

# Housing Benefit

## General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street,  
London SW1 9NA

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**HB G5/2016**

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<b>Contact</b>	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>technical content of this bulletin</b>, contact details are given at the end of each article</li><li>• distribution of this bulletin, contact <a href="mailto:housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk">housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</a></li></ul>
<b>Who should read</b>	All Housing Benefit (HB) staff
<b>Action</b>	For information

## Contents

	paragraph
Single Housing Benefit Extract review .....	1
Payment Deduction Programme interface .....	6
Real Time Information Bulk Data Match good practice .....	12
Further changes to DWP postal addresses.....	23
Reminder - Discretionary Housing Payments monitoring returns 2015/16 .....	25
Reminder - HB Fraud and Error good practice workshops .....	27
HDD secondment opportunities .....	28
Cases with the Upper Tribunal .....	29
Statutory Instruments .....	34
What's new on the web .....	37
Advert - Housing Delivery Division secondment opportunities .....	Annex 1

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## Single Housing Benefit Extract review

1. Housing Delivery Division (HDD) has reviewed the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) in order to gain a better understanding of the barriers and issues that can hinder its supply of complete and accurate information. The review involved consultation with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) stakeholders and a number of local authorities (LAs).
2. Although SHBE compliance is high, levels of awareness and understanding of how it works and how the data it collects is used vary across staff in both LAs and DWP.
3. To help LAs build knowledge and improve understanding we have produced a SHBE Awareness Aid that aims to:
  - provide LA staff with general information on SHBE
  - highlight areas of importance
  - outline LAs' role and responsibilities in respect of SHBE
  - provide contacts for queries/issues and clarification.
4. The aid is now available through Glasscubes under the Files Tab in the SHBE folder.
5. If you have any queries about the content of this article please contact [marie.cave@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:marie.cave@dwpgsi.gov.uk)

## Payment Deduction Programme interface

6. As previously communicated in the March issue of [HB Direct](#) the LA Data Sharing (LADS) delivery team has been working closely with the DWP Payment Deduction Programme (PDP) to introduce a two-way automated interface between LAs and DWP Debt Management (DM). This will replace the existing clerical processes.
7. Work has been progressing well with LA IT suppliers developing solutions based on requirements agreed with key stakeholders including LAs. Go-live is currently on track for 1 August 2016.
8. This interface will be used for:
  - referral of HB debts where the customer claims Universal Credit
  - referral of HB debts where the customer is in receipt of a prescribed legacy benefit
  - LA notifications of revised debt balance or classification to DWP DM
  - recall of HB debts by LAs
  - return of HB debts from DWP DM to LAs where appropriate
  - reconciliation of debts recovered
9. Guidance and learning and development products are currently being

developed and will be issued prior to go-live.

10. Please note the PDP interface will only be used for the referral and management of HB debt.

11. If you have any queries please email [la-sst.hdd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:la-sst.hdd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Real Time Information Bulk Data Match good practice**

12. The number of Real Time Information Bulk Data Match (RTI BDM) referrals issued to LAs has been capped since its introduction in October 2014. The decision has now been made to make additional Optional RTI BDM referrals available to LAs.

13. To help inform this decision, HDD's Performance Development Team conducted a telephone engagement exercise with 20 sample LAs in December 2015. The aims were to:

- better understand LAs' experiences of dealing with the RTI BDM referrals
- gather LAs' views on the impact of issuing additional Optional RTI referrals
- validate DWP Management Information on RTI BDM performance

14. As part of this exercise LAs were asked to provide any good practice they had identified when dealing with the RTI BDM. With the RTI BDM recommencing this month and the upcoming Optional RTI referrals, LAs may wish to consider using or adapting the following good practices:

### **Specialist teams**

15. Allocating RTI BDM referrals to specialist teams or individuals was found to have several advantages. These include:

- building expertise in the interpretation of the RTI data
- identifying patterns in data provided by certain employers
- establishing a faster and more efficient process
- ensuring consistency in the way RTI data was treated.

### **Tailored RTI BDM claimant notifications**

16. Adapting standard notifications to include relevant RTI data and explaining how it was used to reassess the claim was found to reduce the number of requests for explanations, reconsiderations and appeals.

### **Accept RTI Data as accurate**

17. LAs that minimised contact with claimants for additional verification were able to clear the RTI matches more quickly and did not find a significant increase in requests for reconsiderations and appeals. Although there are cases where additional information is required, such as, payments not subject to tax or National Insurance contributions, assessors can minimise contact by:

- accepting RTI data as accurate unless there is a clear anomaly that requires further information
- following the guidance in paragraph 20 of circular [HB A16/2014](#) to assume hours worked and assign earnings disregards
- ensuring claimants are advised of any assumptions used and given the opportunity to challenge anything they think is incorrect.

### **Make RTI data available to customer service staff**

18. Increasing customer service staffs' understanding of the RTI BDM process and making a summary of the RTI data used in a reassessment visible to them has helped resolve customer enquiries at the first point of contact and has reduced the demand on RTI BDM assessors.

### **Setting Diary Dates**

19. Setting 'diary dates' to review earnings and non State Pension income claims that were not being actively reviewed prior to receipt of the RTI BDM was found to reduce the time required to clear subsequent RTI BDM referrals and minimise the number of overpayments identified.

### **Record results accurately**

20. DWP Management Information suggested that some LAs had a large backlog of RTI BDM referrals or incurred a significant delay in actioning them. However, findings from the engagement exercise did not support this.

21. To ensure RTI BDM performance is reported accurately LAs should complete all necessary fields in SHBE by:

- following the guidance in paragraphs 55-62 and Annex 5 of circular [HB A15/2014](#)
- consulting guidance issued by your LA IT supplier

22. If you have any other RTI BDM good practice that you would like to share please email them to [jane.watson@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:jane.watson@dwpgsi.gov.uk)

### **Further changes to DWP postal addresses**

23. There are more office address changes this month as a result of DWP modernising its postal processes. These affect the following businesses:

- Employment and Support Allowance
- Fraud and Error Service

24. More details about the changes and an updated list of changes to office addresses so far can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

## **Reminder - Discretionary Housing Payments monitoring returns 2015/16**

25. Thank you to all those LAs who have already provided their annual Discretionary Housing Payment monitoring return for the April 2015 to March 2016 period. The Department values your input and continues to find this information very useful. For authorities who have yet to send in a return; we are still accepting them and would be grateful if you could consider submitting one to [dhp.monitoringinbox@gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dhp.monitoringinbox@gsi.gov.uk)
26. Further information and the returns form can be found in bulletin [HB G4/2016](#).

## **Reminder - HB Fraud and Error good practice workshops**

27. We announced in Bulletin [HB G4/2016](#) the venues and dates for each LA's workshop. We requested LAs to provide details of delegates for those workshops. There are still plenty of places available, so if you have not confirmed your attendance yet, please email confirmation and delegates' names to [hamish.j.robertson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hamish.j.robertson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).

## **HDD secondment opportunities**

28. HDD has previously utilised HB expertise from LAs to work alongside its in-house teams. We are now looking to recruit three LA employees to work on designing and delivering the new HB certification arrangements that will be rolled out from April 2017. Please see Annex 1 for the secondment opportunities' advert.

## **Cases with the Upper Tribunal**

### **HB/CTB cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal**

29. Decision Making and Appeals Leeds is aware of the following HB/Council Tax Benefit case that is awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal:
- CH/2844/2015 – HB overpayment – failure to disclose marriage and husband joining household. However, husband did not have a National Insurance number. Basis of appeal is that husband in effect was a person without leave to remain and disclosure not required. Secretary of State invited to join.
30. Thank you to those LAs that have let us know about cases they are appealing. Please notify us of cases at the point that the application for leave to appeal is made to the Upper Tribunal office, or the appeal is lodged following grant of leave by a First-tier Tribunal Judge. Please let us know if a case reference (CH/.. or CSH/..) has been allocated.

## HB/CTB decisions by the Upper Tribunal

31. Decision Making and Appeals Leeds is aware of the following HB/CTB cases that have been decided by the Upper Tribunal

- CH/2831/2015: Capital. Tribunal failed to address issue of estranged husband's share of property.
- CH/2831/15: Capital. Tribunal failed to address issue of estranged husband's share of property.
- CH/2494/2015: Claimant appeal – remitted. HB/CTB Overpayment arising from claimant having deferred receipt of her occupational pension. Statement of reasons was delayed 9 months by which time some documents (including documents provided by claimant at hearing) were missing: did the statement of reasons take account of them or not? Also, as there appears to be no provision to defer in this occupational pension scheme was interpretation of HB (Persons who have attained ...) Regulation 41(1)(a) or (b) correct?
- CH/2512/15: Spare Room Subsidy. LA appeal dismissed. Nelson followed.
- CH/698/2015: HB effective date of supersession is date change notified – non-dependent left household. Upper Tribunal confirms as correct finding of fact that claimant had not notified at time of change.
- CH/5070/14 and CH/5066/14 are linked appeals: Tribunal failed to make sufficient findings of fact in relation to capital value of property and failed to make a diminishing capital calculation.
- CH/4640/14: Capital. Sale of former matrimonial home. Under regulation 49(2) claimant did not have access to proceeds of sale on date of completion.
- CH/3153/15. Spare Room Subsidy. Shared care. LA decision confirmed.

32. Decisions of the Upper Tribunal are published on their website which can be found [here](#)

33. 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](mailto:fldmdma.customersupportservices@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or fax on 0113 2324841.

## Statutory Instruments

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

- 2016 No.208, The Social Security, Child Support and Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Decisions and Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into force from 23 May 2016
- 2016 No.215 (c.215), The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 (Commencement No. 3) Order 2016, coming into force from 2 May 2016
- 2016 No.502, The Jobseeker's Allowance (Extended Period of Sickness) Amendment Regulations 2016, coming into force 23 May 2016
- 2016 No.511 (C.30), The Welfare Reform Act 2012 (Commencement No. 28) Order 2016, coming into force from 24 May 2016
- 2016 No.519, The Social Security Administration Act 1992 (LA Investigations) Regulations 2016 coming into force 24 May 2016
- 2016 NO.543, The Universal Credit (Care Leavers and Looked After Children) Amendment Regulations 2016, coming into force 26 May 2016
- 2016 No.544, The Social Security (Claims and Payments) Amendment Regulations 2016, coming into force 15 June 2016
- 2016 No.556, The Social Security (Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, coming into force 29 June 2016

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

- 2016 No.216, The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation 5 May 2016
- 2016 No.217, The Personal Independence Payment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation 20 June 2016
- 2016 No.218, The Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, made on 3 May 2016
- 2016 No.219, The Employment and Support Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, made on 3 May 2016

- 2016 No.220, The Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation from 20 June 2016
- 2016 No.221, The Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation from 20 June 2016
- 2016 No.222, The Universal Credit Housing Costs (Executive Determinations) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, made on 5 May 2016
- 2016 No.223, The Social Security (Payments on Account of Benefit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, made on 3 May 2016
- 2016 No.224, The Social Security (Overpayments and Recovery) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation from 20 June 2016
- 2016 No.225, The Social Security (Loss of Benefit) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation 26 September 2016
- 2016 No.226, The Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, made on 5 May 2016
- 2016 No.227, The Personal Independence Payment (Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation 20 June 2016
- 2016. No.228, The Personal Independence Payment (Supplementary Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation 20 June 2016
- 2016 No.229, The Social Security (Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation from 19 June 2016
- 2016 No.230, The HB (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, coming into operation 20 June 2016



36. Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from the 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 the web

37. The following items can be found on the website link shown

<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Link</b>
<b>HB G4/2016</b>	Discretionary Housing Payments monitoring returns 2015/16  Further changes to DWP postal addresses  Housing Benefit Good Practice Fraud and Error workshops  Funeral Payments team sharing of information  Update: The Housing Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations 2016  Pension Credit and State Pension Changes Telephony Service  Changes to Pension Credit Assessed Income Periods  Real Time Information Bulk Data Matching Project update  Cases with the Upper Tribunal  Statutory Instruments  What's new on the web	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518181/housing-benefit-general-information-bulleting-g4-2016.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518181/housing-benefit-general-information-bulleting-g4-2016.pdf</a>

	<p>HB Good Practice Fraud and Error workshops - Example agenda - Annex 1</p> <p>Discretionary Housing Payments 2015/16 - Monitoring returns form - Appendix A</p> <p>HB Good Practice Fraud and Error workshops - List of dates/venues - Appendix B</p> <p>Funeral Payments team – Sharing of information template - Appendix C</p>	
<b>HB Direct issue 167</b>	Newsletter	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/521559/hb-direct-may-2016.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/521559/hb-direct-may-2016.pdf</a>
<b>HB S4/2016</b>	Additional New Burdens funding to meet the costs of implementing welfare reform changes in 2016/17	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/520420/s4-2016.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/520420/s4-2016.pdf</a>
<b>HB S5/2016</b>	Payment of New Burdens relating to the Single Fraud Investigation Service Project for 2016/17	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522004/s5-2016.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522004/s5-2016.pdf</a>
<b>Guidance</b>	Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Manual Including Local Authority Good Practice Guide May 2016	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524321/discretionary-housing-payments-guide.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524321/discretionary-housing-payments-guide.pdf</a>

### Housing Delivery Division's secondment opportunities

Housing Delivery Division (HDD) comprises of approximately 100 staff. We are responsible for overseeing the performance of local authorities (LAs) in their delivery of Housing Benefit (HB) (circa £24billion), allocating HB admin subsidy (circa £260 million) and Discretionary Housing Payments (circa £125 million). We monitor a range of performance data including how quickly and accurately HB is paid and the prevention and detection of fraud and error. We are able to offer support and challenge to those LAs not meeting performance expectations. Ultimately, HDD can inspect LAs whose performance is causing concern and issue directions.

Following the abolition of the Audit Commission (AC), an Interim body 'Public Sector Audit Appointment (PSAA) Ltd' took over responsibility for providing the certification arrangements for which the Department obtains assurance on the £24 billion reimbursed to LAs for HB administered to claimants. From April 2017, this responsibility will pass to the Department.

This is an exciting opportunity to play a leading role in designing and delivering the future certification arrangements for HB.

**Secondment opportunity 1** salaries are at £25,740 (National) to £34,998 (Inner London) equating to Civil Service **HEO** grade and equivalent to LA S01/S02/PO1/PO2 grades

#### Personal requirements:

- Experience in drafting papers and briefing for governance boards and senior stakeholders
- Experience of supporting successfully delivered medium-sized projects
- Strong communication skills
- Project management experience
- A good understanding of how HB works in LAs
- Strong organisational skills.

**Secondment opportunity 2** salary levels range from £32,053 (National) to £42,521 (Inner London) equating to Civil Service **SEO** grade and equivalent to LA PO2/PO3/PO4 grades

#### Personal requirements:

- Experience of successfully delivering medium-sized projects
- Line management experience
- Experience in running after action reviews, and ensuring lessons learnt are fed into the planning for following years
- The skillset to organise and deliver workshops
- Experience in drafting papers and briefing for governance boards and senior stakeholders

- Skills in proactively managing risks, issues and dependencies
- Knowledge and experience of liaising with stakeholders from a wide range of areas and at all levels of expertise
- Experience of the workings of HB in an LA environment.

**Secondment opportunity 3** – salaries are at £45,430 (National) to £61,055 (Inner London) equating to Civil Service **G7** grade and LA PO2/PO3/PO4 grades

**Personal requirements:**

- Proven problem-solving ability
- Excellent management and organisational skills
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Leading and implementing change experience
- Project and Programme Management skills
- Gravitas to engage with senior stakeholders
- Excellent planning capabilities
- An understanding of the current HB subsidy certification arrangements would be useful
- Experience of the workings of HB in an LA environment

The posts are being offered until March 2017. The posts are full-time and based in Caxton House in London or Warbreck House in Blackpool. We do not want to deter candidates from outside of London applying and will therefore consider some remote working where this fits in with the business need.

We would like the successful candidates to be able to start in early July 2016.

If you are interested in applying please:

- check with your LA that you can be released
- send your CV by email to [Philip.j.sharples@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Philip.j.sharples@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) by **17 June 2016**.

Interviews will be held dependant on number of applicants.

If you would like to have a chat about this opportunity you can contact Emmanuel Ibiayo on 0207 449 5392.