

Housing Benefit

General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, 6th Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street,
London SW1 9NA
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

ISSN 2054-2836 (Online)

HB G1/2016

15 January 2016

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

Contents

	paragraph
Documents and supporting evidence for electronic claims	1
Risk Based Verification - Reminder	7
Clarification on setting CIS ATLAS interest indicators	13
Changes to State Pension age increases.....	19
Planned review of our HB pages on GOV.UK	29
Cases with the Upper Tribunal	34
What's new on the web	37
HB administration - Signposting to good practice and other guidance	Annex 1

Crown Copyright 2016

Recipients may freely reproduce this bulletin.

Documents and supporting evidence for electronic claims

1. In Housing Benefit (HB) bulletin [G11/2015](#), we published an entry on the use of electronic documents in support of HB claims. The paragraphs below are intended to provide clarification.
2. There is no blanket ban on the use of electronic evidence by local authorities (LAs). It is incumbent on any LA adopting this form of evidence to adhere to HB Regulations 2006 (Reg 86) in determining the type of evidence required.
3. With regard to evidence around identity, LAs are expected to adhere to the Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997 (Section 19). LAs should ensure that their procedures for dealing with HB claims include verification of original documentation of all claims. However, in exceptional instances where this is not possible due to a claimant's personal circumstances, LAs should make alternative arrangements for verification of identity.
4. With the technological advances in the modern world and the increasing move to self-service, it is acknowledged that supporting documentation such as payslips and bank statements, which serve as evidence, are often now in electronic formats and subject to being printed off by claimants on demand. We accept that these types of supporting evidence are admissible by LAs as scanned documentary evidence. However, it is the responsibility of LAs to ensure that any evidence provided is verified and satisfactory with regard to the legislation above.
5. With the high levels of HB fraud and error we expect LAs to continue to apply stringent levels of verification but, we acknowledge, this can be achieved in a balanced manner making full and risk-assessed use of electronic communications.
6. If you have any questions regarding this article, please email the Subsidy Team at hbsubsidy.queries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Risk Based Verification - Reminder

7. Risk Based Verification (RBV) was introduced to enable LAs to better target resources towards HB claims depending on the risk categories. This involved three categories; high, medium and low (see circular [HB S11/2011](#)).
8. RBV is a method of applying different levels of checks to benefit claims according to the risk associated with those claims. LAs will still be required to comply with relevant legislation (Social Security Administration Act 1992, Section 1 relating to production of National Insurance numbers to provide evidence of identity) while making maximum use of intelligence to target more extensive verification activity on those claims shown to be at greater risk of fraud or error.

9. RBV is voluntary. However, all LAs opting to apply RBV will be required to have in place a RBV Policy detailing the risk profiles, verification standards which will apply and the minimum number of claims to be checked. We consider it to be good practice for the Policy to be examined by the authority's Audit and Risk Committee or similar appropriate body if they exist. The Policy must be submitted for Members' approval and sign-off along with a covering report confirming the Section 151 Officer's (section 95 for Scotland) agreement/recommendation. The information held in the Policy, which would include the risk categories, should not be made public due to the sensitivity of its contents.
10. The introduction of RBV by an LA should be cost neutral i.e. better direction of resources towards high risk cases and not less resource being utilised.
11. Every participating LA will need a robust baseline against which to record the impact of RBV. The source of this baseline is for the LA to determine.
12. If you have any questions regarding this article, please email the Subsidy Team at hbsubsidy.queries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Clarification on setting CIS ATLAS interest indicators

13. During a number of recent contacts with LAs by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Performance Development Team within Housing Delivery Division it has come to light that there appears to be some confusion about which indicators to set. As you are aware automatic transfer notifications were introduced in March 2015, at that time we provided all LAs with revised guidance '*Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) awareness pack V5*', which can be found on Glasscubes.
14. It has always been recommended that LAs:
 - record new interest
 - maintain the existing interest, i.e. where a change of LA occurs for a customer
 - or end the interest where there is no longer an HB/Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) Scheme interest.
15. LAs should ensure the Customer Information System (CIS) ATLAS and Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) interest is set as soon as you have received an HB/LCTR claim from the customer and ensure the CIS ATLAS interest is set on receipt of the LA Input Document (LAID) / LA Claim Information (LACI) forms. By producing the LAID/LACI the DWP systems should set the ETD interest automatically. ATLAS is designed to provide new claim information where a LAID/LACI has previously been delivered and will provide the new award data or confirmation when the DWP award has not been successful, but the CIS ATLAS interest must have been set correctly.
16. We are currently working on automating the setting and maintenance of future CIS ATLAS interests, as requested by a number of LAs. In the meantime it is

imperative that LAs continue to set and maintain their interest indicators to ensure the correct HM Revenue and Customs award/DWP benefit data is provided.

17. Please refer to the document 'Correctly set up CIS ATLAS interest' at Appendix 2 of the ATLAS awareness pack V5, regarding the correct setting of both ATLAS and ETD.
18. If you have any questions regarding this article you should email andrew.mclean2@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Changes to State Pension age increases

19. Equalising men and women's State Pension age at 65 was first introduced in 2010 to fulfil the HM Government's obligations under European legislation to ensure men and women are treated the same in social security systems.
20. Following an upward revision of official projections of average life expectancy, the government has since decided to speed up the increase to 65 and brought forward further increases to maintain future sustainability of the State Pension system.
21. Under the Pensions Act 2011, women's State Pension age will increase more quickly:
 - from April 2016, to reach 65 by November 2018 instead of March 2020
 - from December 2018 the State Pension age for both men and women will start to increase to reach age 66 by October 2020 instead of 2026.
22. The changes will affect:
 - women born on or after 6 April 1953 will be impacted by the accelerated equalisation of State Pension age to 65
 - men and women born after 5 December 1953 but before 6 October 1954 will have a State Pension age between 65 and 66
 - men and women born on or after 6 October 1954 and before 6 April 1960 will have a State Pension age of 66.
23. Pension Credit qualifying age will rise in line with the accelerated increase in women's State Pension age to 65 and subsequently in line with the increase to 66.
24. Working age benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support will now be available up to revised State Pension age as shown in the timetable below.
25. It will also affect all future claimants to other benefits with a link to the State Pension age threshold, for example Winter Fuel Payment, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independent Payment.

26. The table below highlights the Pensions Act 2011 changes to the State Pension age.

Women's State Pension age under the Pensions Act 2011		
Date of birth		State Pension age date
From	To	
06/04/1953	05/05/1953	06/07/2016
06/05/1953	05/06/1953	06/11/2016
06/06/1953	05/07/1953	06/03/2017
06/07/1953	05/08/1953	06/07/2017
06/08/1953	05/09/1953	06/11/2017
06/09/1953	05/10/1953	06/03/2018
06/10/1953	05/11/1953	06/07/2018
06/11/1953	05/12/1953	06/11/2018

Increase in State Pension age from 65 to 66, men and women		
Date of birth		State Pension age date
From	To	
06/12/1953	05/01/1954	06/03/2019
06/01/1954	05/02/1954	06/05/2019
06/02/1954	05/03/1954	06/07/2019
06/03/1954	05/04/1954	06/09/2019
06/04/1954	05/05/1954	06/11/2019
06/05/1954	05/06/1954	06/01/2020
06/06/1954	05/07/1954	06/03/2020
06/07/1954	05/08/1954	06/05/2020
06/08/1954	05/09/1954	06/07/2020
06/09/1954	05/10/1954	06/09/2020
06/10/1954	05/04/1960	66 th birthday

27. Please note that the Pensions Act 2014 brings forward the increase of State Pension age to 67 so that it is implemented between 2026 and 2028 instead of between 2034 to 2036. This affects people born from 6 April 1960 but these changes have not yet been implemented on DWP IT systems.

28. If you have any queries about this article please email either Gillian.Scott1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or Jon.Blythman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Planned review of our HB pages on GOV.UK

29. As you may already know in 2013 we migrated all of our Housing related information to GOV.UK.

30. Although we have done some small scale housekeeping since that time, we are planning a full review of our pages in the very near future to ensure they are easy to follow and navigate and to remove out of date guidance. This will include reviewing all the associated links on those pages, for example, to our guidance manuals and good practice guides.

31. At present you can find a full list of links to our manuals and guides under

'other individual DWP guidance publications' towards the bottom of our [landing page](#). However, until we have carried out our full review, recent engagement with LAs has highlighted the need to publish the links to some existing guidance and have those links in one document for easy access.

32. In Annex 1 you will find the 'Administration of Housing Benefit - Signposting to good practice and other guidance'. This offers LA staff a document with essential links to up to date guidance and can be saved in your folders or desktop for convenient access.

33. If you have a queries regarding this article you can email housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Cases with the Upper Tribunal

HB/CTB decisions by the Upper Tribunal

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

- CH/153/14, CH/1409/15, CH/1504/15 and CH/83/15: Spare Room Subsidy. Remit. Nelson followed.
- CH/4347/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Claimant appeal dismissed. Nelson followed.
- CH/72/15, CH/89/15, CH/169/15, CH/1403/15, CH/4017/14, CH/4424/14, CH/4487/14, CH/5290/14 and CH/5484/14: Spare Room subsidy. Remit. Nelson followed.
- CH/349/15 and CH/464/15: Spare Room Subsidy. Claimant appeal upheld. Nelson followed.
- CH/2027/15: Extended payment. Contribution based Jobseeker's Allowance not a qualifying contributory benefit for purposes of regulation 73.
- CH/1510/2015: Remitted. HB/CTB suspension / termination / overpayment. Failure to comply with requirements of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit (Decisions and Appeals) Regulation 13.
- CH/92/15, CH/1219/15, CH/1308/15, CH/2021/14 and CH/4020/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Remit. Nelson followed.
- CH/2657/15: Spare Room Subsidy. Remit. Overnight care case.
- CH/3732/14 and CH/5033/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Claimant appeal dismissed. Nelson followed.

35. Decisions of the Upper Tribunal are published on their website which can be found here:

<http://www.administrativeappeals.tribunals.gov.uk/Decisions/decisions.htm>

36. If you have any queries about cases before the Upper Tribunal Judges or courts, you can contact us by email at

fldmma.customersupportservices@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or fax on 0113 2324841.

What's new on the web

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB S9/2015	2016/17 Housing Benefit administration subsidy arrangements for English local authorities	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/487602/s9-2015.pdf
HB S10/2015	2016/17 Housing Benefit administration subsidy arrangements for Scottish local authorities	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/487606/s10-2015.pdf
HB S11/2015	2016/17 Housing Benefit administration subsidy arrangements for Welsh local authorities	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/487607/s11-2015.pdf
G12/2015	<p>Scottish rate of Income Tax</p> <p>Reminder to use the Customer Information System to clarify information</p> <p>On-going changes to DWP postal addresses</p> <p>New State Pension</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p> <p>What's new on the web</p> <p>Annex 1 Copy of the Scottish rate of Income Tax letter</p>	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486729/g12-2015.pdf

Administration of Housing Benefit - Signposting to good practice and other guidance

This document is designed to provide the reader with links to some good practice guides and supporting documents in relation to Housing Benefit (HB). The aim is to provide local authorities (LAs) with up to date intelligence on what can make a difference in delivering the HB service and reducing fraud and error.

Listed below are the key areas of HB good practice and other guidance:

1. ATLAS

This document provides information regarding the Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) infrastructure including details of the Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) transactions with ATLAS:

<https://dwphdd.glasscubes.com/cube/document/1395572?13> (Glasscubes users). Request access to Glasscubes by emailing: la-sst.hdd@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

2. Discretionary Housing Payments

This guidance is for LAs who are responsible for administering Discretionary Housing Payments and contains a section on good practice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discretionary-housing-payments-guidance-manual>

3. Fraud and Error

The Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) offers financial rewards to LAs that reduce HB fraud and error. This guide is designed to help LAs manage fraud and error securing the legitimacy of HB payments:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fraud-and-error-reduction-incentive-scheme-good-practice-guide-housing-benefit>

4. Housing Benefit Subsidy

This guidance explains the subsidies DWP pays LAs for certain costs of the HB scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-guidance-manual-2014-to-2015>

5. Overpayments

This guide is for staff dealing with HB overpayments:

[Housing Benefit overpayments guide](#)

This document contains good practice when dealing with HB debt. The contents should be used by LAs to ensure that they maximise recovery and the use of networks and intelligence to support the recovery process:

[Pursuing Housing Benefit overpayment recovery effectively: good practice guide](#)

6. **Real Time Information**

These documents provide facts in relation to Real Time Information (RTI), HM Revenues and Custom's real-time Pay As You Earn system and how this information is used by DWP and LAs:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360856/a16-2014.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357989/a15-2014.pdf