

Housing Benefit Direct issue 165 March 2016

ISSN 2045-6131 (Online)

Editorial

Welcome to issue 165 of Housing Benefit Direct. As we move towards the end of another financial year there is the usual flurry of activity. I'm afraid we are adding to this by asking for your 2015/16 Housing Benefit initial subsidy claim and 2015/16 Discretionary Housing Payment final claim by 30 April. Having attended some of the highly successful Subsidy workshops recently I do appreciate how much work goes into meeting these deadlines. We also need your 2016/17 DHP monitoring return form by 13 May 2016. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

This is a slightly shorter edition than usual. There are articles reminding you that we need a Single Point of Contact to whom we can send benefit cap scans and asking you to ensure that your Glasscubes and Data Hub representatives make themselves known to one another where this is not already the case. The latter is to assist with the 'on-boarding' process. On-boarding is a term that seems to have slipped into everyday use along with others such as 'power down'. I wonder who thinks up these terms? Perhaps I'm just showing my age.

I hope you find this edition useful. As ever, if you have suggestions for improvement, please let us know and thanks again for your continued support.

Bill Hern

[Distribution and newsletter enquiries](#)

Benefit cap changes – Single Point of Contact nominations to receive scans - Reminder

In bulletin [HB G2/2016](#) we asked local authorities (LAs) to provide details of a PGP key holder and, where necessary, a Single Point of Contact (SPoC) to receive the scans containing details of HB customers likely to be impacted by the changes to the benefit cap levels in Autumn 2016. This is to remind those LAs who haven't already replied that we need these details by 11 March 2016; as without them the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) cannot supply LAs with their scan.

The scans will be sent using PGP data encryption software to a PGP key holder within the LA. In order to receive the scan we need:

- the name of a PGP key holder, with their full PGP contact details, and
- where the PGP key holder is not the person who will deal with the scan, LAs will also have to identify a SPoC along with their full contact details who will receive the scan from the PGP key holder.

PGP key holder details and SPoC nominations need to be sent to la_spoc.bencap@dwp.gsi.gov.uk by the **11 March 2016** as the scans will be sent to LAs in late April 2016.

If your LA doesn't have a PGP key holder or if you have any queries regarding this article please email the Benefit Cap Changes Project at caroline.a.mcdermott@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Universal Credit transition to full service

On Thursday 11 February, the Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith MP, the Secretary of State for DWP, laid a [Written Statement](#) in Parliament announcing the sites that will transition to the full Universal Credit service in 2016.

The full Universal Credit service will be open to all new claims from all claimant types. This will also include anyone who is currently on existing benefits or Tax Credits and has a change of circumstances that would naturally trigger a new claim to Universal Credit; meaning the entire household affected would migrate to the full service.

Additionally anyone who is currently claiming Universal Credit through the live service will then migrate onto the full service over the first three months of operation.

The [transition rollout schedule](#) for 2016 has been placed on GOV.UK.

Data Hub on-boarding process

This year has started with a flurry of activity in support of the Data Hub and we'd like to take this opportunity to thank LAs for their continued support and efforts.

Based on feedback received so far, can we ask that the LA Glasscubes representative make themselves known within their LA as often the Glasscubes representative and the Data Hub representative are two different people and where guidance is published on Glasscubes we need to ensure it reaches the Data Hub representative as soon as possible.

In addition when on-boarding activity has been passed on to a different area of the business can the Data Hub lead please ensure they follow up to ensure the activity is being progressed and completed.

If you have any questions regarding this article contact lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Payment Deduction Project

As you may be aware the LA Data Sharing (LADS) delivery team has been working closely with the DWP Payment Deduction Project to introduce a two-way automated interface between LAs and DWP to transfer the recovery of HB debt from LAs to Universal Credit.

Work has been progressing well, with LA IT suppliers developing solutions based on agreed requirements. However, a capacity issue has arisen which means the go-live date has moved from April 2016 to the **1 August 2016**.

The LADS delivery team will continue to keep you updated with the progress and further information concerning the implementation of this interface will be released closer to the go-live date.

If you have any queries or would like to know more about any of the LADS projects please contact us at lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Subsidy/Discretionary Housing Payments final claim deadlines – Reminder

The deadline for LA submission of the **2015/16 HB initial final subsidy claim is 30 April 2016**. All LAs should take appropriate action to ensure that this deadline is met. Usual subsidy withholding arrangements will apply for any LA which does not meet the deadline and extensions will be granted in exceptional circumstances only. The subsidy related deadline for referral of cases to the Rent Officer is also 30 April 2016. The deadline for auditor-certified final subsidy claims is 30 November 2016.

The deadline for the submission of the **2015/16 Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) final claim is also 30 April 2016**. Again, LAs should take appropriate action to ensure that this deadline is met.

The deadline of 30 April 2016 for subsidy and DHP claims helps to ensure that wider governmental accounting arrangements are satisfied and HM Treasury requirements are met.

Any enquiries should be emailed to michael.mina@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

2016/17 DHP monitoring form return

We would like to provide advance notice that later this month we will be issuing a circular with details of the arrangements for the year end voluntary monitoring return for DHP expenditure.

These returns improve our understanding of how DHPs are being used to help HB claimants affected by the various Welfare Reform measures. The deadline for submission of the 2015/16 year end return will be **Friday 13 May 2016**, using the same format as the mid-year return.

Whilst the financial returns (final DHP claims that you will be providing by 30 April) and monitoring returns are separate processes, we ask that LAs reconcile the total expenditure they report on the monitoring return with the financial return and explain any differences.

The deadline for the monitoring returns has been set at **13 May 2016** to allow adequate time for this. This will avoid unnecessary queries during the data quality assurance process.