

# Housing Benefit

## General Information Bulletin

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

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**HB G7/2015**

**21 July 2015**

<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

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## Bulletin HB G6/2015 addition

1. With reference to the Bulletin HB [G6/2015](#) paragraphs 13 to 17, these paragraphs supersede the guidance in the [Housing Benefit \(HB\) Overpayments Guide 2015](#) part 5, paragraph 5.13.

## DWP postal addresses

2. As previously notified in the June issue of [HB Direct](#), during 2013/14 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) changed the way it handles mail and each site now has a new postal address. We are still seeing large volumes of mail from local authorities (LA), including Third Party Deduction requests and LA enquiry forms being sent to the old addresses. The Royal Mail diversions that have been in place will shortly be removed which means that this mail will not be delivered by Royal Mail and will be returned to sender.
3. All of DWP's new addresses can be found [here](#) and a copy is attached in Appendix A.
4. In order to help us process your correspondence please:
  - only send mail to the correct address, so if it doesn't have 'Wolverhampton' in the address it won't be correct
  - don't send mail for multiple destinations within one envelope. Although the new addresses appear similar it is important that the correct address is used for each DWP site, otherwise the mail is likely to be routed to the wrong office or even benefit.

## Access to data via the Customer Information System

5. LAs access DWP and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) customer information via the Employee Authentication Service (EAS) to the Customer Information System (CIS). This information is shared on the understanding that access to CIS is only permitted for the administration of:
  - HB
  - Local Council Tax Reduction
  - Local Welfare Provision
  - Adult Social Care Financial Assessments
  - Discretionary Housing Payments

6. In this context 'administration' represents any action including face-to-face contact with customers, appeals, recovery of overpayments, investigation of suspected benefit fraud and in connection with the disclosure of information as permitted by the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
7. This notice is being issued as a reminder that CIS cannot be used for any unauthorised purpose. Users must not:
  - attempt to trace or access their own record, or the records of friends, relatives, partners, colleagues or acquaintances or any other record for which there is no legitimate business reason for doing so
  - make enquiries on behalf of colleagues in respect of friends, relatives, partners, or acquaintances or anyone who is not permitted to receive information
  - share EAS tokens, Personal Identification Numbers or other identity credentials with colleagues.
8. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) requires LAs to comply with the management checking regime. The management checks, often referred to as 'test checks' are compulsory. The LA CIS Guide and DWP CIS training packages, both of which are available on the collaboration tool Glasscubes, provide details of the action which must be taken by CIS users, Secure Print Operators and Checking Officers (CO).
9. LAs must ensure everyone who has access to customer information regards security as part of their everyday duties and give DWP assurances that effective measures are in place to manage access to CIS securely. The mandatory 'test check' regime plays a central role in reinforcing this message.
10. DWP's Business Change Security and Support Team (BCSST) carry out a range of checks on CIS access made by staff in LAs. This includes scrutiny of test checks generated by LA staff and audit checks of those checks cleared by COs.
11. BCSST and HMRC additionally interrogate CIS to validate accesses made by LA staff are for genuine business needs. These checks are carried out to provide DWP and HMRC with assurance that any access to CIS is appropriate and information obtained is correctly used.
12. Anyone found to be abusing CIS may face sanctions ranging from disciplinary action to prosecution. DWP will support LAs to ensure appropriate action is taken and may consider prosecuting in serious cases.
13. DWP and HMRC maintain absolute discretion to withdraw access to the data supplied on any data stream. This situation may apply if it is considered an LA as a whole is not complying with the conditions set out in this MoU.
14. BCSST will fully support LAs conducting investigations and can provide detailed audit trails showing the access history of anyone under suspicion.

## Queries

15. Enquiries relating to this item or any aspect regarding the security of CIS access should be addressed to [hbsdsecurity.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbsdsecurity.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## MAG:NET use of LoCTA

16. In HB [G3/2015](#) we informed you of DWP's decision to review the current service offered by the LoCTA system supplied by MAG:NET Solutions Limited.
17. We recognise the importance that access to HMRC data has in relation to the application of Direct Earnings Attachments and are continuing to work through all the associated issues. We are moving towards a conclusion and will communicate our findings to you at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime we have agreed with MAG:NET Solutions Limited to clear the current backlog of cases and the results of this exercise should have been returned to you during week commencing 13 July 2015.

## Data Transport Appliance replacement: Data Hub

18. DWP has reviewed the options for replacing the current Data Transport Appliance (DTA) servers, which are used to securely transmit DWP benefit and HMRC tax credit data to all LAs.
19. After undertaking a successful proof of concept last year we identified a value for money supplier to jointly implement a cloud based solution, which will sit within the Public Service Network (PSN). The name for the solution has now been confirmed as Data Hub, in previous HB Direct updates the solution was referred to as Message Hub but the name Data Hub has now replaced this. We completed the procurement stage on 11 June 2015 by signing a contract with ATOS Canopy to develop and implement Data Hub by the end of November 2015.
20. LAs will access their designated files on Data Hub using a secure web browser session. We are currently in the process of agreeing the security protocols for accessing the site and exploring options around downloading files automatically. Each LA should have a minimum of one computer (e.g. desktop or laptop) set up which will be able to access Data Hub securely. LAs will receive guidance on how to access Data Hub via a web browser as soon as possible after the user interface design has been agreed.
21. Current plans suggest that the development phase should be completed by August 2015. This will be followed by a testing/early adopter phase in late September 2015 and we are aiming to transfer all LAs to Data Hub by the end of November 2015. We will notify all LAs when they will move across as soon as we have confirmation of the migration schedule from DWP suppliers. LAs

will also be notified of proposed arrangements to pick up and recycle the old DTA servers in due course.

22. The mandatory protocol to access Data Hub is Transport Layer Security (TLS) version 1.2. It is imperative that the designated computer (or network terminal) to be used has the appropriate security protocol. Some LAs may already be on TLS 1.2 and you can check your status by visiting [here](#). All LAs will need to have at least one computer which is TLS 1.2 compliant by 31 July 2015. LAs which are not compliant will not be able to access data shared by DWP or HMRC following rollout.
23. To prepare for this, we will be publishing a webpage and asking all LAs to access it. Upon doing this, we will be able to confirm LA readiness in respect of web browser and TLS 1.2 compliance. We appreciate that some LAs have already provided a manual return. This initial connection test will however allow us to confirm the status for every LA before we begin connecting authorities to Data Hub. Guidance on this and the implementation approach will be issued shortly.
24. In the March 2015 edition of [HB Direct](#) we asked for at least 20 LA volunteers that would like to be involved in an early adopter exercise during the testing phase. Although we have received several expressions of interest we still require a few more volunteers in order to fully assure the process. If your LA would like to volunteer or for any other queries regarding DTA replacement please contact Sabby Riordan or Craig Millar by emailing [lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## **DTA Windows operating software update**

25. As you may be aware Microsoft ended support for the Windows 2003 operating system on 15 July 2015.
26. The DWP is aware of the potential risk this creates with the DTA servers which run on Windows 2003.
27. DWP Security and Technology colleagues have impacted this and are content that the risk associated with Windows operating software not being supported beyond July 2015 is small. DWP is willing to accept the minimal risk until the DTAs are replaced with Data Hub, which is expected to be completed by November 2015, providing that the conditions below are adhered to:
  - the DTA is contained in the secure network within the LA
  - access to the DTA is controlled centrally by Hewlett Packard Enterprise Services (HPES)
  - no individual at the LA has access to the administrator password unless supplied by HPES

- the end users only have limited permissions which are locked down and only enable the user to pull files from the DTA onto LA PCs
- a replacement to the DTA servers is being implemented.

28. DWP is ensuring Data Hub is rolled out as quickly as possible to minimise the period of vulnerability.

### **Contingency arrangements**

29. DWP has no specific contingency plans in respect of Windows 2003 failures. If there are problems with DTAs, the expectation is that any existing contingency plans will operate, including the clerical processing and issuing of information if necessary. Wherever possible HPES will continue to replace DTAs where necessary but the possibility that there will be instances where clerical contingency arrangements need to be invoked cannot be ruled out. As usual the DWP LA Support and Security Team (LASST) will support LAs should any contingency action be required.

### **PSN Code of Connection (CoCo) compliance**

30. Some LAs have raised concerns that the cessation of Windows support could be identified as part of their IT Health Check assessment, which is undertaken as part of the PSN CoCo submission. The UK Government's National Technical Authority for Information Assurance has issued guidance on short-term mitigation advice for public sector organisations unable to fully migrate away from obsolete software before it is no longer supported. This guidance can be found [here](#).

31. Cabinet Office colleagues have advised DWP that with regards to the PSN CoCo submissions, they would refer to this guidance as part of the overall application.

32. If you have any queries with regards to this article, please direct them to the following email address: [la-sst.hdd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:la-sst.hdd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Alternative Payment Arrangements, email application process**

33. We are committed to making Universal Credit work for landlords as well as claimants. As a result of a recent successful trial, we have introduced an email channel for the submission of Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) applications using form UC47. The trial delivered excellent results in terms of reduced processing times and those landlords who took part in the trial have been very positive in their feedback. The UC47 e-secure form can be found [here](#).

34. Work is continuing to make the UC47 e-unsecure form available on GOV.UK as well. In the interim this form has been distributed and can be used on

occasions when the UC47 e-secure form is not suitable (i.e. when the landlord does not have a secure email channel).

## Email communication with DWP from 13 July 2015

35. As a Data Controller DWP is required by law to protect personal data. We take this responsibility very seriously and take measures to protect data including restricting data that can be sent and received by email.
36. DWP has made a risk based decision that from 13 July 2015 we will add .gov.uk email addresses to our *trusted* email networks, a decision that has already been taken by a number of central government organisations.
37. This policy change will impact on our communications with LAs, by adding .gov.uk addresses to those *trusted* email addresses already in use in communication with LAs (@gcsx.gov.uk, @gsx.gov.uk, @gse.gov.uk). As a result we may enclose OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE data in emails to addresses ending .gov.uk provided there is business justification for doing so and we have confidence in the receiving destination.
38. Where DWP has previously made a decision that specific communications with LAs should be via more secure options, such as secure or encrypted email via other trusted networks, then these methods should always be used.
39. If you have any queries regarding this communication, please contact the following email address [hbsdsecurity.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbsdsecurity.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Universal Credit national expansion

40. National expansion sees the implementation of Universal Credit for new claims from single people, who would otherwise have been eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance, between February 2015 and April 2016 in four tranches.
41. Tranche One completed on 27 April 2015 and Tranche Two completed on 20 July 2015.
42. The completion of Tranche Two means that Universal Credit is now available in half of all Jobcentre areas and nearly half of all LAs across Great Britain, with over 148,000 claims being made.
43. On the 21 July 2015, the Commencement Order for the remaining Jobcentres and LAs that will go live with Universal Credit was laid. These will be in either Tranche Three (21 September 2015 – 30 November 2015) or Tranche Four (7 December 2015 – 25 April 2016). Details can be accessed [here](#)

## **Universal Support – delivery locally**

44. The 11 formal Universal Support – delivered locally trials began in September 2014 for a 12 month period.
45. The trials are progressing well and the plan is to share an interim research report, as a working document, along with a summary of interim findings and the learning reports during the summer. This will be made available on the revamped learning network.
46. Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform, has recently written to the trials offering six the opportunity to extend for an additional three months to allow us to gather more robust data. This data will help us to inform the Universal Support operating model for May 2016.
47. The trials being offered an extension are: Argyll & Bute, Blaenau Gwent, Derby, Islington and the joint London trial of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark and the West Lincolnshire trial of City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, West Lindsey and Lincolnshire County Council. All of these trials have subsequently accepted the offer to extend.
48. The other five trials will end as planned on 31 August 2015. These are: Carmarthenshire, Dundee, Northumberland and South Tyneside, South Staffordshire and Westminster/Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

## **Cases with the Upper Tribunal**

49. Decision Making and Appeals Leeds has not been made aware of any new HB/CTB cases that are awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal since our last General Information Bulletin entry in May 2015.

## **HB/CTB decisions by the Upper Tribunal**

50. Decision Making and Appeals Leeds is aware of the following HB cases that have been decided by the Upper Tribunal.
  - CH/4610/14: Claimant appeal dismissed. Tribunal entitled to reach their conclusion on non-commerciality of agreement
  - CH/5532/14: Remit needed to determine factual questions regarding dwelling normally occupied as the home
  - CSH/340/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Claimant appeal dismissed. Award of DHPs meant that there was no live issue
  - CSH/341/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Claimant appeal dismissed. Award of DHPs meant that there was no live issue and no effective remedy



- CH/1985/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Shared care case. Previous caselaw followed and appeal dismissed
- CH/3041/2012: Claimant appeal. Allowed. HB/CTB overpayment. Official error to which claimant has not contributed and not reasonably expected to realise she was being overpaid
- CH/3570/2014: Claimant appeal. Allowed. HB overpayment. Official error to which claimant has not contributed and not reasonably expected to realise she was being overpaid
- CH/4692/2014: LA appeal. Allowed. HB/CTB overpayment. First tier Tribunal (FtT) determined official error – non recoverable. Judge Jacobs overturns FtT decision and provides a useful discussion on Regulation 100(2) and the timing of the claimant's realisation her assessment was wrong / was being overpaid (see paragraphs 9 – 14)
- CH/5215/2014: Claimant appeal. Allowed. HB/CTB overpayment. Judge Levenson assumes LA does not oppose appeal as in 3½ months it had not responded to directions; the claimant's representative works for same LA
- CH/1942/14: Spare Room Subsidy. Shared care case. LA decision restored. No breach of Convention rights
- CH/130/15: Commercial basis of tenancy for disabled relative. Appeal dismissed as dominant purpose not commercial
- CH/418/14 concerns the right to reside so is for team 2
- CH/418/2014: Whether the claimant was self employed with a right to reside. Found his attempts to generate income have never succeeded and this was not effective self employment. He received £50 a week from the State. This did not make him a self employed person it was not generated by his activity
- CH/144/15: Claimant appeal dismissed. Absence as a prisoner exceeded 13 weeks
- CH/62/15: Spare Room Subsidy. Shared care case. Tribunal should have applied spare room reduction
- CH/121/15: Tribunal entitled to conclude that agreement not commercial and created to take advantage of the HB scheme.

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

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

52. Thank you to those authorities that have let us know in the past 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.

If you have any queries about cases before the Upper Tribunal Judges or courts, please 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

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

- 2015 No.1362, The Universal Credit (Waiting Days) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, coming into force 3 August 2015
- 2015 No.1393, The Control of Major Accident Hazards (Amendment) Regulations 2015, came into force 13 July 2015
- 2015 No.1406, The Offshore Installations (Safety Zones) (No. 2) Order 2015, coming into force from 14 July 2015

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 the web

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
<b>HB G6/2015</b>	Qualified Housing Benefit Subsidy Claims  Risk Based Verification Pension Flexibilities  Information about Personal Independence Payment  Single Fraud Investigation HB fraud referrals  HB Overpayments and SFI referrals	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435789/g6-2015.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435789/g6-2015.pdf</a>

	<p>Tax credits renewal campaign</p> <p>HB/CTB decisions by the Upper Tribunal</p> <p>What's new on the web</p> <p>Form PPR1</p>	
<b>HB S7/2015</b>	New Burdens payment for the Real Time Information bulk data matching initiative	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-circulars-2015">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-circulars-2015</a>
<b>HB S8/2015 Rev</b>	Payment of New Burdens relating to the Single Fraud Investigation Service for 2015/16	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446441/s8-2015-rev.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446441/s8-2015-rev.pdf</a>
<b>HB Direct</b>	Newsletter	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-direct-june-2015-issue-159">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-direct-june-2015-issue-159</a>