HB as she had been in hospital for over a year. The UT decided that the HB Regulations indirectly discriminated against the claimant but the discrimination was justified

- CSH/481/16: Claimant appeal dismissed, claimant was under a continuing duty, should reasonably have been expected to realise that there was an overpayment at the material times
- CH/3309/16: Claimant appeal dismissed. Tribunal gave sufficient explanation why tenancy was not on a commercial basis
- CH/343/16: RSRS. Secretary of State Appeal upheld. Nelson followed

28. Decisions of the Upper Tribunal are published on their website which can be found on GOV.UK.

29. If you have any queries about cases before the Upper Tribunal Judges or courts, you can contact us by email at fldmdma.customersupportservices@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or fax on 0113 2324841.

Statutory Instruments

30. The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have been laid:

- 2017 No.348, The Universal Credit (Reduction of the Earnings Taper Rate) Amendment Regulations 2017, came into force 10 April 2017
- 2017 No.349, The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations 2017, came into force 10 April 2017
- 2017 No.354, The Occupational Pension Schemes and Social Security (Schemes that were Contracted-out and Graduated Retirement Benefit) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2017, came into force 6 April 2017
- 2017 No.410, The Bereavement Support Payment Regulations 2017, came into force 6 April 2017
- 2017 No.422, Pensions Act 2014 (Consequential, Supplementary and Incidental Amendments) Order 2017, made on 16 March 2017
- 2017 No.427, The Universal Credit (Tenant Incentive Scheme) Amendment Regulations 2017, coming into force 30 April 2017
- 2017 No.437, The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, came into force 1 April 2017
- 2017 No.442, The Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, came into force 1 April 2017

31. The following Statutory Rules (SRs) of Northern Ireland have been laid:

- 2017 No.50, The Employment and Support Allowance (Exempt Work & Hardship Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, came into operation 3 April 2017
- 2017 No.51, The Employment and Support Allowance (Consequential Amendments and Transitional and Savings Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, came into operation 3 April 2017
- 2017 No.69, The Personal Independence Payment (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, coming into operation 20 April 2017
- 2017 No.70, The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (Size Criteria) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, coming into operation 20 April 2017

32. Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/law-volumes/the-law-relating-to-social-security/> and the website of the Office of Publication Sector Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

What's new on our HB pages on GOV.UK

33. The following items can be found on the website links shown:

Document Type	Subject	Link
Guidance	HB subsidy guidance manual 2016/17	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-guidance-manual-2016-to-2017
Guidance	HB Assurance Process Module 1	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-assurance-process-hbap
Good Practice Guide	HB Quality Assurance Process	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-quality-assurance-process-good-practice-guide
HB G3/2017	Update: The Real Time	https://www.gov.uk/government

	<p>Information service</p> <p>Launch of the Right Benefit Initiative</p> <p>Direct Earnings Attachment – A Guide for Employers</p> <p>Recovery of overpayments using the higher rate deduction</p> <p>Scottish rate of Income Tax Salary sacrifice</p> <p>The Social Security (Income-Related Benefits) Amendment Regulations 2017</p> <p>The Social Security (Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme) Regulations</p> <p>Universal Credit: email subject lines</p> <p>Cases with the Upper Tribunal</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p> <p>What's new on the web</p>	<p>t/publications/hb-bulletin-g32017</p>
<p>HB Direct Issue 176 April 2017</p>	<p>Editorial</p> <p>Right Benefit Initiative</p> <p>Universal Credit: duplication of emails</p> <p>LA Insight Survey: next wave</p> <p>Update RTI service</p> <p>Quality Assurance GPG</p> <p>Secondment opportunities</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-direct-newsletters-2017</p>

Circular HB A3/2017 REVISED	The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (Size Criteria) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2017 in relation to the Supreme Court decision of 9 November 2016	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602934/a3-2017.pdf
Circular HB A5/2017	The Social Security (Restrictions on Amounts for Children and Qualifying Young Persons) Amendment Regulations 2017	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/606547/a5-2017.pdf
Circular HB A6/2017	The Pensions Act 2014 (Consequential, Supplementary and Incidental Amendments) Order 2017	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602491/a6-2017.pdf
Circular HB A7/2017	Right Benefit Initiative 2017/18	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605055/a7-2017.pdf
Circular HB S5/2017	Removal of temporary accommodation management fee in Housing Benefit subsidy from 1 April 2017	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602502/s5-2017.pdf
Circular HB S6/2017	Right Benefit Initiative 2017/18 Funding	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605097/s6-2017.pdf

Annex 1

RTI rollout schedule

Tranche	Site	Offices	Total	Users 11k	Rollout start	Rollout end	Rollout weeks
Tranche 1	Test sites	6	6	357	24/04/2017	05/05/2017	2
Implementation Review and Decision Point: to continue with rollout					08/05/2017	19/05/2017	2
Tranche 2	South East Part 1	48	48	1,038	22/05/2017	02/06/2017	2
Implementation Review and Decision Point: to continue with rollout					05/06/2017	16/06/2017	2
Tranche 3	South East Part 2	6	49	1,431	19/06/2017	30/06/2017	2
	Yorkshire and the Humber	17					
	West Midlands	26					
Implementation Review and Decision Point: to continue with rollout					03/07/2017	14/07/2017	2
Tranche 4	East Midlands	34	50	856	17/07/2017	28/07/2017	2
	Wales	16					
Implementation Review and Decision Point: to continue with rollout					31/07/2017	11/08/2017	2
Tranche 5	South West	31	59	1,417	14/08/2017	08/09/2017	4
	Scotland	28					
Implementation Review and Decision Point: to continue with rollout					11/09/2017	16/09/2017	1
Tranche 6	North West	29	76	1,949	18/09/2017	29/09/2017	2
	North East	10					
	East	35					
	Northern Ireland	2					
Implementation Review and Decision Point: mop up to commence					02/10/2017	06/10/2017	1
Tranche 7	London	32	93	3,941	09/10/2017	10/11/2017	5
	All remaining offices	61					