

Housing Benefit

General Information Bulletin

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

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

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Common input errors with Housing Benefit claims

1. When an application for Housing Benefit (HB) is taken from a claimant the data is input by frontline staff onto the local authorities (LAs) claim processing system. This data then becomes part of a return called the Single Housing Benefit Extract which is sent to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on a monthly basis.
2. In recent months DWP analysts have expressed concerns with the data quality being received from LAs new claims.
3. To help improve the quality of the data we are providing clarity on how to complete the sections of the claim which are causing issues:
 - **Claimant's surname** - Surname only. Do not include the forename, initials or other text
 - **Claimant's first name** - First name only. No Initials, middle names, titles or qualifications (e.g. Dr)
 - **Claimant's Date of Birth** - Do not include any text other than a valid date of birth. Format should be DD-MM-YYYY
 - **Claimant's address line** - The appropriate address line should be used. Please do not use 'No Fixed Abode'. If in doubt please leave blank.
 - **Claimant's postcode** - Check the postcode is valid. It should contain a maximum of 7 characters with the correct spacing and begin with a letter. Do not record the postcode in any other section on the claim.
 - **Number of child dependants** - Always complete; if no children please insert '0'.
 - **Claimant's gender** - Always complete. Record as 'X' if the gender is unknown
 - **Claimant's telephone number** - Enter the latest, most reliable, contact number provided by the claimant. Check the number is valid (in other words, correct number of digits). Leave this section blank if no number is available
4. If no information is available for specific sections when inputting you should leave those sections blank.
5. If you have any queries in regards to this article please email ifd.shbe@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Update: Verify Earnings and Pensions service

6. From 6th October 2017, the Real Time Information (RTI) service was re-named the Verify Earnings and Pensions (VEP) service. This change was made in order to bring it in line with the Government Digital Service naming convention for digital services.
7. The VEP service has now rolled out successfully to all 380 LAs.
8. HB assessors in all LAs can use the income details the service provides from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to assess new claims, change of circumstances and reviews.
9. We will be making the usual post implementation calls to all sites that have recently gone live to confirm they are able to use the VEP service successfully and offering support if required. However, the Implementation Managers are still available if you require support.
10. Following the rollout of the VEP service the project will be contacting LAs to ask users for their feedback on the implementation of the service.
11. We would really appreciate your participation as this will help us to inform future implementation approaches. We will also be keen to identify any outstanding issues and any good practices and looking for opportunities to improve the VEP Service.
12. An alerts service is being developed, that will use HMRC payment data to trigger an alert to LAs as and when there are certain changes to a claimant/customer's earnings and pensions information during the life of a HB claim.
13. There will be two alert categories:
 - "Start" alerts (date reported for new employment earnings and non-state pensions)
 - "Fluctuating" alerts (financial value of fluctuation since previous payment for employment earnings and non-state pensions)
14. We have been working closely with LA representatives since April this year to develop and redefine the rules for alerts. We are also currently testing with 10 volunteer LAs to inform the design. There will be a phased roll out of the alerts service in the first half of next year and it is proposed that they will start to replace the current referrals (Bulk Data Matching/Optional RTI).
15. More details regarding the alerts roll out approach and alerts functionality are to be confirmed and will be provided in the coming months.
16. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article please email rtiprojects.portfolioqueries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Delays in the return of RTI data

17. VEP users will be aware that we have been experiencing issues with performance resulting in frequent delays in the return of RTI data. A performance enhancement will be implemented on 6 November 2017; after which we expect to see an improvement. Following feedback from users, we will not be issuing communications about RTI data delays between now and that date. We now advise that, until the performance enhancement has been implemented, users should expect the RTI data to be available at the start of the business day immediately following the date indicated on the system.
18. Further upgrades are being planned for delivery between January and the end of March 2018 to improve performance in this area.
19. We apologise for the inconvenience this issue causes to users.
20. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article please send them to rtiprojects.portfolioqueries@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

Electronic Data Interchange for LAs

21. DWP would like to offer you the option to change the delivery method of your four weekly Housing (Rent) and/or Council Tax Third Party Deduction Schedules from paper to electronic.
22. The electronic receipt of these payment schedules will be via your LA Data Hub.
23. This change can be requested from customerpayments.edi@dpw.gsi.gov.uk. You will need to provide your AP Creditor reference number and full contact details.
24. Please note the timing, content and format of the schedules will not change; however the schedules will arrive wrapped in a TAR file. On opening the TAR file (using WinZip or similar) the standard text file will be there to print or to load directly into your systems once you have changed the file type from “.TXT” to “.XML”.
25. In preparation for these changes, local arrangements between your team and your current Data Hub Administrator and users will need to be made as to how the payment schedules are passed over once downloaded from the Data Hub. It is strongly recommended that an existing Data Hub user downloads these files on behalf of your team.
26. Can you remind Data Hub users that these files have a ‘Source Type’ listed in their Hub in-box of “CPSCHEDULE” and that if there is any issue with loss of the file during or after downloading, that the “Copy of” file generated must be downloaded within the next 24 hours. You should note that issues occurring on a Friday must be resolved the same day.
27. Queries about accessing the Data Hub can be referred to la-sst.hdd@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

HB decisions by the Upper Tribunal

28. We are aware of the following HB cases that has been decided by the Upper Tribunal:

- CH-699-17: Dismissed - Overpayment (OP) recoverable - Although official error by Council, claimant was found to have reasonably expected to know they were being overpaid.
- CH/539/16: LA appeal dismissed- First-tier Tribunal (FtT) found no OP. Insufficient evidence provided by LA to determine LTAHW. No materiel error.
- CH/1360/17: Further findings needed on enforceability of terms of agreement.
- CH/3290/15: Remit in part for inadequate findings by FtT for a specific HB period on whether there was an official error.

29. Decisions of the Upper Tribunal are published on their website which can be found here: www.gov.uk

30. 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 or Fax on: 0113 2324841

New Legislation

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

- 2017 No.897, The Social Security (Qualifying Young Persons Participating in Relevant Training Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, coming into force 6 November 2017
- 2017 No.995, The Social Security and Child Support (Care Payments and Tenant Incentive Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, coming into force 7 November 2017

32. The following Statutory Rule (SR) of Northern Ireland has been laid:

- 2017 No.190 (C.11), The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional and Transitory Provisions) Order 2017, came into force 27 September 2017

33. Copies of SIs/SRs can now be downloaded from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

What's new on our HB pages on www.gov.uk

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB G9/2017	<p>One way automation of the Universal Credit Full Service Housing Benefit Stop Notices</p> <p>Student uprating 2017/18</p> <p>Reminder: DCI1 process Discretionary Housing Payments mid-year monitoring return 2017/18</p> <p>Cases with the Upper Tribunal</p> <p>Statutory Instruments</p> <p>What's new on our HB pages on www.gov.uk</p> <p>Completion notes for DCI1 referrals DCI1 form attached as a separate Appendix A</p> <p>DHP monitoring form issued as a separate Appendix B</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/646619/g9-2017.pdf</p>
Circular HB S5/2017 (2nd revision)	<p>Removal of temporary accommodation management fee in Housing Benefit subsidy from 1 April 2017</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/649453/s5-2017.pdf</p>
Circular HB S12/2017	<p>Final payment for RTI BDM Files issued for May 2017 to August 2017 and</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650715/s12-2017.pdf</p>

	advance payment for RTI BDM files for September 2017 to January 2018	
Circular HB A9/2017	<p>The Social Security (Infected Blood and Thalidomide) Regulations 2017</p> <p>The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (Consequential Amendment) Order 2017</p> <p>Additional earnings disregard amendment</p>	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652798/a9-2017.pdf