

Housing Benefit Direct issue 155 December 2014



ISSN 2045-6131 (Online)

Editorial

Welcome to the December issue of HB Direct. 2014 has been a year in which we have really had the spotlight on HB delivery in DWP and it isn't going to be switched off any time soon. I want to thank everyone involved in delivering this essential benefit to over five million households every year. Despite all the pressures of welfare reform and austerity, claims continue to be processed in good time and the vast majority of claims are accurate at commencement.

On 24 November we launched the new Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) to pay local authorities (LAs) who opt in and find more fraud and error in their caseloads. You will also be able to bid for extra funds from a new Performance Improvement Fund to support performance improvements in this area. We have written to all Chief Executives and issued detailed information packs to Benefit Managers in all authorities. More information about the scheme is included in this newsletter. We found when issuing the information packs that some of the contact details we hold for Revenues and Benefits managers are out of date. We would be grateful if you could keep us informed of any changes as, going forward, we'll be sending out regular updates to Revenues and Benefits managers.

Also included in this issue is an update from the Real Time Information Bulk Data Matching project. You should all have received the first instalment of your new burdens payment at the end of November. We also have a couple of IT related articles; the first is to let you know about our plans for the replacement of the ageing Data Transport Appliance (DTA) Service which is used to send benefit data and HM Revenues and Customs Tax Credit data to authorities. The other article is to let you know that we will be replacing Huddle with a new solution known as "Glass Cubes" which will still be an online cloud based communications tool. All the information you need is included in the article.

That just leaves me to wish you all a very restful but enjoyable break over the Christmas and New Year period.

Clare Elliott

Clare.elliott@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

[Distribution enquiries](#)

Launch of the Fraud and Error Incentive Scheme

The latest National Statistics on [Fraud and Error](#) in the benefit system show that losses due to fraud and error in HB are at a record high. Central and local government are working closely together to address these unacceptable losses.

On 24 November we launched the Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) offering a financial reward to LAs finding reductions to HB entitlement as a result of claimant error or fraud. Up to £12 million is available to LAs in incentive payments for 2014/15 and you will also have access to £9 million of Performance Improvement Funding (PIF) to bid for in order to support you with this activity.

It will be up to each LA to decide how they identify additional changes to entitlement resulting from fraud and error.

The scheme has been designed through collaborative working between LAs, the English, Scottish and Welsh Local Government Associations, the Department for Communities and Local Government, HM Treasury and Cabinet Office. The scheme will run from 1 December 2014 to 31 March 2016.

Information packs were issued to LAs on 25 November which provided the detail of FERIS and the PIF including the application process.

If you have any queries please direct them to feris.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Huddle collaboration tool

Our contract with Huddle will come to an end on 6 December 2014.

As we have had such favourable feedback from LAs on having an online/cloud based collaboration tool, we will be implementing a replacement system for our future collaboration needs.

We aim to have the new solution from Glass Cubes in place by 5 December 2014.

If you are a current user of Huddle we will be sending joining instructions to Glass Cubes using the email address that you are currently registered to. For example, if you are a member of the 'LA Data Share (All LAs) workspace' you will be invited to a similar 'workspace' on Glass Cubes.

If you are not a current registered user of Huddle, but wish to gain access to Glass Cubes, please contact the LA Security and Support Team (LA-SST) via email la-sst.hdd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk and we will ensure new joining instructions are issued as soon as the system is live.

We are currently unable to confirm there will be no gap in service between the Huddle contract ending and the Glass Cubes contract starting, but we will endeavour to get the new collaboration tool up and running as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued support.

Housing Delivery Division

Data Transport Appliance

As you may know, we have been reviewing the options for replacing the ageing Data Transport Appliance (DTA) Service used to securely transmit DWP Benefit Data and HM Revenues and Customs Tax Credit data to LAs.

We undertook a proof of concept to review alternative possible solutions and discussions of the options have been one of the key features of recent meetings of the newly established Business Design Authority. LAs represented on that group (and others we have been able to speak to about it) have welcomed DWP's decision to implement a cloud based message-hub solution, which would sit within the Public Services Network (PSN).

LAs will access their designated files on the message-hub using a secure web browser session. Files can be downloaded and uploaded manually or automatically, using Open Standard File Transfer Protocol (FTP). Each LA should have a minimum of one desk top machine set up which will be able to access the message-hub securely via the web browser and it is very important that this designated desk top has the appropriate security protocol. The required protocol is Transport Layer Security (TLS) 1.2. Some LAs may already be on TLS1.2 and others may still be on TLS 1.0 or 1.1

You can confirm your current TLS status by visiting <https://www.howsmyssl.com>. Further guidance will be sent out to LAs on how to upgrade your status to TLS 1.2, before the end of 2014. You may already be aware of how to action the upgrade internally but alternatively this will need to be discussed with your IT support.

Current plans suggest that the procurement process will not be completed until May 2015, with the development, planning and implementation process completed by August 2015. It is imperative that all LAs are on the TLS1.2 version by the end of August 2015. The message-hub will be introduced through a phased approach up until the end of autumn 2015. We will continue to provide communication to LAs through appropriate channels.

In the meantime if you have any urgent queries please contact Sabby Riordan via email on lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Universal Credit expansion to cover families

Universal Credit has expanded to families providing parents with stronger incentives and support to get into work and earn more money.

Six Jobcentre sites in the North West of England began delivering the new service to families; couples with children and lone parents from 24 November. The six Jobcentres are: Birkenhead, Bromborough, Hoylake, Upton, Wallasey covering the Wirral L A area and Warrington.

More information can be found in the [Press Release](#) available on GOV.UK

Real Time Information - Bulk Data Match initiative

The Real Time Information (RTI) Bulk Data Match initiative successfully went live from 6 October 2014 when the first tranche of referrals was issued nationally to LAs.

Tranche 2 referrals were issued from 22 to 27 October 2014 with a number of fixes applied. Feedback from tranche 2 has been positive, i.e. users have seen an improvement in the quality of the referrals received, providing higher hit rates and increased savings.

Tranche 3 referrals were issued from 19 to 21 November 2014. Additional fixes have been included to improve the quality of referrals even further.

The majority of LAs should have received funding from the LA Data Sharing (LADS) Programme for the software enhancements that LA IT suppliers were asked to complete to support RTI and other LADS projects over the last six months. The new burden payment for RTI will be made separately in two instalments. Subsidy circular [HB S11/2014](#) contains further details about these payments.

We appreciate LAs continued support in dealing with these referrals and your patience and cooperation as we work to resolve the issues identified. We will continue to work with you all to improve outcomes for LAs, while also reducing fraud and error in the HB caseload.

Details of the progress made by LAs to achieve the expected savings will be published early next year.

General enquiries about RTI Bulk Data Matching should be directed to rti.portfolio@dwpgsi.gov.uk. Any issues or incidents identified throughout the course of the project should be directed to the LA-SST via phone: 01253 689422 or by email: la-sst.hdd@dwpgsi.gov.uk using a LAST9 RTI incident management form, which is included in circular [HB A15/2014](#).