

Housing Benefit

General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, 6th Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street,
London SW1 9NA

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/>

HB G5/2013

17 May 2013

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

Contents

	paragraph
Universal Credit claimants moving from Pathfinder areas.....	1
DWP liaison – Expansion of APOLLO LA CIS Register.....	6
Direct Payment Demonstration Project update.....	20
CIS ATLAS update.....	25
Benefit Cap update.....	30
What's New on the Web.....	45

Crown Copyright 2013

Recipients may freely reproduce this bulletin.

Universal Credit claimants moving from Pathfinder areas

1. Universal Credit was introduced on 29 April 2013 in selected areas of the North West and a progressive roll-out will start from October 2013.
2. Universal Credit will apply the “once in, stay in” principle meaning that claimants who move out of the Pathfinder area as a result of changes of circumstance will remain on Universal Credit.
3. Where this happens the claim will continue to be maintained by the Pathfinder Service Centre. If the claimant has moved to a new location they will still be able to receive face-to-face support, such as attending regular interviews from a Jobcentre Plus in their new location.
4. Although new claims are limited to the Pathfinder, it's possible that claimants may move out of the Universal Credit postcode area and move into your local authority area. If this is the case then you would need to action the data sharing with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for your Localised Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) claim for this claimant in a slightly different way. You will also have to take different action if a claimant needs additional help with their housing costs by the way of a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).
5. If you get any of these cases you would need to contact:

hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

for additional guidance.

DWP liaison – Expansion of APOLLO LA CIS Register

Current process

6. The APOLLO local authority (LA) Customer Information Service (CIS) Register provides DWP operations with a list of LA staff who are authorised to obtain DWP data for the purposes of Housing Benefit (HB) administration, counter-fraud activity and overpayment recovery. The law permits the sharing of such data without customer consent.
7. The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 increased the number of services where DWP can share data with LAs and County Councils (CCs) without customer consent. This prevents the customer having to provide the same information twice.
8. At present, the APOLLO LA CIS Register gives DWP assurance that individuals have:
 - provided evidence of their identity
 - completed data protection training

- completed the technical and security training pack
- signed the Confidentiality Agreement
- complied with [HMG Baseline Personnel Security Standard](#) (BPSS)

Proposal

9. DWP has decided that the Apollo LA CIS Register can be expanded to include staff in the following areas:
 - Blue Badge
 - Fairer Charging/Financial Assessment Teams
 - HB
 - LCTR schemes
 - Local Welfare Provision
10. Some LA staff will not be included in the Register but are entitled to obtain DWP information without consent under the Welfare Reform Act 2012, for example, LA staff involved with Troubled Families, DHP.
11. If LA staff are not on the list then this does not automatically prevent them from obtaining customer information. DWP Staff will follow the normal security procedures to confirm identity and must be satisfied that these LA staff are able to obtain information without customer consent
12. If the LA staff member is not on the list and DWP staff are in any doubt about the authenticity of the request then they will advise LA staff that they cannot deal with the request via the telephone but that they must submit the request in writing.
13. This new process will give accredited LA/CC staff easier access to our data when required while giving assurance to DWP staff such information is being appropriately disclosed. The Practitioners Operational Group (POG) has agreed this process.

Requirements

14. To enable DWP to add those LA/CC staff that have not been through the Employee Authentication Service (EAS) process but are now able to request information without customer consent to the expanded register, confirmation will be required at a senior level from all LAs/CCs that such staff have been through the assurance process detailed in paragraph 8 above.
15. Without such an assurance, we would not be able to add non-CIS registered staff to the LA CIS Register. Having this assurance will allow DWP to maintain the security and integrity of the list and protect customer information from unauthorised disclosure.

Next steps

16. The format of the register will change to include the area of work undertaken by each member of LA/CC staff, enabling front end advisors to make an informed decision on what data can be released. We believe this will give LA/CC staff easier access to our data where the law allows them to receive it, and it will provide assurance to DWP operational colleagues that they are not disclosing information inappropriately.
17. All LAs/CCs will receive a request from the Pension Centre Liaison Officer for their location to provide a full list of LA/CC staff that can approach DWP for information without consent, including the area of work they are involved in. Only one collated return will be accepted from each LA/CC. POG recommended that the responsibility for this process best sits with EAS sponsor within each LA/CC
18. Business Change, Security and Support Team (BCSST) will advise LAs/CCs when the expanded register is to be published after all returns have been received.
19. If there are any queries please contact:

hb-ctb-liaison@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk

Direct Payment Demonstration Project Update

20. The Interim report on first 6 months of the Direct Payment Demonstration projects by the Sheffield Hallam University external evaluation team was published on 16 May 2013 as well as a Press/Media release on the projects which focused on:
 - Lessons Learned from the Projects about Switchbacks and Switch forwards
 - detail on the operation of the arrears triggers across the project Areas
 - Management Information up to Payment 9 (March 2013)
21. Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform, visited Wakefield on Thursday 16 May 2013 for a detailed discussion with the Wakefield project team that was then followed by a wider discussion with representatives from all 6 of the Demonstration Project Areas covering their experiences on the project as well as broader topics relating to Universal Credit and Welfare Reform.
22. The Demonstration Project team continues to share its learning across the Universal Credit programme, to inform key design decisions, and more widely with government and external stakeholders in support of wider Universal Credit/DWP communications activity.
23. If you would like to learn more about the Demonstration Project please come and join The Learning Network which is open to LAs, housing associations and other key stakeholders to share key aspects of the learning we are

gathering from the projects, as well as how the landlords taking part in the projects are preparing for the introduction of Universal Credit.

24. If you are interested you can receive an invitation to join by emailing:

DCLG.WelfareReform@communities.gsi.gov.uk

CIS Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems update

25. The Local Authority Data Share (LADS) Delivery Team will be completing a refresh of the CIS Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) interests shortly. The exact date is yet to be confirmed. This refresh will update the interests by using the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) returns and will ensure the ATLAS notifications are provided only where there is a live HB or LCTR scheme claim at the LA.

26. Failure for any LA to provide a SHBE return will result in any existing ATLAS interests being removed with no live interests showing. Unitary and shared authorities need to ensure the SHBE reports are returned for all the LAs they are responsible for.

27. LAs need to continue to register, maintain and end the ATLAS and Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) interests indicators shown on CIS as detailed in the Revised ATLAS Awareness Pack v2 available on Huddle. The refresh will identify where an LA user has updated their ATLAS interest after their SHBE return date, correctly leaving that interest unchanged.

28. An update regarding the date of the refresh will be published on Huddle. In the LA Data Share Huddle Workspace. If you would like to be sent an invitation to join this Workspace please e-mail LA-ST.

29. If you have any queries about this update please contact Glen Skinner:

lads.deliveryteam@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

or on: 01253 689482.

Benefit Cap update - May 2013 direct mail and LA data scans

30. A further Benefit Cap direct mail exercise is taking place in May 2013. This is for all new claimants potentially affected by the cap since the last data scan was run in March 2013. The exercise also includes some stock claimants who received a direct mail in February 2013, but who were not informed of the date for national implementation of 15 July 2013. The May 2013 direct mail is being sent to individual claimants providing information about how the Benefit Cap may affect them and what support is available.

31. LAs will receive a full data scan from 24 May 2013 listing all cases potentially affected by the cap at the time the scan was run. Experience from the LAs in the phased implementation areas (Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey) has demonstrated the benefits of early engagement with claimants. Joint working has also proved to be particularly beneficial as Jobcentre Plus Advisers in these areas are co-located with LA staff to deliver a cohesive offer of both employment and housing support for those impacted.
32. If you have any queries about any of the above, please contact:

benefitcap.external@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Benefit Cap data sharing

33. On 25 March 2013 DWP issued a memo to its staff regarding the circumstances where claimant information may be shared and how it can be shared, including security measures and volumes. Extracts from this memo are re-produced below:

Background

34. This memo provides guidance about the information that can be shared between DWP and LAs.

Legislation supports sharing of employment and training information

35. Section 13 of the Social Security (Claims and Information) Regulations 1999 allow DWP to supply employment and training information (e.g. whether someone is participating in a training course, DWP contracted and non-contracted provision) to an LA (in England, Scotland and Wales) to enable the LA to support the claimant in offering advice and support to help move the claimant into or closer to the labour market.
36. Sharing of this information will also ensure claimants are being offered a full range of support, and reduces the possibility of overlapping support and provision.
37. This gateway also allows LAs to share employment and training information with DWP.
38. The LA cannot use the information provided to decide if a claimant is eligible for a DHP.

Security approval to share employment support provision

39. Legislation allows for the sharing of employment and training data with the LA. However, security clearance has to be obtained to enable this sharing.
40. The Benefit Cap Project has sought clearance for DWP to transfer limited claimant data to LAs. This information must be transferred to a separate

spreadsheet; it must not include dates of birth or addresses (only name and National Insurance number).

41. Once extracted the information can be shared verbally with LAs in tele-conferencing or face to face. However, the preferred and most secure route would be by secure email i.e. GSI/GCSx.

Information that can be shared

42. Security clearance has been obtained to share the following employment and training data with LAs:

- historical dates and details of claimant referrals to contracted and non-contracted employment support provision
- occupations claimants have expressed an interest in and any skills and/or training they require to move closer to the labour market
- confirmation that claimants have accepted and/or are participating in any employment support offered due to benefit cap

LA action

43. LAs may return the spreadsheet to confirm the action they have taken.

LA security protocols

44. For the purposes of LA security protocols the following steps should be adhered to:

- data must only be stored for the period it is required
- the template must be password protected and if stored in a secure shared drive, only those who have a business need to access the data can have access to the shared drive
- the template must only contain the data required for business purposes and unnecessary data must be deleted

If you have any queries about any of the above, please contact:

benefitcap.external@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

What's new on the web

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB A12/2013	Removal of the spare room subsidy – joint tenants	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a12-2013.pdf
HB A13/2013	Universal Credit – changes of circumstances affecting HB	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a13-2013.pdf
HB/CTB G3/2013	Spare Room Subsidy Awareness Campaign Benefit cap Legislative changes for Armed Forces Independence Payments Statutory Instruments What's New on the Web	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g3-2013.pdf
HB G4/2013	Direct Earnings Attachments Information about Universal Credit for Claimants Changes to the Loss of Benefits regime Personal Independence Payment Update to Subsidy Circular S4/2013 HB Cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal What's new on the web	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g4-2013.pdf
HB Direct issue137 May 2013	Newsletter	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-137-may-2013.pdf

Guidance	Frequently Asked Questions – how the removal of spare room subsidy affects foster carers	http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/faqs-foster-carers.pdf
-----------------	--	---

HB/CTB circulars recently issued

HB/CTB A12/2013

HB/CTB A13/2013