

## Editorial

Welcome to the first HB Direct of 2013. I've succeeded Julia Sweeney as Head of Housing Delivery Division and am really looking forward to working with colleagues from local authorities in the year ahead.

And what an historic year this is going to be! The biggest changes to the welfare system in 65 years. We are all, in effect, responsible for making history. While these are really exciting times I appreciate there will be occasions when this level of change will seem a bit scary and lead to feelings of uncertainty. It's therefore vital that we have really good two-way communications and I see HB Direct as having a major role to play in achieving this.

This edition tells you how to find out more about the learning from the Direct Payment Project and offers you the chance to use the Crown Prosecution Service for prosecuting Housing Benefit fraud cases. In addition we explain some changes in the timetable for introducing Personal Independence Payments and implementing the benefit cap.

Finally we offer a secondment opportunity for someone to work with us in helping design the Single Fraud Investigation Service. We've had some really excellent secondees from local authorities over the years. Indeed I'm sitting next to one as I write this editorial. I know it's not easy to release staff during times of financial constraint so we really do appreciate your support with this.

I hope you find this edition of HB Direct helpful but if you've any thoughts or comments for improvement please feel free to let me know.

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## Direct Payments Projects

The Direct Payment Demonstration Projects issued a media package on 17 December which can be accessed at:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2012/dec-2012/dwp135-12.shtml>.

This is also available on the Learning Network which currently has over 700 local authority (LA) and Housing Association (HA) colleagues as members. A summary of the third learning report, produced by the Centre for Regional and Economic and Social Research will be published on the network by the end of January. Access to the online Learning Network can be facilitated by colleagues at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) by e-mailing them at:

[DCLG.WelfareReform@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:DCLG.WelfareReform@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

The learning is an iterative process with the six areas and starting this month the project team will hold monthly internal Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) workshops, to communicate the learning from the Demonstration Projects with internal key stakeholders to inform the future of Universal Credit design.

For further information about the content of this item please contact:

[kim.pinder@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kim.pinder@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Prosecuting Housing and Council Tax Benefit cases

Currently, about 160 LAs have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Crown Prosecution Service ((CPS) formerly Prosecution Division) to prosecute their Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB and CTB) fraud cases. A number of you have recently contacted DWP to say that you would also like to consider referring welfare benefit cases to the CPS for prosecution. I am pleased to announce that the CPS would be happy to increase the number of LAs with whom they have an MOU. If your LA would like to discuss this, please contact:

[Anne.ball@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.ball@cps.gsi.gov.uk)

## Revised Personal Independence Payment delivery timetable

Ministers have decided to complete the reassessment of the bulk of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants, aged 16-64 over a longer period than previously planned.

**8 April 2013** - we'll take new claims to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in a controlled start area covering postcodes: BL, CA, CH (except CH5, CH6, CH7 and CH8), CW, DH, DL (except DL6, DL7, DL8, DL9, DL10 and DL11), FY, L, LA (except LA2 7, LA2 8, LA6 2 and LA6 3), M, NE, PR, SR, TS (except TS9), WA and WN.

**June 2013** - National rollout of new claims starts.

**October 2013** - Reassessment for PIP begins for DLA claimants reporting a change in their condition, those reaching the end of fixed period DLA awards and young people turning 16.

**October 2015** - Reassessment of the remaining DLA claimants starts.

We'll include general information about PIP in DLA uprating letters sent to existing DLA claimants from 28 January 2013.

The Government's response to the recent Personal Independence Payment consultations was published on 13 December 2012, and is available here <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2012/pip.shtml> . Following feedback DWP has made improvements to the assessment criteria and benefit rules to ensure that support is focused on those with the greatest need.

For further information about the content of this item please contact:

[tressy.wojtowicz@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tressy.wojtowicz@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Benefit cap – January 2013

### Phased roll-out

The benefit cap will be implemented from April 2013, starting in four LAs in London – Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey.

This will be a phased roll-out with the remaining LAs implementing the benefit cap over the summer. All households identified as being appropriate to be capped will therefore have been capped by the end of September 2013.

The precise dates for national roll-out will be agreed shortly.

A phased roll-out supports:

- testing of systems and processes end to end in a controlled live environment
- ensuring the supporting products and services for both staff and claimants are effective
- ensuring there is a measured approach to rolling out the cap to affected households
- building capacity to learn and respond to issues raised in the initial phase of rollout to inform national rollout.

### Why were Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey chosen to start the phased rollout?

The LAs in Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey are the only ones that together meet all of the criteria required to have a best value for money approach that allows realistic lessons to be learned. London has the highest percentage of potential benefit cap claimants and a diverse cross section of residents.

The majority of claimants in the four boroughs have their out of work benefit claims processed by DWP's Stratford Benefit Centre, which is the only London based Benefit Centre. That is an important factor in delivering this change safely as it means that focused local support can be provided to make sure the delivery of this change works as intended for LAs, DWP and households.

For further information about the content of this item please contact:

[benefitcap.external@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:benefitcap.external@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Secondment Opportunity Fraud and Error Programme, Single Fraud Investigation Service

**As we currently have a strong representation within the team from LAs in England and Wales, applications are invited from Scotland only.**

The DWP Fraud and Error Programme is seeking a talented individual to support successful delivery of the strategy through a major change programme. We have a vacancy for you to join us on secondment. The post will facilitate LA involvement in the design phase for the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) Project to shape future implementation arrangements.

### Roles and responsibilities

- To provide policy and operational input into the design phase of the project
  - Share operational expertise, in particular LA Fraud Investigation experience, to inform the design and implementation phases
  - Lead in preparing and obtaining clearance on products to support the design and development of SFIS that is informed by relevant stakeholders, including operational and legal requirements

Please note that due to the nature of this role there will be regular travelling involved, especially between London, the North West of England and Glasgow. The costs for travel will be funded by DWP. Existing salary arrangements remain the same but DWP will refund these costs to your LA for the duration of the secondment.

### Essential skills

- A good working knowledge and understanding of current fraud investigation and benefit processing operations
- Good communication skills, with the ability to express complex issues clearly both orally and in writing
- A strong team worker with an ability to work collaboratively and productively with a wide range of partners and interests

The post is being offered for 6 months but this will be reviewed at the end of the period. Please check with your LA that you can be released before applying.

The successful candidate should be available to start by April/May 2013. If you are interested in a career development opportunity, and can demonstrate that you have the necessary skills, please send your CV by e-mail to [frauderror.strategy@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:frauderror.strategy@dwpgsi.gov.uk) by **1 March 2013**.

If you would like any further information on this opportunity, please e-mail:

[frauderror.strategy@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:frauderror.strategy@dwpgsi.gov.uk)