

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Circular

Department for Work and Pensions

1st Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA

HB/CTB A5/2010

ADJUDICATION AND OPERATIONS CIRCULAR

WHO SHOULD READ	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
ACTION	For information
SUBJECT	Right Time Indicator – Publication of Performance Information for 2009/10 Quarters 1 and 2

Guidance Manual

The information in this circular does not affect the content of the *HB/CTB Guidance Manual*.

Queries

If you

- want **extra copies of this circular/copies of previous circulars**, they can be found on the website at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/user-communications/hbctb-circulars/>
- have any queries about the
 - **technical content of this circular**, contact
Email: Performance-Framework@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
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2009/10 Quarters 1 and 2**

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Right Time Indicator – Publication of Performance Information for 2009/10 Quarters 1 and 2

Introduction

- 1 This circular advises Local Authorities (LAs) of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) intention to publish Right Time Indicator (RTI) performance information on 31 March 2010. It will be published for those LAs whose data
 - has been received
 - is of sufficient quality to publish as Official Statistics
- 2 The information will be found at: <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/rti.asp>.

Background

- 3 The RTI was introduced in April 2008 to measure the average processing times for new claims and change events. At the same time DWP began collecting data from LAs using the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE).
- 4 A cross-government review of data transfer procedures and the need to quality assure the new data source to appropriate statistical standards led to a delay in publishing performance information. DWP is committed to publishing performance information which
 - is robust
 - has been derived and developed in accordance with the principles and protocols developed by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA)
- 5 *HB/CTB Bulletin G15/2009* advised that DWP would not publish any RTI performance information for 2008/09, as its quality was not high enough for a significant number of authorities. DWP has
 - worked with LAs and their software providers to improve data quality
 - quality assured the 2009/10 Q1 and Q2 information in line with UKSA publication standards
- 6 DWP wishes to thank LAs and their software providers for their contribution to this work.

Publishing RTI Performance Information

- 7 DWP is publishing RTI performance information as Official Statistics to provide a definitive national picture of performance. On 31 March we will publish performance information for between 270 to 300 LAs whose data, we have concluded, meets UKSA publication standards. It will show the mean LA performance for each month and quarter. New claims and change of circumstance processing times will be shown separately.

- 8 The published RTI performance information has been adjusted to exclude new claims and changes of circumstance which are recorded as having taken more than 12 months to process. This represents around 0.1 per cent of all cases. Our quality assurance exercise, including feedback from LAs, has provided strong evidence that most of these cases have software or input errors and therefore should not be included in the published RTI. As a result of the above adjustment, RTI data derived by LAs from their IT systems may not precisely match the performance information published by DWP as Official Statistics. DWP does not plan to exclude cases taking over 12 months indefinitely, and LAs should take action to resolve any errors without delay.
- 9 The absence of published RTI performance information for individual LAs does not mean that there are problems with their benefits service. It is simply that DWP has not received data covering the relevant quarters or been able to assure itself that it can be published as Official Statistics. We appreciate that LAs have their own data that they use to manage their service and can share with council members and third parties, including customers and audit bodies.

Next steps

- 10 We are continuing to work with LAs and software suppliers whose data is not yet published to maximise coverage and improve future data quality.
- 11 We will not make retrospective changes to the performance information that has been published; our focus is on
- improving data quality
 - coverage for subsequent Official Statistics publications
- 12 In March we will write to LAs who submitted SHBE returns for Q1 and Q2, but whose data does not meet publication standards, to let them know that their data will not be published.
- 13 We aim to publish RTI data for Q3 and Q4 of 2009/10 later this year.
- 14 Please send any questions about this circular to Performance-Framework@dwp.gsi.gov.uk