Editorial

I am aware that many of you are likely to be very busy over the next few days, helping with the practical preparations for the election. Some of you no doubt will be helping to count votes on the day. If you are involved, I hope it all runs smoothly for you.

For obvious reasons, there is not a lot we can say in this edition. Anything to do with policy development and reform will have to wait for future editions. So, this time, we are confining the articles to operational guidance and updates on our projects.

And I am very pleased that, after a short delay while we resolved some technical issues, we are now live with CIS Prompts. I do hope you will feel able to make use of this new source of information about tenants’ changes in circumstance. We are hoping it will help us reduce customer error in Housing Benefit. We are already looking at possible improvements to this system - we appreciate that it is not perfect - and, in particular, ways in which we can download the information direct to your systems. More on this as we develop the work. Meanwhile, we hope that CIS Prompts will be useful to you and we will welcome comments on how to make it better.

Paul Howarth

Email: Paul.Howarth@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
**EAS CIS Implementation Project update**

We’ve had a busy few months on the project. We’ve been joined by three LA secondees and the Government Connect Team to help us prepare for full implementation.

The LA secondees who will form part of the project team are Anita Watton - Birmingham CC, Chiman Karadia - Walsall Council, Frances Kavanagh - LB Richmond. They will be responsible for delivering the training and the training documentation for the LA Agents and will be available for questions and to support you throughout the project.

The Government Connect team are working with the Employee Authentication Service (EAS) project to support GCSX connectivity issues of the implementation both during the early adopter phase and beyond.

Other key items for this update are

1. Implementation Details: The Local Authority Implementation Approach document and FAQs are available on our web pages. You’ll also find plenty of other useful information on the website at [www.dwp.gov.uk/eas](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/eas)

2. Early Adopters: Contact us if you want to take part in our early adopter phase over the next few months.

   E-mail: eas.info@dwp.gsi.gov.uk soon to avoid disappointment. The training events for the Early Adopters will be in London. Benefits include having dedicated support throughout the process and being live on the new access system by the end of the exercise. For more details have a look at the terms of reference [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/eas-tor-pilot.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/eas-tor-pilot.pdf)

Further information and updates are available at [www.dwp.gov.uk/eas](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/eas) or you can send your questions to

E-mail: eas.info@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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**CIS prompts to LAs update**

In the March issue of HB Direct update we confirmed that Customer Information System (CIS) Prompts have now been implemented, apologies for any inconvenience caused by the short delay.

CIS Prompts represent an important improvement in how we share information with you. The prompts cover an extended range of DWP benefits and crucially include HMRC Tax Credit awards which have not been available via the current Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD).

For go-live the project have ensured that over 6 million customer interests taken from the latest Single HB Extract (SHBE) returns have been loaded on to CIS, enabling you to maximise the benefits of the system from the implementation date.

Since Tuesday 27 April 2010 you have been able to retrieve the electronic prompts for your customers 24 hours after the change occurred on CIS. You can set new prompts, amend and end any HB/CTB interest, ensuring that you are aware of the most up to date and accurate customer information possible.

All staff have to undertake the relevant training and read accompanying guidance which has been issued by e-mail.

If you have any queries about the project please contact Glen Skinner or Simon Wainwright via

E-mail: QH.HBINFOFLOWSPROGRAMME@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK or view the [HB Information Flows Website](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) for further information.
Employment and Support Allowance Customer Account Management System Release 10.1

The full version of this item was published in Bulletin HB/CTB G6/2010 but this extract is being repeated in HB Direct to ensure that you are aware of this change.

The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Customer Account Management (CAM) system has been completing a full data gather of HB/CTB information for customers wishing to claim HB/CTB alongside a new or repeat ESA claim since 26 October 2009. This information is then output onto a Local Authority Claim Information (LACI) document and sent to the appropriate authority.

From 31 May 2010 changes are being implemented to improve the quality and quantity of the information output onto the LACI. These changes include changes to the actual LACI document itself and also CAM system changes to ensure a full data gather for HB/CTB is completed.

The guidance has been updated and will be available from 7 May 2010 on our website under ESA Guidance.

The guidance includes updated information on changes to the CAM system to improve the quality and quantity of LACI data and changes to the LACI document.

If you have any questions arising from this change please contact us on

Email: hbsdmp.wweg@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

CJEU judgement on Ibrahim and Teixeira

On 23 February 2010, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) gave judgement in two cases, Ibrahim and Teixeira, where the Court of Appeal had referred specific questions regarding right to reside. The CJEU were asked to consider whether, in certain circumstances, a person has a right to reside as the parent and primary carer of a child in education in a host member state. This is commonly referred to as ‘Baumbast’ rights. The decisions under appeal to the Court of Appeal concerned homelessness assistance, but the judgement will also apply to several different benefits and have implications for other Departments and Authorities.

DWP will issue a more detailed adjudication circular as soon as the full findings of the judgement have been considered. Decision Makers should await this circular before making decisions on claims to HB and CTB if a right to reside is dependant on ‘Baumbast’ rights. If an appeal raises similar issues, the tribunal should be asked to temporarily delay listing until the Department can consider the full implications of the CJEU judgement.

If you do need to make any enquiries in advance of receiving the circular please contact

Email: Richard.Chia@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Local Housing Allowance – Good Practice Guide

At the end of 2009 we refreshed our guidance on paying HB and operating the safeguards under LHA arrangements. We also undertook to issue good practice guidance in these areas.

Our Performance Development Team has spoken to a number of you to identify good practices. We have also taken into account suggestions made by various stakeholders, including Communities and Local Government (CLG), the DWP/Local Authority Associations (LAA) Practitioners Operations group, welfare rights groups and landlords.

We will be publishing the good practice guide shortly. It will be available on the DWP website as an electronic document alongside the LHA Guidance Manual.

The guide will cover

- preventing customers getting into rent arrears
- developing and publicising safeguard policies
- engagement with stakeholders
- proactively identifying customers who may need safeguarding
- notifying and reviewing decisions

We have also included some case studies from a number of you covering

- working with stakeholders (Southend)
- operating the safeguards (Elmbridge)
- using the LHA to alleviate homelessness (Coventry)
- working with a credit union (Peterborough)

We hope you will find this material helpful when reviewing and updating your procedures or to address any areas of difficulty you are experiencing. We encourage you to use it.

Any enquiries relating to this item should be sent to

Email: eugene.okonkwo@dwp.gsi.gov.uk, phone number 020 7449 5225
Local Housing Allowance Guidance Manual and leaflets

Over the last few months we have been reviewing the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Guidance Manual and leaflets to take account of the fact that it is two years since the LHA was introduced and to rationalise the number of leaflets.

We are aiming to have revised guidance and leaflets in publication by the end of May 2010.

To be consistent with the way we publish other guidance, we will no longer produce hard copies of the LHA guidance and we will publish it on the Department’s website. We will issue a further communication letting you know when the new guidance and leaflets are available.

Any enquiries relating to this item should be sent to

Email: eugene.okonkwo@dwp.gsi.gov.uk, phone number 020 7449 5225