

Housing Benefit Direct issue 137 May 2013



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Editorial

Welcome to the May edition of HB Direct. I had expected April to be the last in my role as editor but my valedictory proved premature as I'm still here and delighted to be so.

I know April has been a hectic month to say the least. You've introduced local Council Tax reduction, localised welfare support and the removal of spare room subsidy at the same time as continuing to pay Housing Benefit to around 5 million customers. That is an amazing achievement and one you should be very proud of.

This month's edition gives an update on the Personal Independence Payment and Electronic Transfer of Data merge with the Automated Transfer to Local Authority System and introduces the Public Services Network. The latter will have a major impact on how we exchange data. If you aren't already up to speed on this I strongly recommend you make contact with your IT section.

Universal Credit went live in Greater Manchester on 29 April. Clearly we can't insist that Universal Credit claimants don't move away from Greater Manchester so we've issued a Housing Benefit Circular HB A13/2013 to tell you what to do should a Universal Credit claimant move into your area. There's more about that below as well as an update on the Local Support Services Framework.

I hope you find HB Direct useful but, as ever, if you've got any ideas for improvement please drop me an e-mail.

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Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems Update

Due to some late concerns around the assurance and quality of test files for Personal Independent Payment (PIP) and Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) merge with Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) implementation, the Local Authority Data Share (LADS) Delivery Team has agreed changes to the imminent go-live dates.

The PIP and ETD implementations have been decoupled to reduce risk and allow all parties, including local authorities (LAs), more time to conduct testing.

The PIP implementation has now been rescheduled from 28 May 2013 to 10 June 2013. This will allow LAs an additional two weeks to complete testing.

For ETDs, LADS is now looking to reschedule merger implementation for July 2013, with more exact dates to be provided following liaison with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and LA Information Technology (IT) suppliers. We know that this will be disappointing for some but believe the delay is necessary in order to deliver the changes effectively.

LA IT suppliers have agreed that this will allow more time for LA IT testing and improve overall confidence that systems will work to specification from go-live. This should also reassure the individual LAs who have contacted us directly with concerns that the testing period is not sufficient.

We will provide a more comprehensive update using the [Huddle LA Data Share \(All LAs\) workspace](#) . If you have not yet registered and need access to Huddle please contact [LA-ST](#).

Public Services Network – a change to the way you connect to DWP Services

Many of you will be aware of the work to transition the current secure connectivity of the Government Secure Internet (GSI) Convergence Framework (GCF) (which covers GCSX, GSX and GSE) services over to the Public Services Network (PSN).

Cabinet Office, Government Procurement Services (GPS) and Vodafone (Cable & Wireless Worldwide as was) have worked together to offer a clear migration route and a joint migration programme. There has been much recent correspondence on this to the IT area of LAs.

DWP Housing Delivery Division (HDD) along with the DWP IT Department is actively engaged with the Cabinet Office to support a smooth transition that maintains access to all DWP services through the transition period and beyond.

What will this mean for me?

At present this note is **for information only**, you are not required to take any action. However, if you have not already done so, you may wish to make contact with the manager responsible for IT services in your LA and ask that you are kept informed of progress.

General advice and support is available by visiting the [PSN webpage](#) or by emailing the [PSN mailbox](#).

Universal Credit Housing Benefit Circular

The Universal Credit Pathfinder began on 29 April 2013 in Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester. While the Pathfinder affects a small number of claimants it is possible that a Universal Credit claimant may have a change of circumstances that impacts an existing HB claim in a LA outside of Pathfinder area.

Circular HB A13/2013 “Universal Credit: Change of circumstances affecting Housing Benefit” was issued to LAs on 29 April 2013 to guide staff through the actions to take if a Universal Credit claimant and a HB claimant have a change of circumstances that requires the closure of a HB claim.

The Pathfinder represents a period of learning for DWP and partner organisations, including LAs, and as such LAs are encouraged to provide feedback if they find any of the technical issues or guidance in the HB circular to be unclear. Comments specifically related to the HB circular should be emailed to:

la.universalcredittransition@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Universal Credit Local Support Services

The initial consultation on the Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework has now closed. We are currently analysing the responses to the consultation and we will officially respond in due course. Jobcentre Plus District Managers have been asked to begin the local partnership discussion with their respective LAs around how they can meet the challenges of delivering Universal Credit Local Support Services.

You can find out more about Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework on: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/universal-credit-information/>

Send your comments to:

Localservices.framework@dwp.gsi.gov.uk