

Editorial

Welcome to a packed HB Direct where the theme this month is very much working in partnership. That's how it should be considering that we serve the same customers and share the same aims. Alex Suswillo has produced an article about his secondment to DWP. I've worked closely with Alex and his up-to-date Housing Benefit expertise has been invaluable. The same is true of previous secondees we have had and I never ceased to be impressed by the quality of staff out there in local authorities. We've further opportunities for secondments into DWP and I'd strongly encourage you to consider applying. As you can see from Alex's entry, everyone gains from this experience – the secondee, the local authority, DWP and, most importantly the Housing Benefit customer through an improved service.

There have been exciting developments on the Universal Credit front with the recent announcement of national roll-out from February 2015 and the Universal Support – delivered locally partnerships. The partnerships really illustrate the importance of DWP and local authorities working together to serve the same customer base, in particular the more complex and vulnerable customer groups.

The Real Time Information Bulk Data Match Initiative goes live next week. Given that losses of Housing Benefit due to fraud and error are related to earnings, this is a vital initiative in terms of protecting the public purse. We are grateful for your support with this.

Finally, there is a plea to you to consider using some of our online material to help support young people into employment. So I'll end as I started, working in partnership!

Clare Elliott

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[Distribution enquiries](#)

An update on Universal Credit and an introduction to Universal Support – delivered locally

Plans announced for accelerated roll-out of Universal Credit after success in North West

Universal Credit is currently being successfully rolled-out in the North West of England to new claims from single claimants and couples. The new service is already available in over 50 Jobcentres in England, Wales and Scotland, and will be available in nearly 100 Jobcentres by Christmas. A list of the current live Universal Credit sites is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/jobcentres-where-you-can-claim-universal-credit>

On Monday 29 September 2014 the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Secretary, Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith announced that Universal Credit will be rolled-out across the country to all Jobcentres and local authorities (LAs) from February 2015 for new single claimants previously eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance.

This approach is consistent with our '*test and learn*' commitment to expand the service in a safe, secure and controlled manner. This plan will ensure we establish Universal Credit across Great Britain with new claims to legacy benefits closed from 2016 and with migration to follow thereafter.

The full news article is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-announced-for-accelerated-rollout-of-universal-credit-after-success-in-north-west>

Universal Support – delivered locally

On 10 July 2014 Ministers announced the successful partnerships that will formally trial aspects of local support, now referred to as 'Universal Support – delivered locally', these trials began on 1 September in eleven partnership areas across Great Britain. These trials will help to inform future delivery and will include the sharing of data, skills and estate to support more households into work.

The rebranding brings Local Support Services into the Universal Credit family. The original name was seen as a working title as the framework was produced but now that we have moved into a formal testing arena it is more appropriate to use a name that reflects that the support itself will be available and delivered locally rather than continuing to refer to the framework.

The expansion of Universal Credit during 2015 will also allow us to build a secure platform for the introduction of Universal Support by mobilising local partnerships nationwide, putting in place a robust infrastructure ready for later expansion to all claimant groups, including the more complex and vulnerable.

We have written to all LA Chief Executives about these changes. More information about Universal Credit for LAs is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-for-local-authorities>

DWP Consultation on data sharing with social landlords

We published a public consultation on 19 September on legislative proposals for sharing information with social landlords, as a part of the roll-out of Universal Credit. This consultation will run until 19 October 2014.

The draft regulations will amend the Social Security (Information-Sharing in Relation to Welfare Services etc.) Amendment Regulations 2014. The proposed changes will come into force in January 2015 and will be implemented from February 2015 onwards.

The changes proposed will mean that data will be shared by DWP to enable social landlords to assess and provide advice and support, where appropriate, to tenants who have made Universal Credit claims with housing costs or who receive Universal Credit. The data shared will be minimal and would be in keeping with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The consultation document is available on our website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/universal-credit-data-sharing-with-social-landlords>

If you would like to respond to the consultation, please do so by 19 October (2014) to: hpdinformation.sharing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

We particularly welcome comments from social landlords, social landlord groups, including housing associations, LAs (as social landlords), social sector housing arms-length bodies, social sector housing tenant groups, social sector housing tenant participation groups and Universal Credit claimants receiving housing costs, but we would be interested in views from any source.

DWP – can we work with you to help young people?

DWP have been building an on-line campaign to help 16-24 year olds and we're asking LAs to become involved.

We've been focusing on inspiring young people to think about the first steps they can take to move towards their career goals and have tons of social media content as well as our on-line information on gov.uk. Our campaign has seen celebs such as Olly Murrs, Greg Wallace and Lenny Henry get involved and we have videos and case studies to encourage young people to consider sector-based work academies and work experience. Right now we're working with the BBC and other national broadcasters, and high profile youth employment websites [plotr](#), Piers Linney's new website [workinsight](#) and [yeuk](#).

Many of you have on-line content to support young people, including careers advice and information to increase their job prospects. We'd love you to consider sharing our content too. Take a look at some of our recent activity:

- Start your own business – [New Enterprise Allowance](#)
- How to find a job if you have [little or no experience](#)
- Check out [Storify](#)
- [Construction](#) isn't just builders' bums and bacon butties
- Read how some employers, a minister, a dragon and an inspirational footballer came together to [talk to young jobseekers](#)
- Our [gov.uk](#) content - Helping young people into work
- Here is a new portal available with information and advice for [young disabled people](#)
- Sector-based work academies on [YouTube](#)

Interested? Please contact clare.kiszely@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. We look forward to working with you.

IRRV Annual Conference

We are pleased to let you know that we will once again be attending the IRRV Annual Conference and Exhibition at Telford, 07 - 09 October 2014.

Steve Buckingham Director, DWP Housing Delivery & Operations Finance will address the conference on 07 October. The title for the session is - **Housing Benefit Fraud and Error: DWP working with local authorities to tackle Fraud and Error.**

In the context of a changing Housing Benefit (HB) caseload and marked increase in claimant error, DWP's Director for Housing Delivery and Operations Finance presents the latest thinking from the Department on HB Fraud and Error, working with LAs in tackling the rising trend.

In addition to this keynote address, we will be running a workshop on 08 October. The workshop is entitled **DWP working with local authorities to tackle Housing Benefit Fraud and Error**. This will be a largely interactive session allowing IRRV colleagues to discuss and provide their views to DWP officials on how we best take this work forward.

Real Time Information - Bulk Data Match initiative

The Real-Time Information (RTI) Bulk Data Match initiative is about to go-live, with the first tranche of referrals due to be issued nationally from week commencing 6 October 2014, this is where DWP will match details about earnings and non-state pension declared to LAs with information supplied by employers and pension providers to HM Revenues & Customs (HMRC).

The project's aim is to identify savings from the live HB caseload by 31 March 2015 which DWP committed to as part of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2013. This means that unlike many other projects, there is an immovable deadline by which this initiative must complete. DWP has recently completed a test phase with six LAs: Barrow-in-Furness, Calderdale, Gateshead, Kensington & Chelsea, Liverpool and Sedgemoor. The feedback received from participating sites has been invaluable and we are grateful for the commitment shown by all involved.

Encouragingly, the test has identified undeclared or under-declared income in a significant number of cases. However, a number of issues have also been identified, which are still being investigated as this issue of HB Direct goes to press. Unfortunately, it appears it will not be possible to resolve these issues ahead of go-live and therefore updated guidance as to how to handle affected cases will be issued to all LAs very shortly. In the meantime, DWP will continue to work tirelessly to rectify the issues identified for future tranches. We really appreciate LAs' continued support in dealing with these referrals and your patience and cooperation as we work to resolve the issues identified. As is to be expected with initiatives of this type, we are likely to learn a lot as the project rolls out and we look forward to working with you all to improve outcomes for LAs, while also reducing fraud and error in the HB caseload.

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 Support Team (LA-ST) 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](#).

Working for LA Data Sharing (LADS) from a secondees's view

If you're considering applying for a secondment at DWP but are worried it will be a bit *Yes, Prime Minister*, then rest assured that you will not regret it. In 2013 I applied for a secondment with the LADS Delivery Team even though I was unsure as to whether I had the skills required. I had some project management experience but little formal training. Whilst working for DWP I have had the opportunity to gain the PRINCE2 and APMP project management qualifications, which are internationally recognised and valued by employers.

DWP certainly differs greatly from the LAs I've worked at and, if you fancy challenging yourself and broadening your horizons, DWP could be the place to do it. It's an enormous organisation spread across the country and I travel to different sites. During my secondment I've had to engage with IT suppliers; colleagues right across the Civil Service and LAs throughout the country. At times I've been placed in some extremely testing situations but I've learned so much from these that I am now glad to have experienced them. I've got to see the inner workings of government departments and have seen first-hand how developments in the political and media sphere impact national policy.

My experience of working in LAs has been really valued by DWP, and in exchange I've learnt lots about how DWP works and why it does what it does. I've had to re-evaluate some of the preconceptions I had about the Civil Service while also influencing those within it to reconsider their relationships with LAs. DWP really values input from secondees to deliver further welfare reform successfully and if you'd like to help shape how that looks, while obtaining the best possible outcome for LAs, then take a leap of faith and change your future. For those of you still wondering, alas DWP does not resemble a 1980s sitcom, although I have had plenty of laughs along the way. Alexander Suswillo

Secondment Opportunities: DWP Housing Delivery Division - Performance Development Team

There are secondment opportunities in the Performance Development Team (PDT), for LA secondees with a good working knowledge of HB administration.

Housing Delivery Division (HDD) responsibilities include overseeing the performance of LAs in their delivery of HB. The PDT monitors a range of performance data, particularly on the speed and accuracy of HB payments, and the prevention and detection of fraud, and provides consultancy support and challenge to LAs not meeting performance expectations. The PDT team is expanding and wish to recruit staff with knowledge and experience of HB administration.

Posts are available immediately and are offered for an initial period of six months. If you are interested in this career development opportunity, please contact mabel.wanogho@dwp.gsi.gov.uk by 10 October in order to receive a detailed job specification.

Secondment Opportunities: DWP Housing Delivery LADS Programme

There are also secondment opportunities for talented individuals who want to come and work on the LADS Programme, as part of the Delivery Team. This is a key role within HDD to ensure that LAs receive appropriate data from other systems, for example, we previously implemented the Automated Transfer to LA Systems (ATLAS), the standard data delivery method for most HMRC/DWP customer data to LAs. The LADS programme is now firmly established and has a wide portfolio of data sharing demands from major programmes and projects. Some of these will be implemented this year, including the merger of Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) into ATLAS.

The emerging requirements for the future work programme are to enhance current data sharing arrangements in order to:

- smooth the transition of Universal Credit from live service to digital state
- ensure a fuller data set to help LAs administer Council Tax Reduction schemes
- set up an automated process to enable recovery of existing HB debt from Universal Credit
- look at the future migration of cases to Universal Credit and how we support the customer transition
- impact the data available against a number of current fraud and error and welfare reform initiatives to identify what future commissions can be explored.

The LADS Delivery Team continues to:

- develop a really good understanding of the requirements
- represent LA stakeholder needs and communicate those to the LA community;
- translate those requirements into terms that stakeholders can understand, so that in developing the technical solution we are sure that it exactly meets the original requirements
- test the solution to make sure each component works and that the end-to-end process delivers what is expected.

We need people with a good working knowledge of some or all of debt data, benefits data and rent data from LAs. Knowledge of the existing data sharing arrangements would be desirable and current experience of dealing with HB systems would be an advantage.

Essential / desirable skills:

- experience of working in a project environment
- good communication skills and the ability to understand complex issues
- good team working and the ability to work collaboratively and productively
- enthusiasm and commitment.

At least part of the working week will need to be in Leeds, although we will consider people based in London or Blackpool. There will be an expectation to be available to travel to some meetings and workshops in relation to your role. Posts are available immediately and are offered for an initial period of six months. Successful applicants will retain current terms and conditions and be reimbursed salary and work-related expenses through current arrangements. Some assistance with travelling to work may be available subject to individual circumstances and budgetary constraints. If you are interested in this career development opportunity please check with your LA that you can be released and then submit your CV to lads.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk by 17 October 2014. If you would like to know more or discuss your suitability before applying please feel free to speak to **Paddy Wild on 0113 2327327 or Jo Wood on 0113 2327634.**