

DIRECTION OF JO MILLER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL UNDER THE HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT (ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS) (MISCELLANEOUS BENEFITS) ORDER 2006

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council in accordance with paragraph 2 of Schedule 11 of The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006, paragraph 2 of Schedule 10 of The Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006, paragraph 2 of Schedule 9 of The Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006, paragraph 2 of Schedule 8 of The Council Tax Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006, Schedule 7, part 4 of The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 hereby makes the following directions:-

1. An individual who, in accordance with the 2006 Regulations, makes a claim for Housing Benefit, under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 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.
2. An individual who, in accordance with the Doncaster Council scheme makes an application for Local Council Tax Reduction under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 is authorised to do so by an electronic communication, provided that the individual uses the method approved by the Authority in relation to the application.
3. Notification of Change of Circumstance will continue to be submitted using the printable form provided on line at www.Doncaster.gov.uk, via phone to 01302 735336 or through a face to face assisted interview with an officer of the Council or a person acting as its agent.
4. Notification of Amendments will continue to be made via phone to 01302 735336 or face to face assisted interview with an officer of the Council or a person acting as its agent.
5. The forms of electronic communication approved by the Authority are as follows:
 - Electronic applications for Housing Benefit or Local Council Tax Reduction made online or via an assisted face to face interview with an officer of the Council or a person acting as its agent (including claims made through the Department for Work and Pensions in an acceptable form) received into the Council's official benefits computer system.

- Electronic Communications sent via SMS text or e mail to housing.benefits@doncaster.gov.uk.
- Electronic notifications made to any other council email address or phone number will be forwarded to the correct email account or transferred to the e-benefits phone number.
- Electronic transmission of customer information using approved electronic forms by approved Registered Social Landlords to enable the Authority to update customer records so that benefit entitlement can be calculated and awarded correctly.

6. The methods approved by the Authority are as follows:


- The person making an electronic claim may be asked to sign the electronic document produced 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 full name and any two of the following**
 - **The claimant's full postal address**
 - **The claimant's date of birth**
 - **The claimant's national insurance number**
 - **The unique identifier generated by the councils electronic benefit services**
 - **The claim or benefit reference number (if known)**
- The person may be asked to keep a copy of the 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 requested on reasonable request may be deemed to show that an electronic communication was not successfully made to the Authority.
- For security reasons, evidence in support of electronic claims, including evidence of identity, cannot be submitted electronically (but see exception below) and the same rules around the provision of original documentation will apply as for paper claims.
- The Authority may accept digital photographic and scanned images of notices, forms, evidence and information provided by a person where it has been verified by an officer of the Authority or its agent. Where it has not been verified, the Authority may request to see the original where its authenticity cannot be corroborated by other means.
- The Council may verify claims, certificates, notices, information or evidence using third party systems and sources of information as well as direct contact with a person using electronic communication or by some other means.
- It is acknowledged that some client groups will find it easier to make an electronic claim than others. Therefore, Doncaster Council will retain the option of written claims where no other option is viable for the person claiming.

7. Submitting / Acceptance of the claim

- Electronic communications received after 5pm Monday to Friday or on a Saturday or Sunday will be treated as though they are received by the Authority on the following working day. Monday to Friday are deemed to be working days except where they are statutory holidays or the Authority has decided that the offices will be closed to the public for whatever reason. If there is no record of receipt, the presumption is that the claim or document was not received.
- Any communication where the Authority is unable to authenticate the identity of the sender shall be deemed invalidly made.
- Any communication which confirms to the standards in section 5 but which is not, for whatever reason, accepted by the Authority's computer system, will **not** be regarded as having been delivered.
- The Council's official computer system for the purpose of recording information relating to electronic claims is provided by Northgate Information Systems Ltd for Revenues and Benefits and also the integrated document information and workflow system.

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

Signed by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Miller', written in a cursive style.

Jo Miller

Chief Executive

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Date: 07 August 2014