

Electronic data collection

Direction of the Chief Executive regarding Housing Benefit claims and applications for Council Tax Reduction

This page sets out the council's legal obligation to publicly state our policy regarding electronic collection of data relating to Housing Benefit claims and applications for Council Tax Reduction.

Electronic communications

Direction of Dr. Carolyn Wilkins O.B.E, Chief Executive of Oldham, under The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Electronic Communications) Order 2006 and Paragraph 11 of Schedule 7 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012.

Oldham Council ("the Authority") in accordance with:

- Schedule 11 to the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006
- Schedule 10 to the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006
- Schedule 7 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements)(England) Regulations 2012
- Schedule 1 of the Oldham Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2013

Hereby makes the following directions:

1. An individual who, in accordance with the 2006 and 2012 Regulations makes a claim for Housing Benefit under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, or an application for Council Tax Reduction under the Local Government Finance Act 2012, or gives notice of a change of circumstances, is authorised to do so by an electronic communication, provided that the individual uses the method approved by the Authority in relation to the claim or application.

2. Electronic communication may be used by an individual with a claim for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction in the following circumstances:

- To make a new claim
- To amend an existing claim

Original documents will be required to prove identity and support claims.

3. The authority's website is Oldham.gov.uk

4. The methods approved by the Local Authority are

- The website form approved by the local authority of any claim, notice, information or evidence sent by means of electronic communication
- Providing information and evidence to support claims and changes of circumstances by email
- Information provided from the DWP to support claims

5. The local authority requires that

- All forms must be completed to such an extent as to be deemed acceptable to the Council
- The sender of the electronic communication will be authenticated by provision of the claimant's full name, full postal address, date of birth and national insurance number
- Where evidence is provided electronically, the authority may request original documents and these must be provided in accordance with instructions provided. For new claims, the Council usually needs to see and retain copies of original documentation.

6. The person must keep a copy of any electronic communication, reference number generated for the online claim evidence so that it can be produced where the Authority so requires. Where an email address is provided, an email receipt will be issued confirming the online claim reference number. Failure to produce on reasonable request the evidence requested may be deemed to show that an electronic communication was not successfully made to the Authority.

7. The Authority's 'official computer system' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic communications is provided by Capita Business Services Ltd for Revenues and Benefits. The Authority's integrated document information and workflow system is provided by Northgate Information Systems Ltd and the electronic benefit and council tax reduction scheme online application form is provided by Team Netsol Ltd. These systems are also regarded as 'official computer systems' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic communications.

8. The Authority may require further information or original supporting evidence before the new claim or change of circumstances notified in relation to Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction can be assessed.

The Authority may verify claims, certificates, notices, information or evidence by using third party systems and sources of information as well as by direct contact with a person using electronic communications or by some other means.

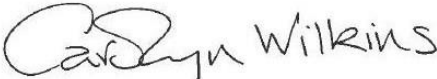
9. Any notification received that:

- does not conform to any of the relevant standards will be invalid
- does conform to the above standard but is not accepted by the Authority's official computer system, is not regarded as having been delivered

10. Customers claiming housing benefit and council tax reduction will be encouraged to sign up for My Account services at the time of application to encourage access to more online services and wider online information about their council tax account and benefit claim form. Failing to register for My Account services will not render the claim or change of circumstances defective should the customer elect not to do this.

11. This direction may be withdrawn or amended at any time by the issue of a further direction.

Signed by:



Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE
Chief Executive