



External Ref:	
Review date	April 2015
Version No.	V01
Internal Ref:	

Information Sharing Protocol for the
Administration of Housing Benefit, Council Tax
Reduction, Free School Meals and Community
Care Grants in North and North East Lincolnshire
Councils' Local Taxation & Benefits Shared
Service



Maintenance and control of this document is undertaken by North & North East
Lincolnshire Council Local Taxation & Benefits Shared Service

Tier 2 - Strategic Purpose Information Sharing Protocol

1. Introduction

This Protocol has been developed as a result of the agreement between North and North East Lincolnshire Councils to work collaboratively to deliver a Local Taxation and Benefits (LT&B) Shared Service.

The Protocol covers the sharing of identifiable confidential & sensitive information between the councils' LT&B teams in order to work collaboratively, and effectively use resources within the teams. Information may also be shared with partners and stakeholders acting on behalf of the customer with the express consent or, where appropriate implied consent, of the data subject.

The Protocol is supported by the over-arching legal agreement signed by both councils.

2. Objectives

The Protocol aims to provide a basis for the sharing of information in order to facilitate integrated working, maximise resources and improve outcomes for LT&B customers within North and North East Lincolnshire.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The information covered by this Protocol will be disclosed to customers that access the LT&B benefits service.

There is a wide range of information that is collected by the service and may need to be shared in order to enable the delivery of the shared service. The information includes, but is not limited to:

1. Personal details of individual Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meal and Community Care Grant applicants (including discretionary payments relating to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction), relevant to their claim including some or all of the following depending on the individual case:
 - Name
 - Addresses – current and past
 - Date of birth
 - National insurance number

Not Protectively Marked

- Nationality and any immigration controls in place, rights of residence etc.
 - Telephone numbers
 - Ownership and Tenure of property, details of landlord and amount and frequency of rent paid
 - Type and size of accommodation occupied
 - Relationship including spouses, partners, civil partners
 - Details of children and other household members including ages, disabilities, income
 - All disabilities, including registration with Social Services, mental incapacity etc.
 - Income – including earnings, pensions, tax credits, maintenance, and all benefits and allowances
 - Any hospitalisation
 - Students – educational establishments and hours attended
 - Details of employers
 - Capital including bank/building society account numbers, national savings certificates, premium bonds, stocks and shares, unit trusts etc.
 - Details of expenditure
 - Any other personal information disclosed by customers in support of a claim
2. Information relating to other benefits/ tax credits supplied to the Councils from DWP/HMRC included on following forms:
- Local Authority Input Documents (LAID)
 - Local Authority Customer Information (LACI)
 - Electronic transfer of data (ETD)
 - Automated transfer of local authority data (ATLAS)
3. Information relating to applicants or other household members obtained from other agencies such as:
- Experian
 - Enforcement Agents
 - IT suppliers (trace and collect)
 - DVLA

Information is received directly from LT&B customers in relation to applications for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meals and/or Community Care Grants. Information is also received from other sources such as (but not limited to) the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Her Majesty's Revenues & Customs (HMRC), landlords, and employers.

Access to the information will be granted to the appropriate staff within the LT&B service in order for them to process applications and changes to applications, deal with customer queries, and check that claims are assessed correctly.

Only staff who have a legitimate need to know the information will be allowed access.

Information will continue to be stored in the existing IT systems (Northgate Information Systems, Information@Work, Civica DIP and Civica OPENRevenues systems). Authorised staff may also access relevant DWP systems when necessary.

All staff have a contractual obligation to adhere to the information security policies and procedures in place at both councils.

4. Legislation

Both councils are subject to a variety of legal, statutory and other guidance in relation to the sharing of person- identifiable information.

For all signatories, the key legislation and guidance affecting the sharing and disclosure of information includes but is not restricted to:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Local Government Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Social Security Regulations 2012 and 2013
- The Social Security Amendment and Prescribed Bodies Regulations 2013
- Section 131 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012

The LT&B benefits section will use the information we hold in accordance with this legislation for the purposes of:

- Making and maintaining a local Council Tax Reduction scheme
- Determining a person's entitlement or continued entitlement to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and/or Free School Meals
- Preventing, detecting, securing evidence of, or prosecuting the commission of an offence relating to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meals and/or Community Support Grants
- Presenting relevant data to a Valuation Tribunal relating to the Council Tax Reduction scheme
- Presenting relevant data to the HM Courts and Tribunals Service relating to Housing Benefit
- Determining whether to make to any person any grant or payment under the Community Support Grant scheme, and if so, the amount of such grant or payment
- Determining whether to make to any person any discretionary awards under the schemes for Discretionary Housing Payments or the Council Tax Support Fund
- Preventing or detecting crime
- Protecting public funds

5. Client Consent

It is generally accepted that some information provided by customers is confidential in nature.

Both councils accept the duty of confidentiality and will not disclose such information without the consent of the person concerned, unless there are statutory grounds or an overriding justification for doing so.

The customer's right to confidentiality is not absolute and may be overridden if evidence that disclosure for specific purposes is necessary in exceptional circumstances. Such as:

- Where it is required by statute
- Where there is a risk of harm to any person
- Where sharing is required to prevent serious crime.

6. Monitoring / Review

The Protocol will be reviewed annually or at any point, which may necessitate a change in the Protocol, such as additional signatories or a change to Information Sharing Policy within the signatory organisations.

7. Signatories

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