

LA Welfare Direct 6/2024

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If you have queries about the:

- technical content of this bulletin then contact details are given at the end of each article
- general content and distribution of this bulletin, contact lawelfare.correspondence@dwp.gov.uk

Who should read

All Housing Benefit staff.

Action

For information.

Editorial

Hi everyone and welcome to another packed edition of the Local Authority Welfare Direct.

You will see below an article that provides details from the recent publication of the Monetary Value of Fraud and Error National Statistics.

I wanted to take this opportunity to state that we continue to ask local authorities (LAs) to focus on the highest areas of loss through our funded schemes Verify Earnings and Pensions and the Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative. I also wanted to thank LAs for their continued efforts in this regard, as national performance on both schemes is very good.

There are also several articles below on the improvements to Universal Credit (UC) data sharing from the Local Government Data Sharing Transformation team. It is all the more important that we maximise the opportunities in this area now, especially when large numbers of Housing Benefit claimants who also receive Local Council Tax Reduction are migrating to UC as we move through the roll out period.

I hope you find this edition helpful.

Darren Baker

Head of Change and Communications, Fraud, Error and Debt Team

Fraud and error in the benefit system

1. The Monetary Value of Fraud and Error National Statistics for financial year ending (FYE) March 2024 were published on 16 May 2024 here:

- [Fraud and Error in the Benefit System: financial year 2023 to 2024 estimates](#)
- [Unfulfilled Eligibility in the Benefit System: financial year 2023 to 2024 estimates](#)

2. In summary, for all Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits:

	FYE March 2023	FYE March 2023	FYE March 2024	FYE March 2024
Estimate of the total rate of overpayments	3.6%	£8.3billion	3.7%	£9.7billion
Rate of fraud overpayments	2.7%	£6.3billion	2.8%	£7.4billion
Rate of claimant error overpayments	0.6%	£1.4billion	0.6%	£1.6billion
Rate of official error overpayments	0.3%	£0.7billion	0.3%	£0.8billion
Estimate of the total rate of underpayments	0.5%	£1.2billion	0.4%	£1.1billion

	FYE March 2023	FYE March 2023	FYE March 2024	FYE March 2024
Total unfulfilled eligibility rate	1.0%	£2.3billion	1.2%	£3.1billion

3. The Housing Benefit (HB) overpayment rate was 6.3% (£980million) in FYE March 2024, compared with 5.7% (£860million) in FYE March 2023, which breaks down into:

	FYE March 2023	FYE March 2023	FYE March 2024	FYE March 2024
Overpayments due to fraud	3.5%	£530million	3.9%	£600million
Overpayments due to claimant error	1.7%	£260million	2.0%	£300million
Overpayments due to official error	0.5%	£70million	0.5%	£70million

4. Under-declaration of financial assets (Capital) was the main reason for the changes across total HB overpayments, particularly in pension age. At a total level, Capital increased to 2.2% in FYE March 2024, compared with 1.3% in FYE March 2023. This increase was statistically significant.

Carers Support Payment: further roll out of new claims, case transfer and IT changes

5. As advised in [LAWD11/2023](#) and circular [A7/2024](#), Carer's Support Payment (CSP) is the replacement for Carer's Allowance in Scotland. It was first launched in November 2023 in three pilot areas, Perth and Kinross, Dundee City and Na h-Eileanan Siar (Western Isles).

6. New claims to CSP will be available in ten new local authority (LA) areas from June 2024 as part of the next phase of the roll-out, starting with North and South Lanarkshire and Angus on 24 June 2024, Fife, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray, and North, East and South Ayrshire from August 2024, followed by the remainder of LAs in Scotland in November 2024.

7. The transfer of existing Carer's Allowance cases began in February 2024, with all awards expected to be transferred to CSP by Spring 2025.

Local authority claim information

8. No amendments have been made to the local authority claim information (LACI) notification to reflect the award of CSP.

9. The LACI notification will only include the tick box to confirm if the claimant is in receipt of Carer's Allowance. Where LAs receive a LACI to make a new claim to HB and the claimant lives in Scotland, details of the CSP award will not be included.

10. Instead, the LA will need to check Searchlight in all cases where the claimant lives in Scotland to check for a CSP award.

Impact on LAs

11. For HB purposes, CSP is treated in the same way as Carer's Allowance and LAs should continue to follow business as usual processes when a claim is transferred. Since there will be no break in entitlement between the Carer's Allowance and CSP awards, premiums on HB will also continue without any gap.

12. As cases are transferred, LAs will:

- not receive a Carer's Allowance end of award ATLAS (automated transfer to local authority systems) notification when the Carer's Allowance award has been ended
- be able to view the CSP award details in Searchlight
- receive a new award ATLAS notification when CSP has been awarded

IT changes

13. A new ATLAS schema will be implemented on 10 June 2024 to include the CSP data. All LAs will be affected by these changes because DWP issue a single ATLAS schema for the whole of Great Britain.

14. After national go live, the changes that LAs will notice are:

- the New Award and Change of Award notifications will now include CSP
- no new benefit cap removal reason will be introduced and the existing removal reason "other" will be used. LAs will need to check Searchlight or the Scottish Government Portal to confirm the qualifying benefit

Impact on LAs

15. DWP commissioned LA IT software suppliers to make the required changes to the LA HB systems. The new software was implemented in their latest releases. All LAs have been notified of the availability of the new software to ensure they download and test ahead of the national go live date.

Use of CSP data

16. The Scottish Government has asked DWP to provide the CSP data through ATLAS files. This will be accessible on Searchlight for the purposes of the administration of HB, Discretionary Housing Payments and Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR).

17. The next version of the DWP/LA Memorandum of Understanding will be updated to include CSP information.

18. The ATLAS Awareness Pack has been updated to include CSP and will be published on Glasscubes ahead of national go live.

19. If you have any questions on the IT changes in this article, email lawelfare.ladsdeliveryteam@dpw.gov.uk

20. For all other enquiries, email lawelfare.changemanagementoffice@dpw.gov.uk

HB speed of processing statistics: addition of working age and pension age breakdowns from July 2024

21. From the July 2024 release onward, the HB speed of processing statistics will include two additional statistical tables. These tables will provide the volume of claims and average speed of processing, broken down by working age and pension age at an LA level.

22. This data will be available for both new claims and change of circumstances to existing claims. If you have any questions, please email cbm.stats@dpw.gov.uk by 30 June 2024.

Updated lasting power of attorney guidance

23. As explained in [LAWD8/2021](#), the Ministry of Justice, working with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) in England and Wales, provides a digital service that allows LAs to view valid registered lasting power of attorney (LPA) details.

24. The OPG has recently launched [new guidance](#) about this service on www.gov.uk. LAs can use this guidance to enhance their understanding and awareness of how the service can be used when verifying a person's LPA status.

25. As a reminder, this service can only be used for LPAs that were registered in England and Wales on or after 1 January 2016. For LPAs registered before this date, you will still need to view the paper LPA documents.

Single Housing Benefit Extract Application Programme Interface: update and solutions to common queries

26. All LAs should now be using the SHBE (Single Housing Benefit Extract) Application Programme Interface (API) to send HB data to DWP.

LA provision of GNU Privacy Guard key (GPG) to DWP

27. As explained in [LAWD3/2024](#), all LAs should now have provided their GPG keys to DWP.

28. LAs that have received their returned key/credentials from DWP should move over to the 'Version 2' Token URLs using the guidance available on your LAs IT software supplier specific workspace on Glasscubes, in conjunction with the guidance provided by your IT software supplier.

29. LAs will need their passphrases, for when credentials are returned, otherwise a replacement GPG key will be required. The passphrase protects the key you have generated.

Common queries

30. Throughout the rollout of SHBE API, LAs have experienced some common issues:

- SHBE API URLs

31. When copying across the SHBE API URLs on to their systems, occasionally some of the hyphens contained within the URL are not pasting correctly. We ask that LAs thoroughly check that all the hyphens look correct. If the URL is incorrect, this will cause the API to fail.

- Error 422 "One or more NINOs could not be verified"

32. As per guidance and the frequently asked questions available on Glasscubes, this means that a claim could not be verified. This could be due to a mismatch in the Surname, National Insurance number (NINo) or date of birth, not just the NINo.

33. Following feedback from LAs, we are currently investigating potential improvements to the SHBE API solution. We will keep you updated on progress.

34. If you have any questions or need any support, please contact lawelfare.ladsdeliveryteam@dwp.gov.uk

Update: Move to Universal Credit

35. In line with the Move to Universal Credit (UC) migration plans, we continue with the Managed Migration of Income Support households and those on tax credits with HB. From June 2024 we will start migrating HB only households.

Further update: UC-LCTR data feed enhancements

36. We are now closer to rolling out the Spring 2024 UC-LCTR data feed enhancements referred to in [LAWD4/2024](#)

37. Following successful internal testing, we have worked closely with one LA IT software supplier and one LA to ensure that everything is working as expected.

38. So far, after two intensive weeks of testing, no issues have been raised and all deduction reasons are present and correct. The LA has also confirmed that the original data has not been compromised, therefore we are now looking to expand to other LAs served by the same IT software supplier to enable further tests.

39. In addition, we are working to identify a suitable LA from another LA IT software supplier for similar testing to ensure the solution delivers the same positive results.

40. This Agile approach is designed to ensure that LAs go live with strong assurance that the additional data is comprehensive and accurate, giving a firm foundation to gradually build further automation. Existing automation has not been affected by the new enhancement.

41. At the same time, we are continuing with the development of the remaining UC-LCTR enhancements. We are still on target to deliver them later this year and we intend to use a similar approach to implementation.

42. If you have any questions, please contact lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dpw.gov.uk

Update: Additional UC information on Searchlight

43. The Local Government Data Sharing Transformation team has been working closely with UC and Searchlight team colleagues and have agreed the design and approach to enhancing Searchlight with additional UC data fields.

44. Unfortunately, the build start has been delayed by urgent, higher-priority work that the Searchlight team has to complete.

45. The first additions we were aiming to make in Spring 2024, as explained in [LAWD2/2024](#), will now be postponed until later in the Summer of 2024.

46. We will keep you updated throughout the coming months as we make progress. If you have any questions, please contact lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dpw.gov.uk

Identifying Local Vulnerability Data Sharing Working Group

47. The Local Government Data Sharing Transformation team is working with LAs from England, Scotland and Wales to learn more about their data needs in relation to identifying and supporting cohorts of vulnerable people, so they can better target their resources.

48. The team held their second Identifying Local Vulnerability (ILoV) Data Sharing Working Group meeting on 20 May 2024, with LA specialists in:

- homelessness
- the Supporting Families Programme (including equivalent programmes in Scotland and Wales)
- supporting citizens not in education, employment or training
- employment programmes
- working in benefit take-up and local welfare provision

49. The team is arranging further workshops, interviews and desk-based research to ensure Digital colleagues can build a new UC data share that is based on a proper understanding of the user needs, purpose, aims and security of the solution.

50. If you would like to take an active part in helping us to identify LA data needs, then please consider applying to join the ILoV Data Sharing Working Group by contacting lawelfare.datasharingtransformation@dpw.gov.uk

Reminder: Keeping Child Maintenance Service informed during the adoption process

51. If LAs are supporting birth parent(s) through an adoption process, we would ask that they check with birth parent(s) if there is a Child Maintenance interest for the child or children being adopted.

52. If so, the birth parent(s) should be encouraged to contact Child Maintenance Service to make them aware of the adoption, so that all records are updated and any live maintenance claims ended.

LA Welfare Steering Group

53. The last LA Welfare Steering Group meeting took place on 23 May 2024. Agenda items included the LA Welfare issues Highlight Report, LA funding, Move to UC and the Cost of Living.

54. If you have any questions regarding topics raised at this consultation group, you can email lawelfare.correspondence@dpw.gov.uk

HB decisions by the Upper Tribunal

55. 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.

56. 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.

57. If you have any queries about cases before the UT Judges or courts, please contact us by email at quarryhouse.dmaleedscustomersupportservices@dpw.gov.uk

HB cases awaiting decision by the Upper Tribunal

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

59. If you have any queries about cases before the UT judges or courts, please contact us by email at quarryhouse.dmaleedscustomersupportservices@dpw.gov.uk

New legislation

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

- 2024 No. 602 The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2024, made on 3 May 2024
- 2024 No. 611 The Social Security (State Pension Age Claimants: Closure of Tax Credits) (Amendments) Regulations 2024, made on 7 May 2024
- 2024 No. 604 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 (Commencement No. 31 and Savings and Transitional Provisions) (Amendment) Order 2024, made on 7 May 2024
- 2024 No. 647 The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) and Persons Subject to Immigration Control (Housing Authority Accommodation and Homelessness) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, made on 15 May 2024
- 2024 No. 663 The Immigration (leave to Enter and Remain) (Amendment) Order 2024, made on 20 May 2024

61. Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from legislation.gov.uk

What's new on [our HB pages](#)

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

Document Type	Subject	Link
Bulletin	<p>Editorial</p> <p>Update: Housing Benefit Matching Service rules</p> <p>Changes to front end LA IT systems to enable accurate recording of HB Award Accuracy Initiative management information</p> <p>Urgent reminder: Memorandum of Understanding compliance audit pre-audit questionnaire deadline</p> <p>Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession</p> <p>User research opportunity: Appointees completing Personal Independence Payment forms</p> <p>Rent Simplification and Support – Proof of Concept</p> <p>Publication of HB speed of processing statistics for October 2023 to December 2023</p> <p>Latest update: Move to Universal Credit</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 www.gov.uk</p>	LAWD5/2024
Adjudication bulletin	The Carer's Assistance Payment (Scotland)	A7/2024