



# Benefits Update

## WLBC Benefits Service

### Changes to Local Housing Allowance from April 2011

From April 2011 the Government has announced its intentions to :-

- ◇ restrict Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels to the four bedroom rate
- ◇ apply a new upper limit for each property size, set at £250 a week for a one bedroom property; £290 a week for a two bedroom property; £340 a week for a three bedroom property; £400 a week for a four bedroom property or larger -
- ◇ remove the £15 weekly benefit excess payment provision
- ◇ adjust the size criteria to provide for an additional bedroom for a non-resident carer where a disabled customer has an established need for overnight care
- ◇ set LHA rates at the 30th percentile of rents in each Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA), rather than the median.

For all new customers these changes will take effect from 1st April 2011. All existing customers however, will get 9 months protection from the anniversary date of the LHA review, unless they have a change of address or a reduction in their room requirements within that period

Customers will receive written notification of any change that affects their Benefit entitlement.

For further information access the WLDC website at

[http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/benefits\\_payments/local\\_housing\\_allowance.aspx](http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/benefits_payments/local_housing_allowance.aspx)

### Annual uprating of non-dependant deductions

The Department for Works and Pensions has not increased the level of non-dependant deduction used in the calculation for benefit entitlement for the past 10 years and as part of the annual up rating from April 2011, the non-dependant deduction will be increased over the next three years to bring the level back into line with what it should have been. The result of this change means that as from April 2011 the new rates of deductions will be:-

| <u>Gross Income</u>          | Council Tax |      | Housing Benefit |       |
|------------------------------|-------------|------|-----------------|-------|
|                              | 2010        | 2011 | 2010            | 2011  |
| In receipt of Pension Credit | Nil         | Nil  | Nil             | Nil   |
| Age 25 or over on IS/JSA(IB) | Nil         | Nil  | 7.40            | 9.40  |
| Aged 18 or over not in work  | 2.30        | 2.85 | 7.40            | 9.40  |
| < £122                       | 2.30        | 2.85 | 7.40            | 9.40  |
| between £122- £180           | 2.30        | 2.85 | 17.00           | 21.55 |
| between £180- £234           | 4.60        | 5.70 | 23.35           | 29.60 |
| between £234- £310           | 4.60        | 5.70 | 38.20           | 48.45 |
| Between £310-£387            | 5.80        | 7.20 | 43.50           | 55.20 |
| Over £387                    | 6.95        | 8.60 | 47.75           | 60.60 |

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## Payment by BACs for tenants and Landlords

Over the past 6 months we have been introducing BACS payments to most of our landlords with multiple properties. We are pleased to confirm that this process has been successful and we are able to issue landlord or tenants with a weekly BACs payment instead of a crossed-cheque.

Payments will be processed on Fridays and will be available in the receiving account on the following Tuesday.

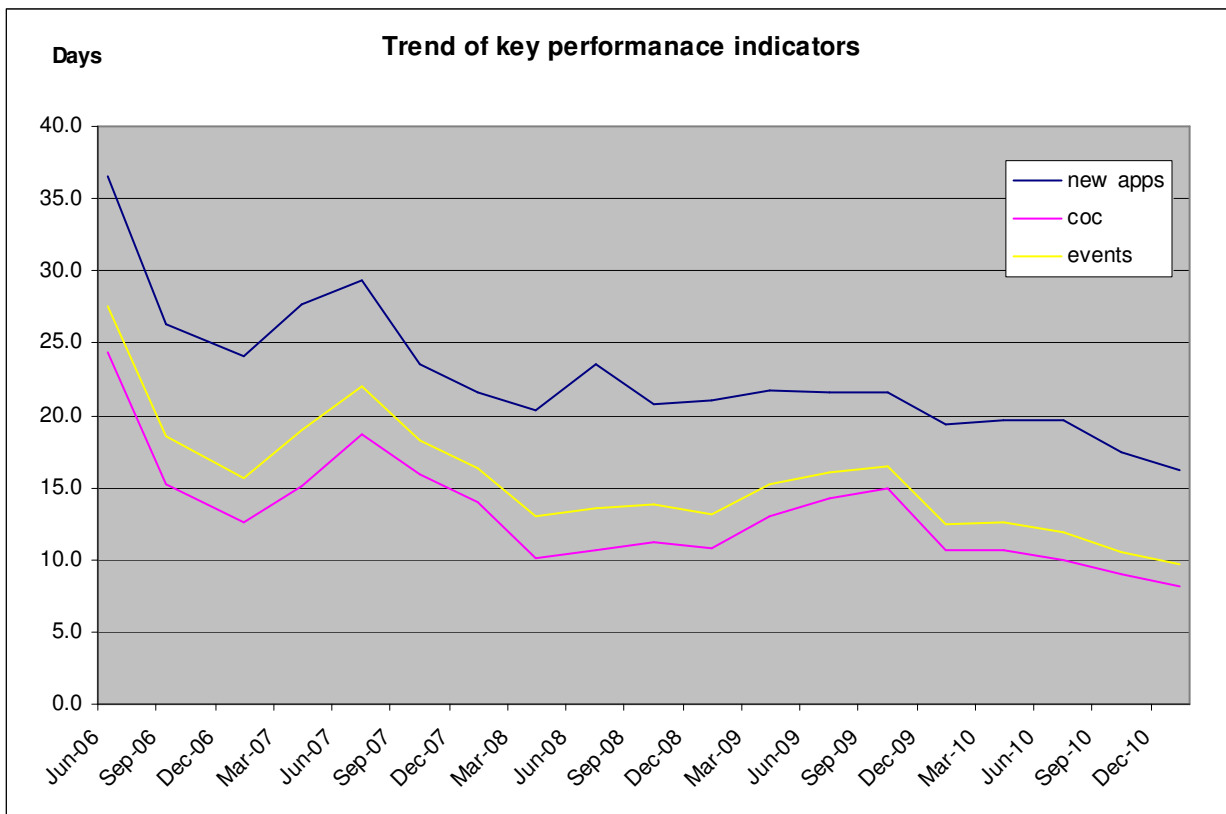
If you would like to receive payments by this method please contact the Benefits Service Section on 01695 585080 and a member of staff will be able to assist you in this matter.

## Our Performance

The key performance indicators for our Benefit Services are in relation to measuring the speed of processing for both new benefit claims and change of circumstances. Since 2008 these measures have been combined to form one performance indicator for the time taken to process an event. This is the National Performance Indicator N181 against which all Councils are measured.

We have steadily improved our performance over the last 5 years and have reduced the speed for processing a new application from 36 days to 16 days and improved the time taken to deal with a change of circumstance from 24 days to 8 days.

This should reflect and general improvement in the service that our customers receive and speed up the response time for payments and dealing with benefit queries.



### Contact us

If you need any further help with any Benefit issues please do not hesitate to contact us on Tel no. 01695 585080