

Housing Benefit Direct issue 145 February 2014



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Editorial

Welcome to February's edition of Housing Benefit (HB) Direct.

This month, we are signposting you to a new frequently asked questions document produced primarily to help landlords help prepare their tenants for the move to direct payments under Universal Credit. We are also alerting you to the new landing page on GOV.UK which brings together an overview of all the local authority (LA) information.

You will have now seen your allocation of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) for 2014/15. This edition includes a reminder that we need DHP and HB subsidy initial final claims by 30 April 2014. The deadline for auditor-certified final subsidy claims in 30 November 2014.

We have a couple of data sharing articles. Customer Information System (CIS) and Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) interests will be refreshed in February and will include both HB and Localised Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) interests. This should not impact on your access to CIS. Watch out for further information on Huddle and let us know if you don't currently have access but would like to be added.

Finally, following consultation with LA representatives and information Technology (IT) suppliers, we have rescheduled the merger of Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) notifications into ATLAS to commence in May with a small number of volunteer authorities acting as early adopters to ensure we can identify and address any operational issues quickly. All going to plan, the remaining LAs will received merged notifications from 23 June. My thanks go to those authorities who have volunteered to go first.

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[Distribution enquiries](#)

Universal Credit and rented housing: frequently asked questions

As Universal Credit continues to roll out this year, we remain committed to delivering support and information to ensure that all those who will be affected understand the changes taking place and are able to prepare.

To help with this, a [Universal Credit and rented housing: frequently asked questions document](#) has been produced to consolidate all the information we have regarding how Universal Credit will affect landlords and tenants.

It has been produced primarily for private and social sector landlords so they have current information about Universal Credit to help them understand what they can do to help their tenants prepare for the move to direct payments and it explains how Universal Credit will ensure that the appropriate protections and safeguards are in place.

We will ensure it remains up to date and should be your first port of call for enquiries around rented housing and Universal Credit.

For more information about this document, please email: universal.creditcomms@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

Reminder – Subsidy/DHP deadline 30 April 2014

Subsidy Claims

The deadline for LA submissions of the 2013/14 HB initial final subsidy claim is 30 April 2014. All LAs should take appropriate action to ensure that this deadline is met. Usual subsidy withholding arrangements will apply to 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 2014. The deadline for auditor-certified final subsidy claims is 30 November 2014.

DHP Claims

The deadline for the submission of the 2013/14 DHP final claim is 30 April 2014. Again, LAs should take appropriate action to ensure that this deadline is met.

The deadline of 30 April 2014 for subsidy and DHP claims will help ensure that wider governmental accounting arrangements are satisfied and Her Majesty's Treasury requirements are met.

Any enquiries should be e-mailed to: michael.mina@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

CIS ATLAS interests refresh update

The CIS ATLAS interests are scheduled to be refreshed on either the weekend of 15/16 or 22/23 February 2014. We will confirm the exact date on Huddle as soon as possible. This refresh is required as the previous refresh which occurred on 23 to 24 November 2013 failed to include the LCTR interests. This new refresh will include both HB and LCTR interests, and will do so for any further updates.

We will ensure all the correct interests are obtained from your LA Single Housing Benefit Extract returns and have confirmed that all LAs are providing the data required to update CIS correctly.

The refresh will not affect your CIS access over these weekends, so you will be able to work as normal unless notified by the LA Support Team (LA-ST) via [Huddle](#) to state otherwise.

If you do not have access to Huddle please e-mail [LA-ST to request access](#) with details of your LA IT supplier (e.g. Civica, Northgate or Capita).

If you have any queries about the refresh please contact the Local Authority Data Sharing (LADS) Delivery team at:
lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

LA information on .GOV.UK

In August 2013 all of the information for LAs that used to be on the Department for Work and Pensions corporate website was migrated to .GOV.UK. At that time we provided a full list of the links that you would need, this was attached as an appendix to [HB Bulletin G9/2013](#). We have recently been made aware that there is now a formal landing page on GOV.UK where all LA information is sectioned together.

All of the bookmarks that you will have created still work but we thought you might find it useful to have a link to the main page where you are given an overview of all the material that is available:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-benefit-claims-processing-and-good-practice-for-local-authority-staff>

Any enquiries relating to this item should be sent to:
housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

ETD and ATLAS merger

You will be aware from previous editions of HB Direct and more recent updates provided at the LADS workshops that we plan to merge existing ETD notifications with ATLAS this year. Initial proposals were aimed for April; however following feedback received from LA representatives and LA IT suppliers, a decision has been agreed to reschedule go-live until May 2014. Additionally, to ease the pressure on LAs at such a busy period in the year, we have agreed to phase the rollout and commence with a small number of volunteer early adopter sites. This method was used when we introduced ATLAS phase 2 and proved to be successful, allowing any operational problems to be addressed quickly.

Following a good response to the expression of interest, we can confirm the following LAs have been selected as early adopters:

- Colchester - Capita
- Bromley - Capita
- Derbyshire Dales - Capita
- Enfield - Civica
- Camden - Civica
- Trafford Council - Civica
- Calderdale – in-house
- East Riding of Yorkshire - Northgate
- Dumfries and Galloway - Northgate
- Liverpool - Northgate
- Babergh, Ipswich and Mid Suffolk (Shared Partnership) – all Northgate
- South Lanarkshire – Northgate Orbis

The above LAs will receive the merged ETD and ATLAS notifications from 12 May 2014 for a six week period. During this period we will ensure the change is working as expected and any lessons are learned in preparation for the merged transfer being introduced to all remaining LAs from 23 June 2014. To support you all operationally through this change, more detail will be provided via an update to the existing ATLAS Awareness pack.

If you have any questions please feel free to email them to: lads.deliveryteam@dp.gsi.gov.uk