

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, 1st Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

HB/CTB G2/2009

9 February 2009

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 Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: orderline@cds.co.uk• bulletin in general, contact Kath Murphy<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Who should read	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
Action	For information

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As separate attachment

Form DCI1- Benefit inspired NINO application requests Annex A

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Council Tax Benefit awareness campaign

- 1 This item was first published in *HB Direct Issue 86*, but is being repeated here for information.

LA publicity materials

- 2 This year we will again make flyers and posters available for local authorities (LAs) to use to promote Council Tax Benefit (CTB) to our customers who may be missing out on reduced bills. In previous years many LAs have included the flyer in council tax bills and displayed the poster in council offices. These are simple and effective ways to raise awareness of the benefit among customers.
- 3 The updated publicity material now includes the 'DirectGov' web address, please ensure that the latest versions are used as products from previous years are now out of date.
- 4 Details of the campaign will be on the internet at www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/counciltax/. The publicity products can also be downloaded from here. Quark files are also available so that you can include your own logo if required.
- 5 The publicity materials will be available for download from 2 February 2009.

Further information

- 6 If you require any further information, please email Duncan Macgregor in DWP Communications, email duncan.macgregor@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Changes to the National Insurance Number (NINO) benefit process – Form DCI 1

- 7 *HB/CTB Bulletin G24/2008* informed you of changes to the NINO benefit process with form DCI 1
 - replacing DCI (LA), and
 - using one of two NINO Delivery Centres (NDC)
- 8 A copy of form DCI 1 is sent as a separate file with this bulletin (Annex A.pdf) and should now be used for NINO applications when trace action fails to locate an existing number.

- 9 Please note that there is an amendment to the address given in G24/2008 for the Isle of Wight NDC. This is shown in the table below, with the regions each NDC covers. Completed DCI 1 forms should be sent to the NDC covering the region that the LA is situated in.

Regions	NINO Delivery Centre
Scotland Region	Glasgow Nino Delivery Centre
North East Region	Portcullis House
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	21, India Street
North West Region	Glasgow
London Region	G2 4PH

Regions	NINO Delivery Centre
East of England	Isle of Wight Nino Delivery Centre
East Midlands	Jobcentre Plus
South East	Broadlands House
South West	Staplers Road
Wales	Newport
West Midlands	Isle of Wight
	PO30 2HX

- 10 Following a number of queries received we would also like to point out that there has been no change to the existing process for
- dispatching form DCI 1, or
 - protecting the information supplied by the customer

Further information

- 11 If you need more information please email NINOEXPERTDOMAIN.POINTOFCONTACT@JOBCENTREPLUS.GSI.GOV.UK

Benefit Fraud campaign is right on target

- 12 The latest benefit fraud campaign from the Department for Work and Pensions has hit the mark with claimants, research shows.
- 13 The 'We're Closing In' campaign has been running since September using press, TV, radio, internet and outdoor poster advertising to hammer home the message that benefit fraud is theft and there is no escape from detection.
- 14 Research among claimants in the 40 LA areas covered by 'We're Closing In' has revealed what they remember about the campaign, what messages they have taken out of it, and whether it's changed their attitudes and behaviours.
- 15 Their responses confirm that the campaign is having a big impact
- general awareness of the campaign is very high, especially around TV, radio and press advertising
 - 'We're Closing In' is bringing home the message that benefit fraud is theft and the risks of being caught are high
 - messages around investigation techniques are coming through strongly
 - perceptions are rising that imprisonment is a possible consequence of benefit fraud
 - claimants are picking up that failing to report a 'partner moving in' constitutes benefit fraud
- 16 Many thanks to all those LAs that have supported the campaign by using the poster templates and copies of the TV ads which are available via the campaign web site www.dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves/local-authorities
- 17 The next phase of 'We're Closing In' launches on 9 March 2009 with more poster, press and radio advertising in the target LA areas.

Further information

- 18 For more details contact Jenny Bradley by
- Email: jenny.bradley@dwp.gsi.gov.uk , or
- Telephone: 0113 251 9887

Reviewing the changes to the HB/CTB backdating rules

- 19 HB/CTB staff will be aware that, from 6 October 2008, the rules governing backdating HB/CTB claims changed so that
- working age customers can request backdating up to a maximum of six months rather than 52 weeks, and
 - Pension Credit age customers effectively now have three months rather than 12 months automatic backdating
- 20 In the case of working age customers, the reduction to a six month backdating period is intended as the first step in moving towards a new maximum period of three months for all customers. Following consideration of representations made to Government by the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Local Authority Association and others earlier this year, it was decided to reduce the maximum backdating period for working age customers in stages rather than moving straight to a three month maximum. A commitment was given to review the new policy at the end of 2009.
- 21 DWP will gather a range of information and evidence to help inform this review. It is keen for LAs and welfare agencies to contribute to this process, and hopes to collect data in a number of ways
- A questionnaire will be available online from early March, aimed at people working in the field such as LA staff and welfare rights advisors. The questionnaire will ask for case study examples showing how the new rules are impacting on customers, on LAs and on other agencies. We will advertise a link to this questionnaire shortly.
 - A new section on backdating has been inserted in the LA Omnibus Survey. DWP knows that completing this survey can already be time consuming for hard-pressed LA officials, but we are keen to gather as much evidence as possible to inform our review, and would appreciate your taking the time to complete this section.
 - DWP will also use relevant information from The Single Housing Benefit Extract.

Further information

- 22 For further information please contact Richard.Grennan@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Government Connect

- 23 With many GCSx connections now being put into action Government Connect will be issuing a fortnightly newsletter, *GC Communicate*. This is being issued to IT Managers in LAs, but we think HB/CTB staff will also find this very informative as you work towards going live with your GCSx connection over the next few months. The newsletters are being posted on the GC website: <http://www.govconnect.gov.uk/>
- 24 Additionally Housing Benefit Information Flows Programme will post each newsletter on the DWP Resource Centre website as they are published. Please access the following link:
[DWP HB Information Flows Programme – What's new](#)

Queries

- 25 If you have any queries on the content please contact the gctech.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Taking account of Invalidity Addition (IVA) paid as part of State Pension in HB and CTB

Background

- 26 People can receive an age addition with Incapacity Benefit if they became incapable of work before certain ages dependent on when their claim was made. Also, pensioners may receive an IVA to their State Pension in certain circumstances.
- 27 From April 2009 the rates of age additions paid to Incapacity Benefit claimants are being reduced in order to ease customer migration from Incapacity Benefit to Employment & Support Allowance (ESA). Due to an error in implementing the Uprating Schedule, the rates of IVA for people receiving State Pension were also reduced. This does not reflect our policy intention. The rates should be increased by RPI in line with the State Pension.
- 28 Action has been taken over the weekend of 7/8 February to correct the rate of IVA paid as part of State Pension so that people will get the right rate of State Pension from April 2009. We estimate that around 20,000 pensioners will have received an incorrect notification of their State Pension entitlement from April 2009. These cases will be corrected and they will receive notification of the correction before April.

- 29 *HB/CTB Circular A27/2008* provided details of the annual uprating of social security benefits. *Paragraph 39* advised the percentage to be used when uprating State Pension, and that increments for particular components of State Pension would increase in line with the same percentage increase that applies to that component. This is correct.
- 30 The error does not affect the age related additions paid with Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), therefore the age related additions for SDA shown in *HB/CTB Circular A27/2008* are also correct.
- 31 There is also an impact on some Pension Credit cases. Some will have ceased to be entitled to guarantee credit, some will have had a change in their savings credit, and some might have lost Pension Credit entitlement altogether. This is being corrected as explained at paras 37 and 38 below.

Impact on State Pension Customers

- 32 We understand that authorities normally uprate the amount of State Pension held on their IT by the percentage indicated in the Uprating Circular, ie the rate in *HB/CTB Circular A27/2008, para 39*. That being the case, the uprating will have been carried out correctly.
- 33 However, as mentioned in para 28 above, some pensioners with an IVA in their State Pension will have received notifications from DWP which show that their rate of State Pension is lower than the amount taken into account by the LA.

Action to take

- 34 All pensioners who have received incorrect notifications of their State Pension will receive a revised notification from DWP before April. LAs do not need to reassess the HB/CTB case.
- 35 If there is any doubt that an individual case is one affected by the IVA problem, staff should contact their Pension Centre liaison officer before taking any action on the case.
- 36 However, an overpayment might occur if the customer provided incorrect State Pension details directly to the local authority, and the local authority, in good faith, reassessed the HB/CTB case. In this case, any overpayment should be treated as a Departmental error overpayment.

Impact on Pensioner Credit customers – PDCS action

- 37 In addition to the corrective action being taken above, on a staged basis between April and November, PDCS will be taking corrective action to ensure Pension Credit is adjusted and paid at the right level. This will in some cases mean that LAs will be sent an ETD to confirm the revised (correct) entitlement to PC. Current estimates are that there will be a maximum of 77,000 such cases, but as some of these cases will only need housekeeping changes, an ETD will not be produced on all of them.
- 38 It is unlikely that there will be any HB/CTB overpayments due to the factors mentioned in paragraph 7, and as HB(SPC) Regulation 60/CTB(SPC) Regulation 59 already protect local authorities from having to take overpayment action where changes in Pension Credit occur.

Action to take on receipt of new information from PDCS

- 39 **Pensioners who continue to be in receipt of the guarantee element of Pension Credit**
- ETD will be issued, but no effect on HB/CTB as linked entitlement to full HB/CTB will continue.
- 40 **Pensioners whose guarantee element of Pension Credit ceases, but who continue to receive the savings credit**
- ETD will be issued. HB/CTB should be reassessed in accordance with HB(SPC) Regulation 60(3)(b)/CTB(SPC) Regulation 51(3)(b).
- 41 **Pensioners who are in receipt of savings credit only, and continue to be so**
- For the period until PDCS corrects the case, the HB/CTB assessment is legally correct until such time as a new savings credit figure and Assessed Income Figure (AIF) is issued by PDCS, ie following the corrective action.
 - ETD will be issued giving the new savings credit/AIF figure. HB/CTB should be reassessed in accordance with HB(SPC) Regulation 60/CTB(SPC) Regulation 51.
- 42 **Pensioners whose Pension Credit ceases completely**
- ETD will be issued. HB/CTB should be reassessed in accordance with HB(SPC) Regulation 60(3)(b)/CTB(SPC) Regulation 51(3)(b).

Queries

- 43 If you have any queries regarding this article, please contact richard.metcalfe@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Statutory Instruments

- 44 The following Statutory Instrument (SI) has now been laid
- 2009 No 30, The Income-related Benefits (Subsidy to Authorities) Amendment Order 2009, coming into force 10 March 2009
- 45 Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/docs/lawvols/bluevol/> and the website of the Office of Publication Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

Current HB/CTB Circulars

- 46 Following the issue of HB/CTB Guidance Manual, Amendment 16, the current 'A' circulars are listed in the table below.

Number	Subject
A17/2006 A17/2006 (Revised)	Targeting working age cases to reduce fraud and error in HB/CTB Reissued as A17/2006 (Revised)
A20/2006	Changes to Security Performance Measures
A13/2007	Details of the intended distribution of data collection modernisation funding
A2/2008	HB/CTB Performance Indicators from April 2008
A3/2008	Recovery from customers who have been declared bankrupt
A4/2008	HB/CTB Right Benefit Performance Indicator from April 2008
A5/2008	Guidance on completion of the Single HB Extract fields for the derivation of the performance data for the 'Right Time' and 'Right Benefit' indicators
A7/2008	Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) Data Take on and Processing Schedule (DTOPS) 30
A9/2008	Housing Benefit Data Service (HBDS) Timetable and process for the extraction and transfer of the Single HB Extract for 2008/09
A9/2008	Housing Benefit Data Service (HBDS) Timetable and process for the extraction and transfer of the Single HB Extract for 2008/09
A10/2008	Additional information for LAs on the 2008/09 HB/CTB Right Benefit and Right Time Performance Indicators and Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2008
A11/2008	Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit: amendments to take account of the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance
A12/2008	Amendments to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Extended Payments Schemes from 6 October 2008
A13/2008	Housing Benefit database and matching Service (HBMS) timetable and process for the return of Stats 124s 2007/08

Number	Subject
A14/2008 (Revised)	Student support uprating 2008/09
A16/2008	Changes to the backdating rules for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims
A17/2008	Housing Benefit Data Service (HBDS) Timetable and revised process for transfer of the Housing benefit Recoveries and Fraud Return (HBRF) for 2008/09
A18/2008	Guidance on the content of The Employment and Support Allowance (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2008 - SI 2008/2428
A19/2008	Better off in Work Credit pilot
A20/2008	Change to method of claiming HB/CTB for people applying for Pension Credit over the phone
A21/2008	New appeals system
A22/2008	Guidance to Local Authorities on dealing with claims from those living in supported accommodation
A23/2008	2008/09 HB/CTB Right Benefit and Right Time Performance Indicators and Publication of Performance Data and HB Recoveries and Fraud
A24/2008	Amendments to the HB Overpayments and Excess CTB Regulations, which include changes to the provisions relating to 'recovery from a partner' Introduction of a new overpayments subsidy classification called 'Administrative delay' Changes to the definition of a Fraud overpayment in the Subsidy Order
A25/2008	Rapid Reclaim: change to eligibility conditions
A26/2008	Guidance to LAs on the In and Out of Work Processes and The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2008 SI No 2987
A27/2008	Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit: 2009 uprating
A28/2008	Revised process for the transfer of the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) Return from 1 January 2009 (Quarter 3 2008/09 onwards)

47 You may destroy all other HB/CTB A circulars, but we recommend you keep at least one copy of each for reference purposes.