

## LA Welfare Direct 4/2024

### Introduction

Who should read – HB Staff. Various technical changes, clarification of LA17 when seeking a valuation of a property.

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## Change of tax year for Housing Benefit Matching Service self-assessment referrals

1. At present, the Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) self-assessment referrals are matched against the 2021 to 2022 tax year.
2. From the week commencing 8 April 2024, HBMS referrals will be matched against the 2022 to 2023 tax year.
3. This means all local authorities (LAs) will receive higher volumes of referrals and possible duplications within the first month of this change. However, volumes will start to decrease by month two of implementation.
4. Changes to the tax year for HBMS are implemented in April of each year in line with HM Revenue and Customs procedures.
5. The following rules, which are detailed in the HMBS rule guide on Glasscubes, will be impacted:
  - HBSA002
  - HBSA003
  - HBSA004
  - HBHB405
6. If you have any questions, you can contact [lawelfare.datamatching@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.datamatching@dwp.gov.uk)

## Improvements to the Housing Benefit Matching Service rule HBSA002

7. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is continually reviewing and improving the suite of HBMS rules to provide quality referrals and to reduce nugatory referrals issued to LAs.
8. We have worked closely with LAs to identify issues and improvements to rule HBSA002, which identifies a Housing Benefit (HB) claimant and/or partner with undeclared self-assessment earnings which are less than £10,000 per annum.
9. These improvements include:
  - Omission of supported accommodation and temporary accommodation cases as these are more appropriately dealt with by DWP/Universal Credit (UC).
  - The removal of non-declared PAYE data which was erroneously included as part of the rule previously.
  - Individual self-assessment earnings for both claimant and/or partner.

10. The improved referrals will be available to LAs from the week commencing 15 April 2024 and the HBMS rules guide (available on Glasscubes) will be updated to reflect the changes.

11. The Local Authority Partnership, Engagement and Delivery (LA-PED) division would like to take this opportunity to thank those LAs who participated in the consultation process.

12. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article, contact [lawelfare.datamatching@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.datamatching@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Local authority funding for DWP's requirements provided by IT software suppliers**

13. DWP is currently working with project leads and LA IT software suppliers to prepare funding to pay for DWP commissioned work completed by the LA IT software suppliers.

14. The funding will be paid to LAs in early to mid-April 2024.

15. The Local Authority Data Sharing Team will send individual letters to each LA's single inbox, with details of their total funding, a breakdown of that funding and the work it relates to and the specific date the payment will be made. LAs should ensure that this information is provided to their finance team.

16. Once we confirm the LA payment date to the LA IT software suppliers, they will be invoicing LAs for the amount received. LAs' finance teams need to ensure these invoices are paid in a timely manner.

17. We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support with this work.

18. If you need any further information email [lawelfare.ladsdeliveryteam@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.ladsdeliveryteam@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Memorandum of Understanding compliance audits**

19. To help LAs plan, all LAs who have been selected for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) compliance audits throughout 2024 will have received a notification letter by March 2024.

20. If an LA has not yet received an MOU compliance audit notification letter from DWP, their MOU compliance audit will be taking place in 2025.

21. We will notify those LAs selected to complete the MOU compliance audits in 2025 from the summer of 2024.

22. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact [lawelfare.lacompliance@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.lacompliance@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Clarification regarding the LA17 form and how to use**

23. The LA17 form can be used by LAs for dual purposes. These are:

- to inform DWP of changes in circumstances for HB claimants
- to request confirmation of DWP benefit information for HB claimants

24. A number of LAs have asked that we clarify the processes for reporting changes of circumstance that DWP is unaware of and confirming benefit information using the LA17 form.

25. These processes only apply to the following benefits:

- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
- Income Support (IS)
- Pension Credit

Note: It should not be used for UC.

## **Process for reporting changes of circumstance notified to LAs but not DWP**

26. Instances may arise when an HB claimant notifies a change of circumstance to their LA but fails to notify DWP, such as a change of address within their LA area or if their earnings have changed.

27. LAs must use form LA17 to report any changes in circumstances to affected benefit lines that claimants may not have reported to DWP.

28. LAs should supply complete information to DWP about any changes of circumstance, including that the information has been verified.

29. When sending the form to DWP, LAs must include 'LA17 – change of circumstance' in the subject line of the email to ensure prompt action. DWP will confirm the processing of the change or request further action from the LA.

30. LAs should continue to use form CIS500 where there is a discrepancy recorded on Searchlight (for instance, where Searchlight holds a misspelled name or the wrong house number). The CIS500 is not intended to report changes of circumstance, and these requests will be rejected. Further information on the CIS500 process can be found in circular HB [A9/2016](#).

## **Process for confirming benefit information**

31. LAs can also use the LA17 to confirm benefit information, such as claim end dates or awarded amounts. Despite improved data sharing by giving staff access to Searchlight or the transfer of ATLAS (Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems) files, the LA17 process continues to be of value to LAs.

32. Where alternative avenues to confirm information cannot be used, LAs should complete the LA17 form and send it to the respective benefit line. When sending the form to DWP, LAs must include 'LA17 – confirming benefit information' in the subject line of the email to ensure prompt action. DWP will respond with the necessary information or request additional details as needed.

## Updated LA17 form

33. We have produced a new version of the form as a Microsoft Excel document which has been redesigned to make its purpose clearer and simpler to complete with specific fields to accurately confirm required information.

34. The form is attached as a separate Appendix A and should be used with immediate effect. LAs can also find the form on Glasscubes.

- [Appendix A: form LA17 open document file](#)
- [Appendix A: form LA17 Excel file](#)

35. The use of any locally produced NHB5, NHB7 or the previous Microsoft Word version of the LA17 form (designed to be completed by hand) should be discontinued.

36. There is no change to where LAs should send completed forms. These are:

- ESA: [norwich.scesachanges@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:norwich.scesachanges@dwp.gov.uk)
- JSA with surnames beginning A to K: [internalenquiries.jsachangesa-k@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:internalenquiries.jsachangesa-k@dwp.gov.uk)
- JSA with surnames beginning L to Z: [internalenquiries.jsachangesl-z@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:internalenquiries.jsachangesl-z@dwp.gov.uk)
- IS: [doncasterbenefitcentre.dwpdoncasterisla17@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:doncasterbenefitcentre.dwpdoncasterisla17@dwp.gov.uk)
- Pension Credit: [dundeepensioncentre.laformscwf@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:dundeepensioncentre.laformscwf@dwp.gov.uk)

37. For any questions, please contact [lawelfare.changemanagementoffice@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.changemanagementoffice@dwp.gov.uk)

## Update to enhancing the UC data available to LAs

38. As you know, LA-PED's Local Government Data Sharing Transformation team has been working alongside UC to deliver additional data items within the UC-Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) data share.

39. Development of the spring release concluded at the end of February 2024. As we use an Agile approach to development, there have been some changes to what we told you in [LAWD2/2024](#).

## **LCTR data share update**

40. See Annex A for an update of the LCTR data share changes.

41. We will provide all LAs with detailed technical guidance about all the enhancements for the spring release in due course.

## **UC Searchlight enhancement update**

42. At our March 2024 Working Group, we presented three possible solutions on what the spring 2024 enhancement may look like. Although the group gave us a clear steer on their preferred option, there is still work to do. We need to consider time, costs and resource availability to reach the final decision on what we can deliver in the first release. We will continue to take the views of our Working Group into account to help us reach that decision.

## **Move to UC**

43. The first notifications to migrate HB claimants to UC through the Move to UC Programme are due to begin from April 2024. The Local Government Data Sharing Transformation team has facilitated the technical changes made to accommodate new Migration and Termination notifications. More information is contained in the LA Move to UC (Managed Migration) guidance.

44. We will continue to provide updates about all the enhancements. In the meantime, the team can be contacted at [lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Invitation to all LAs to participate in the email solution for the Personal Independent Payment form PIP3007**

45. DWP currently sends the Personal Independent Payment form PIP3007 by post to LAs to establish care home admission dates and funding information. The completed form is then returned to DWP by post.

46. Some LAs agreed to participate in a small test and learn pilot to explore the effectiveness of using secure email (using the gov.uk network) as the alternative way of corresponding with LAs to obtain care home admission dates and information.

47. Using secure email has considerably reduced delays in the information being received and actioned. Therefore, DWP would like to invite all LAs to participate in the use of secure email. All this would involve is an LA providing an appropriate

email address to which DWP could send the form PIP3007 for completion and return.

48. If you are interested in participating and want to find out more please contact [sdm.pipportfolioeaminbox@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:sdm.pipportfolioeaminbox@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Publication of refreshed HB Assurance Process modules for the financial year ending March 2024**

49. DWP recently refreshed and [published](#) the following HB Assurance Process (HBAP) modules for the financial year ending March 2024:

- Module 1: DWP reporting framework instruction (in England). The Standard Engagement Terms for HBAP, including standard checks on the subsidy claim form and links to other modules.
- Module 2: DWP benefit annual uprating checklist.
- Module 6: Approach and testing strategy (in England). The detailed testing requirements which provide Reporting Accountants and LAs with instructions required by DWP to complete the HBAP.

50. If you have any questions, contact [hb.assurancequeries@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:hb.assurancequeries@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Invitation to the next Data sharing and IT consultation and engagement forum**

51. The next forum will be held on Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 10:45am to 11:45am.

### **Joining instructions**

52. The joining instructions were notified in the version of this LAWD that was emailed to all LA single inboxes.

### **Forum agenda**

- A 15-minute introduction from DWP, covering projects recently delivered, projects currently in delivery, insight into future planned projects, as well as the most recent common issues that have been reported to us.
- 30 to 45 minutes of questions from LAs on the call about the projects and matters covered in the introduction and any other IT and data sharing questions and issues LAs may have.
- If time allows, 15 minutes focused on suggestions from LAs about future data sharing, data matching or automation projects that DWP could consider funding and delivering.

53. The call will be recorded and the recording will be published on Glasscubes.

54. The forum is open to all LAs and we would be beneficial for every LA to have at least one representative dial into the forum to help us maximise feedback.

Each LA representative should:

- seek input and feedback from as many of their colleagues as possible prior to dialling in, for example, questions they might want answered
- have knowledge, at least at a high level, about data sharing, data matching and current IT topic areas
- feedback to their colleagues about how the conference call went, including the answers to the questions we asked.

55. We look forward to your participation on the call. However, if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact [paul.selby@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:paul.selby@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Help to Claim support from 1 April 2024**

56. As outlined in a Written Statement [published](#) on 11 March 2024, following a recent grant competition, we are pleased to advise that Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland will continue to deliver Help to Claim support independently across England, Scotland and Wales with up to a further £38 million investment planned for two years from April 2024.

57. This means that free confidential and impartial support will continue to be available to help people make a new UC claim (including those invited to move from legacy benefits to UC) and manage their claim, up to receiving their first correct payment.

58. The support will continue to be provided through telephony and digital channels. For those individuals who are unable to access support through these channels, they will be able to go to their local jobcentre, where staff will identify the right support to meet their needs. This support is already in place and available to those individuals who choose to seek advice from DWP directly in making a claim to UC.

## **Latest update: Move to UC**

59. From April 2024, DWP will begin to notify households that receive other combinations of benefits of the need to move to UC, starting with IS claimants and those claiming Tax Credits with HB.

60. The latest insight report on Tax Credit migrations and the initial discovery activity for wider benefit cohorts moving to UC was [published](#) on 29 February 2024. This builds on the initial Discovery work done for additional cohorts of legacy benefit claimants in 2022 and enables us to learn and improve our approach to Move to UC.



61. This publication details the research that was undertaken to understand why some Tax Credit claimants have not made the move to UC as well as the early evidence from the Discovery work carried out on other combinations of legacy benefits who will be asked to move to UC from April 2024.

## **Practitioners' Operational Group and LA Welfare Steering Group**

62. The last LA Welfare Steering Group meeting took place on 21 March 2024. Agenda items included the LA Welfare issues Highlight Report, LA funding, Spring Budget, Move to UC and the Cost of Living.

63. Both groups' meetings are held bi-monthly (and alternately), so the next Practitioners' Operational Group meeting is scheduled to take place on 18 April 2024.

64. 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)

## **Secondment opportunities in LA-PED division**

65. Working with LAs, as one of our major stakeholders in Welfare Reform, continues to feature heavily and for this reason we value the expertise and knowledge that LA HB experts can bring to the team. These secondment opportunities provide those experts with an opportunity to gain an insight and experience of policy development and workings of central government.

66. LA-PED has had a programme of bringing HB experts from LAs in to work alongside data sharing, subsidy, change and performance teams on secondment. We are now looking to register your interest for further secondment opportunities over the coming months.

67. LA-PED comprises of approximately 150 staff. The division is responsible for overseeing the performance of LAs in their delivery of HB. It monitors a range of performance data including how quickly and accurately HB is paid and the prevention and detection of fraud and error. LA-PED offers support and challenge to those LAs not meeting performance expectations.

68. It supports a large programme of data sharing activity that is paramount in helping LAs pay the correct amount of HB and is heavily involved in managing change activity supporting the Welfare Reform agenda.

69. It's also responsible for paying HB Administration Subsidy, Discretionary Housing Payments, New Burdens and additional grant funding.

70. This is an exciting opportunity to play a leading role in maintaining and improving stakeholder relationships between DWP and LAs and in designing innovative

opportunities for closer working during this busy and complex period of Welfare Reform.

## Personal requirements

71. Candidates should possess the following:

- good understanding of HB procedures and regulations
- good drafting and communication skills
- ability to build and maintain effective working relationships with LAs and other stakeholders
- ability to work with people at different levels in the organisation and to work as part of a team to achieve results
- ability to deliver work at pace and with successful, quantifiable outcomes

## Further information

72. Secondment posts would be offered for either 12 months or 24 months dependant on the role offered across the division. The posts would usually be full time and based across the country, although no moves at public expense would be considered. These opportunities will be determined by business need so your CV will be kept on file, and you will be contacted once a suitable opportunity arises.

73. If you are keen to register your interest and are at S01/S02/SO3 and Pay Band level 4 or equivalent, (roughly equates to civil service HEO/SEO/G7 grades) please:

- check with your LA that you could be released, and then
- send your CV by email to [laped.businesssupportteam@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:laped.businesssupportteam@dwp.gov.uk)

## HB decisions by the Upper Tribunal

74. Decision Making and Appeals (DMA) 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.

75. 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.

76. 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)

## HB cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal

77. DMA Leeds have not been made aware of any new HB cases that are awaiting decision by the UT.

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

## New Legislation

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

- 2024 No. 273 The Pensions Act 2004 (Codes of Practice) (Revocation) Order 2024, made on 1 March 2024
- 2024 No. 289 The Social Security (Contributions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2024, made on 4 March 2024
- 2024 No. 243 The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 2024, made on 1 March 2024
- 2024 No. 242 The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 2024, made on 5 March 2024
- 2024 No. 284 The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order 2024, made on 4 March 2024
- 2024 No. 334 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, made on 7 March 2024
- 2024 No. 331 The Pensions Increase (Review) Order 2024, made on 4 March 2024
- 2024 No. 341 The Social Security and Universal Credit (Migration of Tax Credit Claimants and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2024, made on 8 March 2024
- 2024 No. 306 The Social Security (Contributions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2024, made on 7 March 2024
- 2024 No. 371 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) (Amendment) Order 2024, made on 13 March 2024
- 2024 No. 357 The Finance Act 2004 (Registered Pension Schemes and Annual Allowance Charge) Order 2024, made on 12 March 2024
- 2024 No. 399 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2024, made on 20 March 2024
- 2024 No. 437 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Commencement No. 2 and Savings Provisions) Regulations 2024, made on 25 March 2024
- Correct as of 3 April 2024

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

## What's new on our HB pages on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
Bulletin	<p>Editorial</p> <p>Important reminder: SHBE Application Programme Interface</p> <p>Further update: Care Home Information Service Update: New War Pension rates</p> <p>Latest update: Public Services Network Update: The Cabinet Office LA Council Tax debt recovery pilot</p> <p>All LA Universal Credit conference call on 15 March 2024</p> <p>All LA VEP and HB Award Accuracy Initiatives conference call on 21 March 2024</p> <p>Invitation to a Glasscubes tutorial on 26 March 2024</p> <p>Latest update: Move to UC</p> <p>UC sanctions regime</p> <p>Publication of the Discretionary Housing Payment reports</p> <p>Secondment opportunities in LA-PED division's Performance Development Team</p> <p>Practitioners' Operational Group and LA Welfare Steering Group</p> <p>HB decisions by the Upper Tribunal</p> <p>New Legislation</p> <p>What's new on our HB pages on GOV.UK</p>	<a href="#">LAWD3/2024</a>
Bulletin	<p>Recording of the Move to Universal Credit LA conference call posted on Glasscubes</p> <p>Have your say on our Pension Credit stakeholder toolkit</p> <p>Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries statistics</p> <p>Update: Landlord Portal Guidance</p>	<a href="#">LAWD3/2024 lite</a>

Document Type	Subject	Link
Subsidy circular	Rent Rebate Subsidy Limitation information for financial year ending March 2025 (Wales only)	<a href="#">S1/2024</a>
Subsidy circular	Discretionary Housing Payment government contribution for English and Welsh LAs for the financial year ending March 2025	<a href="#">S2/2024</a>
Subsidy circular	Housing Benefit Administration Subsidy arrangements for English, Scottish and Welsh LAs for the financial year ending March 2025	<a href="#">S3/2024</a>
Adjudication circular	Victims of forced marriage and victims of transnational marriage abandonment	<a href="#">A2/2024</a>
Adjudication circular	Valuation of capital assets	<a href="#">A3/2024</a>

## Annex A - Update: LCTR data feed spring release

### Enhancements

#### Two-child limit

The two-child limit enhancement has been brought forward to the Spring release.

#### Tariff Income

We have enhanced the data feed to make it easier for all LA software systems to show when Tariff Income has been applied.

#### Other income – Claimant

Information for up to 33 other benefits the UC claimant has received will be included in the Spring release. However, this information will only be available at the end of the first assessment period.

#### Minimum Income Floor

The data feed will provide the monetary value of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) if it has been applied. In addition to what was advised, we will supply this rate for all self-employed cases, together with a date it applies.

## **Self-employment**

We are enhancing the data feed in the Spring and further enhancements will be included in the summer release too.

## **Students**

We are also enhancing the data feed to provide more details regarding students.

## **Items not included as already provided or we are unable to enhance further**

Our detailed analysis has identified that some of the data items requested are already supplied on the UC-LCTR data feed.

## **Joint tenants**

We are already sharing all the information we can.

## **UC denied/terminated before payment**

We are enhancing the information LAs will receive when a UC award is terminated. However, our Working Group suggested that LAs do not always receive a second file if UC was terminated before the end of the first Assessment Period, for example because the claimant had failed the Habitual Residency Test.

We have undertaken extensive testing in this area and each time a file was generated. In other words, we have not been able to replicate this fault. So, if LAs find instances where they do not receive a termination reason and date before files stop being received permanently, this should be reported to LA-PED's Local Authority Security and Support Team at [lawelfare.lasupport@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.lasupport@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Shared ownership**

We intended to supply more information about shared ownership and any relationship with the landlord in the summer release. Closer analysis has identified that we are already sharing all the information that the UC system holds about shared ownership.