

# Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

## General Information Bulletin

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

**HB/CTB G1/2010**

**21 January 2010**

<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>• <b>distribution of this bulletin</b>, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Email: <a href="mailto:orderline@cds.co.uk">orderline@cds.co.uk</a></li></ul></li><li>• <b>bulletin in general</b>, contact Kath Murphy<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Email: <a href="mailto:Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk">Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</a></li></ul></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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## HB/CTB cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal

- 1 Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) Leeds is aware of the following HB/CTB cases that are awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal (UT)
  - CSH/452/2009 – claimant's landlord is his daughter. She purchased his home and is now letting it to him
  - CH/1164/2009 – overpayment of HB/CTB (and IS). Claimant failed to disclose she was living with her husband
- 2 Thank you to those authorities that have let us know about cases they are appealing. Please notify us of cases at the point that the application for leave to appeal is made to the UT office, or the appeal is lodged following grant of leave by a First Tier Tribunal (FtT) Judge. Please let us know if a case reference (CH/.. or CSH/..) has been allocated.
- 3 Since **Monday 30 November 2009** the UT (Administrative Appeals Chamber) contact details have been

**Upper Tribunal  
(Administrative Appeals Chamber)  
5th Floor  
Chichester Rents  
81 Chancery Lane  
London  
WC2A 1DD  
Tel: 020 7911 7085  
Fax: 020 7911 7093**

Email: [adminappeals@tribunals.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adminappeals@tribunals.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.administrativeappeals.tribunals.gov.uk](http://www.administrativeappeals.tribunals.gov.uk)

## Queries

- 4 If you have any queries about cases before the UT Judges or courts, please contact us by
  - email at [DMALEEDS.CUSTOMERSUPPORTSERVICES@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK](mailto:DMALEEDS.CUSTOMERSUPPORTSERVICES@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK) or
  - fax on 0113 2324841

## Identity card roll-out accelerates

- 5 Following the launch of National Identity Cards in Greater Manchester in 2009, roll-out has now been extended across the North West of England to include United Kingdom (UK) citizens who live or work in Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside.
- 6 The roll-out of Identity Cards for Foreign Nationals has also been extended to include more categories of foreign nationals granted leave to remain in the UK.
- 7 Local authorities (LAs) will accept the identity cards as primary evidence of identity. Guidance about how to recognise and check them can be found in HB/CTB G21/2009.
- 8 More information on identity cards can be found by accessing the [Identity and Passport Service website](#) or the [Directgov website](#)
- 9 For any queries about the ID Cards, though not for verification issues, please contact [CaxtonHouse.Fraud-Error-Policy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CaxtonHouse.Fraud-Error-Policy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Using the Department for Children, School's and Families' Free School Meal Eligibility Checking Service

- 10 To determine eligibility to Free School Meals (FSM) for a child, LAs need to check whether the parent(s)/carer(s) receive certain Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits, child tax credit or support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- 11 In March 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) launched a FSM Eligibility Checking Service (ECS); formerly known as 'the Hub'. The FSM ECS is a statutory data sharing gateway that allows data from the DWP, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Home Office (HO) to be shared and checked to determine eligibility to FSM, removing the need for parents/carers to provide LAs with written proof of benefit entitlement as part of the FSM application process.
- 12 LAs in England and Wales who have registered to use the FSM ECS can check FSM eligibility simply by sending three key pieces of information relating to the applicant's identity to the FSM ECS. This information is then cross-checked against the data provided by the DWP, HMRC and HO and if matched, FSM eligibility is confirmed.

- 13 Using the FSM ECS, LAs are able to check eligibility of applicants by either
- performing single, online checks, or
  - using the batch service which enables LAs to send through a number of records in one file (recent changes mean that batch files are now processed throughout the day)
- 14 The FSM ECS has significantly improved the FSM service with some LAs offering a fully online service allowing parents/carers to complete the initial application form online or via a Customer Service Centre, while other LAs use application forms and then check eligibility themselves online via the FSM ECS. As there is less reliance on paper proof of benefits this has resulted in a quicker and more efficient service for LAs that use the ECS.
- 15 LAs have also benefited by automating their FSM renewals process using the FSM ECS, removing the need for parents/carers to reapply for FSM on an annual basis. Some LAs have introduced automated audits using the FSM ECS allowing ongoing eligibility for FSM to be verified throughout the year, eliminating the likelihood of debt being accrued through the incorrect provision of FSM.
- 16 The FSM ECS has undergone considerable development as a result of feedback from a number of LAs, including recent focus on the provision of a web service interface so that LAs can develop a system to system interface to the FSM ECS, which can be integrated with their web site or back office systems. The web service interface enables LAs to provide a customer centred solution allowing real-time checking of parent/carer eligibility by either parents/carers themselves or through a Customer Service Centre. This service went live in July 2009 and three LAs currently use it with a number of others in the process of redesigning internal systems to include it in their FSM application process.
- 17 We encourage LAs in England and Wales to use the ECS when processing FSM. Feedback from LAs who have used the ECS is positive with a number reporting significant efficiency savings. Dorset County Council, who recently used the FSM ECS as part of a renewals process, reported *'only 2% of our free school meals renewals needed follow-up. That's a quick-win saving for us of around £6,500, plus the saving for the schools as well. Once we have completed the applicants' dataset this will be even larger by probably another £4,000, and it's an ongoing saving. Not a bad morning's work!'*
- 18 For further information on the FSM ECS visit the GES Community of Practice at [www.communities.idea.gov.uk](http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk) or to access the Hub User Guide visit [Teachernet](#).
- 19 You can also email: [ges@hertsc.gov.uk](mailto:ges@hertsc.gov.uk)

## Statutory Instruments

- 20 The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have now been laid
- 2009 No.3257, The Social Security (Housing Costs Special Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, coming into force from 5 January 2010
  - 2009 No.3389, The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (War Pension Disregards) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, coming into force 26 January 2010
  - 2010 No.3, The National Employment Savings Trust Corporation Naming and Financial Year Order 2010, coming into force 5 July 2010
  - 2010 No.4, The Employers' Duties (Implementation) Regulations 2010, coming into force 1 September 2012
  - 2010 No.5, The Employers' Duties (Registration and Compliance) Regulations 2010, coming into force 1 October 2012
  - 2010 No.6, The Transfer Values (Disapplication) Regulations 2010, coming into force 5 July 2010
  - 2010 No.7, The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) (Amendment) Order 2010, coming into force 1 October 2012
  - 2010 No.9, The National Employment Savings Trust (Consequential Provisions) Order 2010, coming into force 5 July 2010
  - 2010 No.10 (C.2), The Pensions Act 2008 (Commencement No.5) Order 2010, coming into force 5 July 2010
  - 2010 No.19, The Social Security (Contributions Credits for Parents and Carers) Regulations 2010
  - 2010 No.45 (C.7), The Welfare Reform Act 2009 (Commencement No.1) Order 2010, coming into force from 12 January 2010
- 21 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 Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>

## What's new on the web

22 The following items can be found on the website link shown

Document Type	Subject	Link
HB/CTB Bulletin G22/2009	Statutory Instruments What's new on the web HB/CTB Circulars issued recently	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g22-2009.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g22-2009.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular A26/2009	Amendment to the Local Housing Allowance Guidance	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a26-2009.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a26-2009.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular A1/2010	The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No.4) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009 No 2655) Students Grant and Loan Rates	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a1-2010.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a1-2010.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular A2/2010	Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit: 2010 Uprating	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a2-2010.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a2-2010.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular S6/2009	HB/CTB subsidy arrangements 2010/11: Details of the specific grant for administration costs, distribution of the government contribution	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s6-2009.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s6-2009.pdf</a>
HB/CTB Circular S7/2009	HB subsidy arrangements for temporary accommodation from April 2010	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s7-2009.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s7-2009.pdf</a>
Local Housing Allowance Guidance Manual	Guidance manual	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/ha-guidance-manual.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/ha-guidance-manual.pdf</a>
HB Direct Issue 97 January 2010	Newsletter	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-97-jan-2010.pdf">http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-97-jan-2010.pdf</a>

## **HB/CTB Circulars issued recently**

23 The following HB/CTB Circulars have been issued recently

HB/CTB Circular A26/2009

HB/CTB Circular A1/2010

HB/CTB Circular A2/2010

HB/CTB Circular S1/2010

## **Other publications**

24 We have also recently issued

Local Housing Allowance Guidance Manual - Amendment 3