

# Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

## General Information Bulletin

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

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

**HB/CTB G1/2013**

**25 January 2013**

<b>Contact</b>	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>technical content of this bulletin</b>, contact details are given at the end of each article</li><li>• distribution of this bulletin, contact <a href="mailto:housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk">housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</a></li></ul>
<b>Who should read</b>	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
<b>Action</b>	For information

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## Access to DWP and HM Revenues and Customs data on the Customer Information System – Management Checks

1. Local authorities (LAs) access the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) customer information via the Customer Information System (CIS). This information is shared on the understanding that access is only permitted for the purposes of Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) administration. In this context 'administration' represents any action including face-to-face contact with customers, appeals, recovery of overpayments, investigation of suspected benefit fraud and in connection with the disclosure of information as permitted by the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
2. This notice is being issued as a reminder to all those who are authorised to access CIS in LAs that the system cannot be used for any unauthorised purpose.
3. Users must not:
  - attempt to trace or access, their own record or the records of friends, relatives, partners, colleagues or acquaintances or any other record for which there is no legitimate business reason for doing so
  - make enquiries on behalf of colleagues in respect of friends, relatives, partners, or acquaintances or anyone who is not permitted to receive information
  - share their system Employee Authentication System (EAS) token, Personal Identification Number (PIN) or other identity password with colleagues.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding requires LAs to comply with the Management Checking regime. The Management Checks often referred to as 'test checks' are compulsory.
5. LAs must ensure everyone who has access to customer information regards security as part of their everyday duties and give DWP assurances effective measures are in place to manage access to CIS securely. Thorough implementation of the mandatory 'test check' regime plays a central role in reinforcing this message.
6. All 'test checks' generated in LAs must be comprehensively scrutinised by a Checking Officer (CO). The process is detailed in the LA CIS Guide.
7. DWP's Business Control Security and Support Team (BCSST) carry out a range of checks on CIS access made by staff in LAs. This includes scrutiny by security staff in BCSST of test checks generated by LA staff and of those checks cleared by CO.
8. If 'test check' action is not completed correctly, either by the user receiving the check, or the CO, it may result in a Security Incident being logged.

9. BCSST and HMRC additionally interrogate CIS using data scans to verify accesses made by LA staff. These checks are carried out to provide DWP and HMRC with assurance that any access to CIS is appropriate and information obtained is correctly used.
10. Anyone found to be abusing CIS may face sanctions ranging from disciplinary action to prosecution. DWP will support LAs to ensure appropriate action is taken and may consider prosecuting in serious cases.
11. BCSST will fully support LAs conducting investigations and can provide audit trails showing the full access history of anyone under suspicion.

### Queries

12. Enquiries relating to this article or any aspect regarding the security of CIS access should be addressed to

[malcolm.mattack@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:malcolm.mattack@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or

[hbsdsecurity.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbsdsecurity.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### The role of Performance Measurement (PM)

13. Performance Measurement is an independent organisation within DWP, which undertakes detailed examination of approximately 28,000 benefit cases, of which some 12,000 are HB. This is to enable us to estimate and report the extent of fraud, customer error and official error within the benefit systems.
14. Recent National Statistics figures show that of the £23 billion total HB expenditure, £1.1 billion of expenditure was overpaid and £310 million was underpaid.
15. When a case which has been randomly selected for review is already under investigation, or when we identify a suspicion of fraud, the case is referred to LA Fraud for investigation. PM will track the case and ask to be notified of the outcome.
16. The outcomes from HB Fraud investigations are tremendously important to the Department's Resource Account estimates, with outcomes from 80% of referred cases being required at the two annual reporting points, in February and August. The LA investigation outcomes data is used by the Department in compiling the Resource Account report.
17. Ideally the outcome should be notified to PM within 14 weeks from the initial referral. During the most recent 6 monthly period ending July 2012, 79% of HB cases under investigation by LA Fraud had been successfully concluded. This was a significant improvement from previous periods and PM would like to thank all HB staff, and hope to build on this going forward. The next reporting period ends in January 2013.

18. Representatives from PM recently attended the Security Operations Group meeting to explain PM's role and discuss how we can support each other in achieving our future objectives.

### Queries

19. For further information on the content of this item please contact

[wendy.fisher@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.fisher@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### Loss of Benefits (LOB) - new changes from 1 April 2013

20. From 1 April 2013 a new tougher Loss of Benefits (LOB) penalties regime will be introduced. Briefly, this will increase the period for which a LOB penalty can be applied, dependent on the number and the severity of the offences committed. The new LOB regime will run alongside and eventually replace the existing One and Two strike LOB regime for the DWP and LAs. Further information is contained in an LA LOB factsheet which will be published soon. An alert and link to the factsheet will be included in the February issue of HB Direct.

### Queries

21. However, for those LAs who wish to see a copy of the factsheet sooner or require further information about the content of this item, please email

[fraudanderror.lossofbenefits@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fraudanderror.lossofbenefits@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### Statutory Instruments

22. The following Statutory Instrument (SI) has been laid

23. 2013 No.41, The Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, coming into force 11 February 2013.

24. Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/law-volumes/the-law-relating-to-social-security/> and the website of the Office of Publication Sector Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

## What's new on the web

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

<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Link</b>
<b>HB/CTB S1/2013</b>	Details of the government funding to LAs for DHPs in 2013/14.	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s1-2013.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s1-2013.pdf</a>
<b>HB/CTB S2/2013</b>	Additional funding to meet the costs of welfare reform changes 2012/13	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s2-2013.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s2-2013.pdf</a>
<b>HB/CTB A1/2013</b>	Transitional arrangements during the abolition of Council Tax Benefit	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a1-2013.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a1-2013.pdf</a>
<b>HB/CTB G12/2012</b>	LHA Rates  Update on Personal Independence Payments  Discretionary Housing Payments  Update on the benefit cap  Statutory Instruments  What's new on the web  Circulars recently issued	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g12-2012.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g12-2012.pdf</a>
<b>HB Direct Issue 133 January 2013</b>	Newsletter	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-133-jan-2013.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-133-jan-2013.pdf</a>
<b>LA Consultation</b>	Notes of the Practitioners Operational Group meeting December 2012	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pog-minutes-05-dec12.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pog-minutes-05-dec12.pdf</a>

### HB/CTB circulars recently issued

HB/CTB A1/2013

HB/CTB S1/2013

HB/CTB S2/2013