

## Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Circular

Department for Work and Pensions

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# HB/CTB A11/2010

### ADJUDICATION AND OPERATIONS CIRCULAR

<b>WHO SHOULD READ</b>	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
<b>ACTION</b>	For information
<b>SUBJECT</b>	The Social Security (notification of changes of circumstances) Regulations 2010

### Guidance Manual

The information in this circular does affect the content of the HB/CTB Guidance Manual. Please annotate this circular number against *A2 paragraph W2.640 and P2.640*.

### 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 Michelle Whittle  
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# The Social Security (notification of changes of circumstances) Regulations 2010

## Introduction

- 1 The Social Security (notification of changes) Regulations 2010 came into force on April 5 2010, and provide an alternative means by which a person in receipt of benefit may notify a change of circumstances about a birth or a death.

## Background

- 2 For many people, dealing with Government when reporting changes in their lives can require them to repeat and verify the same information to numerous departments, agencies and parts of local authorities.
- 3 Tell Us Once (TUO) is introducing an additional capability to handle change notifications about a birth or a death. People can use this alternative method of notification voluntarily to inform Government just once of a change. While the use of the service is voluntary, the duty to notify Government still remains.
- 4 There will be a phased national roll out of this service, with 15 local authorities (LAs) who were involved in developing and testing this service continuing to do so and a small number of early adopter LAs going live with the service in July 2010.
- 5 Full phased roll out activity will begin in July 2010 and it is expected that the first tranche of (approximately 80) LAs will go live from around November 2010. In addition, a service for reporting a death is being piloted in the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales.
- 6 Amendments to Social Security regulations which came into force on 5 April 2010 make clear the circumstances in which these alternative means of notifying changes of circumstances can be used to notify a birth or death.

## The Service

- 7 The citizen is sign-posted to the service by the Registrars of Births and Deaths after registering a birth or death. The citizen has the option of using the TUO notification service or the existing process to notify a death or birth independently to relevant organisations. The information is sent to the participating departments taking into account the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 8 The reporting of a death can be done face to face at a participating LA office and/or via telephone to the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS). The birth service will only be available face to face at an LA office so that the citizen can verify the event by presenting the original or genuine copies of the birth certificate. The event is verified against the information input into the DWP IT application from the death or birth certificate.

- 9 The aim is to extend the birth and death service to online reporting via Directgov by April 2011.

## The effect of the legislation

- 10 These amending regulations broaden the means by which a customer can discharge their duty to notify a change that involves a birth or a death. The effect of the amendments is to allow such notifications to be made through personal attendance at an LA office where the Secretary of State has agreed with that LA for it to facilitate notification. Where the change is a death, notification may alternatively be given by telephone.
- 11 In relation to HB and CTB, the authority administering the customer's benefit must also agree with the Secretary of State that birth and or death notifications may be made using these alternative methods of notification.
- 12 The new arrangements<sup>1</sup> mean that a customer's duty to disclose a change of circumstances involving a birth or a death may be discharged by notifying the Secretary of State as soon as reasonably practicable using the following methods:
- if the change of circumstances is a birth or a death, through a relevant authority<sup>2</sup>, by personal attendance at an office specified by that local authority , provided the Secretary of State has agreed with that authority for it to facilitate such notification, or
  - if the change of circumstances is a death, by telephone to a telephone number specified for that purpose by the Secretary of State.

## Queries

- 13 If you have any operational queries regarding the implementation of the TUO service please contact :

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<sup>1</sup> SS (C&P) Regs, reg 32ZZA, JSA Regs, reg 24A;

<sup>2</sup> Housing Benefit Regs, reg 2; Council Tax Benefit Regs, reg 2