

Electronic collection of data

Direction of the Chief Executive regarding Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Scheme claims

This Directive sets out the Council's legal obligation to publicly state its policy with regard electronic collection of data relating to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support scheme claims.

Direction of Robert Barlow, Chief Executive of South Holland District Council, under the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Electronic Communications) (Miscellaneous Benefits) Order 2006 and Paragraph 11 of Schedule 7 of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments).

South Holland District Council ("the Authority"), in accordance with:

- Paragraph 2 of Schedule 11 of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 ("the 2006 Regulations")
- Schedule 10 of the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006
- Paragraph 116 of the authority's Council Tax Support Scheme Policy

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 and/or makes a claim for support under the Authority's current Council Tax Support scheme is authorised to do so by electronic communication, providing that the individual uses the method approved by the Authority in relation to the claim.
2. The approved methods for using electronic communication are as follows:-
 - Electronic applications for housing benefit and/or Council Tax Support provided they are made via the authority's official online application form
 - Electronic application form assisted phone or face to face interview with an Officer
 - Amendments to claims (i.e. changes to claims prior to the initial decision on an award of benefit) made via phone or in person.
 - Completion of the approved authority pdf application form, submitted by email
 - Reporting a change in circumstances for an existing claim via phone or email.
 - The person making an electronic claim or reporting an amendment or change in circumstances may be asked to sign the electronic document or a statement using a manual or electronic method.
 - To ensure the authenticity of the identity of the sender the electronic communication must include the following: -

- the claimant's name and any two of the following:-
 - the address of the benefit claim
 - the claimants date of birth
 - the claimants national insurance number
 - The claimants Benefit reference number
 - The Authority may accept digital photographic and scanned images of notices, forms, evidence and information by a person where it has been verified by an officer of the Authority or its agent. Where it has not been verified or cannot be corroborated by other means the Authority will request to see the original.
 - The person making the claim or reporting a change in circumstances must keep a copy of any electronic communication, reference number generated, claim, certificate, notice, information or evidence so that it can be produced where the Authority so requires. Failure to produce the evidence upon reasonable request may be deemed to show that an electronic communication was not successfully made to the Authority.
 - The Authority's 'official computer system' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic communications is provided by MRI Community Software Ltd for Revenues and Benefits. The Authority's integrated document information and workflow system is provided by NEC Software Solutions. The electronic Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support application form is provided by MRI Computing Systems Ltd. These systems are also regarded as 'official computer systems' for the purpose of recording information relating to electronic communications.
3. The Authority may require further information or original supporting evidence before the claim for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support can be assessed or revised. The Authority may verify claims, certificates, notices, information or evidence 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.
 4. Any claim, amendment or notification received that:
 - a) Does not conform to any of the relevant standards will be invalid.
 - b) Does conform to the above standard but is not accepted by the Authority's official computer system, is not regarded as being delivered.
 5. This direction may be withdrawn or amended at any time by the issue of a further direction.

Signed by:

Robert Barlow
Chief Executive

Dated: 19/05/2025