

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 G10/2010

21 June 2010

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| 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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Off-benefit recovery and recovery from estates

- 1 Shared Services Debt Management (DM) are looking at the potential for extending its services to local authorities (LAs), particularly looking at
 - off-benefit recoveries (when a customer is no longer in receipt of a prescribed benefit from which deductions can be made), and
 - recovery from the estates of deceased debtors
- 2 In DM, we are well aware that there is a lot of good work already going on in LAs in both of these areas and we need to undertake a feasibility study to see what we could offer that might add genuine value to existing arrangements.
- 3 DM has obtained the approval of the joint DWP/Local Authority Association (LAA) Steering Group to approach LAs to request volunteers to help us with this study. We don't expect the involvement of volunteer LAs to be particularly onerous. We will discuss and agree our detailed intentions with relevant LA managers before any work commences.
- 4 For off benefit recovery, the feasibility study will aim to determine what proportion of customers the LAs and DWP share and will analyse customer repayment patterns when they have a debt with both organisations.
- 5 For recovery from the estates of deceased customers DM would like to better understand LA processes and policies so we can identify the potential to improve on current arrangements. It will also help us identify what changes may need to be made to DM processes and systems to accommodate LA requirements.
- 6 The end product of our study will be an informed assessment of the potential for expanding our current services and, if appropriate, a commercial business proposition for LAs to consider.
- 7 If you would like to get involved, we would like to hear from you. If you need more information before deciding, please let us know. We are keen to start the feasibility study within the next few weeks, so if you are interested, please let us know by 9 July 2010.
- 8 Please contact
Ann Harrison, Senior Business Development Manager, 0161 873 4758, or
Eleanor Bentley, Business Development Manager, 0161 873 4636

Working Benefits workshops in June and July 2010

- 9 Many unemployed people do not realise they may be eligible for Housing Benefit (HB), Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and other financial support while they work.
- 10 This misconception may put some people off taking the first steps to work, leaving them stuck on out-of-work benefits.
- 11 During June and July 2010, DWP is running a series of 53 [Working Benefits workshops](#). These workshops are for people on the front line who advise jobseekers on employment, benefits, budgeting or housing issues. Delegates can learn more about the benefits available to people in work and when they start work and will have the opportunity to complete an action plan to take back to the workplace. Tools, resources and materials will be available to help jobseekers to understand that they do not necessarily have to give up all their benefits when they start work.
- 12 Delegates will also have the opportunity to share good practice with colleagues from partner organisations, gain an understanding of how the In and Out of Work process works between Jobcentre Plus and LAs and will learn how the Benefits Adviser Service can help jobseekers make informed decisions regarding employment.
- 13 The workshops are being delivered by hnotes, an independent company specialising in HB advice and training.
- 14 Invitations have already been sent out by e-mail to LAs, Jobcentre Plus District and External Relations Managers and many third sector advice providers. If you are an adviser and you have not yet booked a place at your nearest workshop please go to the [workshop website](#).
- 15 For more information on Working Benefits go to www.dwp.gov.uk/workingbenefits or email tina.llewellyn@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Local Housing Allowance guidance and leaflets

- 16 In the May edition of HB Direct we said that that we would be publishing some new Local Housing Allowance (LHA) guidance on the DWP website as follows
- good practice guidance on paying benefit and operating the safeguards under the LHA arrangements
 - a re-write of the LHA Guidance Manual
 - revised LHA leaflets

All these products will be available on the website on this link [Local Housing Allowance - DWP](#) during week commencing 21 June 2010.

- 17 **The Good Practice Guidance** is intended to supplement the LHA Guidance Manual Chapters 4-6 which cover paying benefit under the LHA arrangements and the operation of the safeguards for people who are unable or unlikely to manage their rental payments. It also includes a number of case studies as follows
- working with stakeholders (Southend)
 - operating the safeguards (Elmbridge)
 - using the LHA to alleviate homelessness (Coventry)
 - working with a credit union (Peterborough)
- 18 We hope you find the good practice useful.
- 19 We have updated and refreshed the **LHA Guidance Manual** to
- reflect changes such as the creation of the new Tenants Services Authority
 - remove guidance that applies to all HB claims, for example guidance on extended payments
 - include more guidance and examples on areas which generate queries such as joint tenancies and protection following a death
 - make minor changes to Chapter Four (Paying benefit) to expand guidance on when it may not be in the customer's overriding interest to make direct payment to the landlord and when to use the LHA excess to clear rent arrears
 - remove guidance that applies to all HB claims, eg extended payments as this is available in the main HB/CTB Guidance Manual
- 20 Please note that an erroneous example at the current paragraph 3.32 has been removed (change in number of joint tenants) to correctly reflect that a new maximum rent (LHA) can only be determined when the joint tenants form a common household.
- 21 **We will no longer be issuing hard copies of the LHA Guidance Manual.**
- 22 We have reduced the number and refreshed the content of the **LHA model leaflets** to reflect that the LHA arrangements are no longer new. As many of you have replicated the content of the original leaflets on your websites we would encourage you to make use of the new material to ensure that your websites contain up-to-date and correct information. The revised suite of leaflets is also available in Welsh.
- 23 As part of a more general exercise to up-date the DWP website we are also archiving old LHA material such as products which were developed for national roll-out.
- 24 Any queries on this guidance can be sent to Eugene.okonkwo@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

What's new on the web

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

| Document Type | Subject | Link |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| HB/CTB Bulletin G7/2010 | Improving on-line services for DWP customers | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g7-2010.pdf |
| HB/CTB Bulletin G8/2010 | Fraud Procedures and Instructions Guidance – alerts to updates in the guidance What's new on the web HB/CTB Circulars issued recently Latest updates to the Fraud Procedures and Instructions Guidance | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g8-2010.pdf |
| HB/CTB Bulletin G9/2010 | HB/CTB cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/g9-2010.pdf |
| HB/CTB Circular A10/2010 | Right to reside – parent and primary carer of a child in education | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a10-2010.pdf |
| HB/CTB Circular A11/2010 | The Social Security (notification of changes of circumstances) Regulations 2010 | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a11-2010.pdf |
| HB/CTB Circular S4/2010 | Section 1: Referring registered housing association rents to a Rent Officer Section 2: Applying for an exemption from the top-level subsidy caps in local authority-run short term leased accommodation | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/s4-2010.pdf |
| HB Direct Issue 102 June 2010 | Newsletter | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/issue-102-june-2010.pdf |

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| Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Good Practice Guide | Good practice guide | http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/ha-good-practice-guide.pdf |
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HB/CTB Circulars issued recently

26 The following HB/CTB Circulars have been issued recently

HB/CTB Circular A12/2010

HB/CTB Circular F2/2010