

## LA Welfare Direct 1/2025

### Introduction

Who should read – HB Staff. Technical Information and any Upper Tribunal Cases.

#### Content:

- Update: Universal Credit data sharing
- Improvements to the Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems' notifications of benefit termination reasons
- HB debt recovered by DWPs' Debt Management: Updated service level agreement
- Guidance published on the new lasting power of attorney online service
- Ukraine Permission Extension scheme
- Big Energy Saving Week
- Update: Move to UC
- POG and LA Welfare Steering Group
- HB Decisions by the Upper Tribunal
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## **Update: Universal Credit data sharing**

### **Universal Credit – Local Council Tax Reduction data feed enhancements implementation update**

1. As advised in [LAWD12/2024](#), we are making the fully enhanced version 2 files available to all local authorities (LAs), by supplier, between January and March 2025. We have now written to all NEC LAs to explain our intention to release version 2 files to them on 15 January 2024.
2. Our communication was accompanied by a fully revised and updated technical guide, which has been thoroughly road-tested by the 17 test and live LAs, covering all suppliers.
3. Another test site, Clackmannanshire Council went live before Christmas 2024 with the fully enhanced version 2 files and have reported no issues with regards to the additional data they now receive.
4. As advised in previous LAWD articles, we have worked very closely with all IT software suppliers and their Memorandum of Understanding-compliant test LAs, together with our working group of LAs during the design, build and testing of the spring, interim summer and late summer Universal Credit (UC) releases. All three UC releases are incorporated in the fully enhanced version 2 files and LA IT software suppliers have built and tested software to use the additional data fields, including new automation routines.
5. We continue with our agreed rollout schedule and will be writing to Capita LAs shortly for a February 2025 release date and then Civica LAs for a March 2025 release date.

### **Additional UC information on Searchlight**

6. In [LAWD12/2024](#), we advised that we were aiming to release the first iteration of more UC information on Searchlight early in 2025. We can now clarify that we are aiming to complete building and testing of the first iteration in order to release it to users in February 2025.
7. We continue to work closely with our working group of LAs, UC and the Searchlight team to ensure each iteration is co-designed with our LA users at the heart of the decision-making throughout.

### **Identifying Local Vulnerability data sharing working group**

8. As advised in [LAWD12/2024](#), we have been holding a series of workshops, both virtually and face to face, around the country with members of a dedicated working group of LAs. We are visiting Cardiff Council and then Glasgow City Council in January 2025.

9. The workshops are helping us to identify the value of sharing Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) data to help LAs identify their most vulnerable residents in order to target welfare support services and benefits. The workshops are also helping us to gain clarity on LA capacity to receive and use a new data share, as well as identifying a first priority use case with a view to expanding and scaling up beyond it.

10. We will continue to work with members of the working group throughout the phases of the data sharing product's development. Do note, that as advised in LAWD12/2024, there is still time to express an interest in joining the Identifying Local Vulnerability working group. We are particularly interested in hearing from systems analysts, data analysts, data architects and strategic (LA-wide) policy and data scientists from authorities. Any expressions of interest should be sent to [lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dwp.gov.uk)

11. We will continue to provide updates on progress in these three areas of data sharing through the LAWD bulletin. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact [lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Improvements to the Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems' notifications of benefit termination reasons**

12. All LAs have been receiving an annual survey about DWP data sharing since late 2021. This allows LAs to suggest specific improvements.

13. Through this route, a number of LAs have suggested that too many benefit termination reasons received from the Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) data share are coded as 'Other'. In their view, many of these could or should be given a more specific termination reason, and in doing so, would save LAs unnecessary administration time, searching for the real termination reason. More specifically:

- One LA reported issues with high volumes of terminated claims under the 'Other' reason code, where there was no additional information to explain the reasons, subsequently causing inefficiencies and delays in processing changes to Housing Benefit (HB) awards.
- The inappropriate use of the 'Other' code leads to poor processing stats, increased agent time and backlogs of claims, affecting efficiency.

14. DWP looked into this last year and, initially in March 2024, Benefit Centre staff were reminded to use the correct reason code when terminating claims.

15. A further strengthened communication was sent to Benefit Centre staff in October 2024. This highlighted the importance, impact and savings to taxpayers and LAs by reinforcing the following:

- Use of the correct reason code (instead of Other), where an appropriate one exists on legacy IT systems.
- If using Other, to put a reason as to why this has been used on the Notepad screen which LAs can view on Searchlight.
- Where there are operational instructions advising the use of Other for New Style claims as part of the 'Failure to Attend' (FTA) process, to note the following message 'New Style claimant non-compliant with FTA Process'. LAs can also view this on Searchlight.

16. These changes, where followed, should help LAs to better distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate use of reason codes, allowing LAs to more quickly reassess whether HB should continue to be awarded.

17. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article, email [lawelfare.correspondence@dw.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.correspondence@dw.gov.uk)

## **HB debt recovered by DWPs' Debt Management: Updated service level agreement**

18. LAs have the option to recover HB overpayments through a claimant's DWP benefit.

19. The service level agreement (SLA) for this process has been updated, as cleared by the Practitioners' Operational Group (POG) representatives, and covers the financial years ending (FYE) 2025 and 2026.

20. The SLA has been placed on Glasscubes.

## **Guidance published on the new lasting power of attorney online service**

21. As explained in [LAWD8/2021](#), the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) introduced a digital service which allows LAs to view an online summary of a lasting power of attorney (LPA). This makes it easier for donors and attorneys to share the details of an LPA and check that they are valid.

22. For LPAs registered in England and Wales on or after 1 January 2016, the donor or attorney can set up an online account on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). They can use this account to share a secure access code with any relevant authority who requires visibility of their LPA details. The authority can enter the code and donor's name into the '[View an LPA' service](#) to view a summary of the LPA and download a copy for their records.

23. If someone has a registered online account, this means the important information on the LPA is easily accessible online. The information contained on the

‘View an LPA’ service is valid and always contains the most current information about an LPA. LAs should use the ‘View an LPA’ service in this instance.

24. For all those with an LPA registered before 1 January 2016, you will still be required to verify the paper document. Some donors and attorneys with LPAs registered on or after 1 January 2016 may elect to use a paper copy.

25. The OPG has released guidance for authorities on [using the View an LPA service](#) and a [Your questions answered: Using your LPA](#)

26. If you have any questions, contact [OPGStakeholderEngagement@publicguardian.gov.uk](mailto:OPGStakeholderEngagement@publicguardian.gov.uk)

## Ukraine Permission Extension scheme

27. On 18 February 2024, the United Kingdom (UK) government announced the launch of the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme. The UPE scheme will open to applications on 4 February 2025.

28. Only those who are living in the UK with existing permission on one of the Ukraine schemes may be eligible to apply. These are:

- Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)
- Ukraine Family Scheme
- Ukraine Extension Scheme

29. The Home Office do not grant UPE scheme visas automatically. Those eligible must apply no earlier than 28 days before their current immigration status ends, and no later than the expiry date of their current status to ensure they can continue to live, work, study and access public funds in the UK.

30. More information about [applying to the scheme](#) can be found on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Impact on LAs

31. There are no changes to the HB regulations. Those who are granted permission to stay in the UK under the UPE scheme will be allowed to access public fund benefits, including HB, so long as they are eligible.

32. If a claimant applies for the UPE scheme before their permission expires, they can continue to receive HB until the outcome of the decision is known.

33. However, if a claimant makes a late application after their permission expires, they will lose their entitlement to receive benefits until the outcome of their decision is known. Any HB overpaid during that period is recoverable by LAs.

34. Any questions should be emailed to [lawelfare.changemanagementoffice@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.changemanagementoffice@dwp.gov.uk)

## Big Energy Saving Week

35. Friday 17 to Thursday 23 January is [Big Energy Saving Week](#) so, as part of this national campaign, we're reaching out to LAs to help ensure eligible residents don't miss out on vital financial support with their energy costs.

36. Many people over State Pension age (66 years and older) could be eligible for Pension Credit, which is worth an average of over £4,200 per year. Eligible Pension Credit claims can also be backdated by up to three months. Even a small award can unlock additional benefits, including valuable heating support such as:

- The Warm Home Discount Scheme (£150 off electricity bills)
- Cold Weather Payments (£25 for each qualifying week until 31 March 2025)

37. The [online application](#) process takes just 16 minutes on average.

38. How you can help:

- Share this information through your local networks and communication channels
- Direct residents to [gov.uk/pension-credit](https://gov.uk/pension-credit) to check eligibility and apply
- Encourage frontline staff to look out for potentially eligible people

39. We've found that people are more likely to claim when they hear about Pension Credit from trusted local sources. Your support in spreading this message could help ensure your most vulnerable residents get the help they need.

40. For more information or support materials, please see our [Stakeholder toolkit](#) and, if necessary, don't hesitate to email [chiltonmannion.jobshare@dp.gov.uk](mailto:chiltonmannion.jobshare@dp.gov.uk)

## Update: Move to UC

41. As we move into 2025, we are increasing the number of migration notices issued to those households receiving income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) only, and ESA with HB. In addition, we are focusing on supporting those households who received a migration notice in 2024 and are yet to make the move, particularly before tax credits close on 5 April 2025.

42. On 17 December 2024 we published our fourth Insight document, [Move to Universal Credit – Insight on Income Support and Housing Benefit and initial ESA cohort activity](#). We also published, on this date, three research papers: [Move to Universal Credit for Tax Credit Couples: Qualitative Research](#), [Move to Universal Credit non-claimants \(formerly tax credits](#)



[customers\)](#) and [Move to Universal Credit Late Claimers \(formerly tax credit customers\) Qualitative Research](#)

43. Amendments to [Universal Credit](#) Regulations were laid in Parliament on 6 January 2025 and will come in to force on 27 January 2025. These regulations predominately make small clarifying changes to the regulations. Further detail can be found in [The Social Security \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2025](#)

44. Changes have been made to the Universal Credit Service to easily identify corporate appointees in the online claim. Corporate appointees can now self-identify and will be treated as departmental trusted partners which provides flexibility on how we communicate and work with them.

## **POG and LA Welfare Steering Group**

45. The POG meeting took place on 19 December 2024. Agenda items included LA funding, bringing the administration together for HB and Pension Credit, Single Fraud Investigation Service funding and HB Fraud Investigation and Joint Working update, Move to UC and the Cost of Living.

46. Both groups' meetings are held bi-monthly (and alternately), so the next LA Welfare Steering Group meeting is scheduled to take place on 23 January 2025.

47. If you have any questions regarding topics raised at these consultation groups, you can email [lawelfare.correspondence@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.correspondence@dwp.gov.uk)

## **HB Decisions by the Upper Tribunal**

48. Decision Making and Appeals Leeds is not aware of any HB cases that have been decided by the Upper Tribunal (UT) since the last edition of the LAWD bulletin.

49. A selection of decisions of the UT are [published](#) on their website. Do be aware that there is an undefined time lapse between decisions being issued and their appearance on the website.

50. If you have any queries about cases before the UT Judges or courts, please contact us by email at [quarryhouse.dmaleedscustomersupportservices@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:quarryhouse.dmaleedscustomersupportservices@dwp.gov.uk)

## **New Legislation**

51. The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have been laid:

- 2024 No. 1276 – The Greater London Authority (Consolidated Council Tax Requirement Procedure) Regulations 2024, made on 3 December 2024

- 2024 No. 1313 – The Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2024, made on 10 December 2024
- 2024 No. 1309 – The Housing (Right to Buy or Acquire) (Designated Rural Areas etc.) (England) Order 2024, made on 9 December 2024
- 2024 No. 1321 – The Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Calculation of Small Business Non-Domestic Rating Multiplier) (England) Regulations 2024, made on 11 December 2024
- 2025 No. 3 – The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2025, made on 6 January 2025

52. Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from [legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)

**What's new on our HB pages on [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)**

1. The following items can be found on the website link shown:

## **LA Welfare Direct 11/2024**

Content type: bulletin.

Link: [LAWD11/2024](#)

## **Contents**

Editorial.

Importance of ensuring Housing Benefit interest markers on Searchlight are kept up to date.

HB debt recovered by the Department for Work and Pensions' Debt Management: Revision process for Capita and Civica users.

New Performance Measurement HB work programme.

New Pension Age Disability Payment and Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance in Scotland.

LA cyber security attacks.

Update: HB subsidy workshops.

Invitation to the next Data sharing and IT consultation and engagement forum.

Update: Move to UC.

Practitioners' Operational Group and LA Welfare Steering Group.

HB Decisions by the Upper Tribunal.

New Legislation.



What's new on our HB pages on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Performance Measurement HB work programme attached as a separate Appendix A.

## **LA Welfare Direct 12/2024**

Content type: Bulletin.

Link: [LAWD12/2024](#)

### **Contents**

Editorial.

Change to DigiCert validation process.

Update: Care Home Information Service national rollout plans.

Update: Housing Benefit debt recovered by DWP's Debt Management Revision process for Capita and Civica users.

Update: Improvements to the HB Matching Service rules and codes.

Refresh of the HB Assurance Process Module X for the financial year ending March 2024.

Update: UC data sharing.

Update: Pension Credit applications and awards.

Reminder: 21 December 2024 deadline to qualify for Winter Fuel Payment in England and Wales or Pension Age Winter Heating Payment in Scotland.

Publication of HB speed of processing statistics for April 2024 to June 2024.

Update: Move to UC.

Secondment opportunities in LA-PED.

Practitioners' Operational Group and the LA Welfare Steering Group.

HB Decisions by the Upper Tribunal.

New Legislation.

What's new on our HB pages on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## **S7/2024**

Content type: Subsidy (S) circular.

Link: [S7/2024](#)

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Additional New Burdens funding due to each LA to reflect the additional costs incurred for terminating Employment Support Allowance with Housing Benefit claims during the financial year ending March 2025.

### **S8/2024**

Content type: S circular.

Link: [S8/2024](#)

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Additional funding for the Verify Earnings and Pensions service for the financial year ending March 2025.

### **S9/2024**

Content type: S circular.

Link: [S9/2024](#)

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Discretionary Housing Payment government contribution for English and Welsh local authorities for financial year ending March 2026.

### **A11/2024**

Content type: Adjudication circular.

[A11/2024](#)

## Contents

Housing Benefit uprating for the financial year ending March 2026.