

Direction of Mark Williams, the Chief Executive under the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Electronic Communications) (Miscellaneous Benefits) Order 2006

South Somerset District Council in accordance with paragraph 2 of Schedule 11 to the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and paragraph 2 of Schedule 9 to the Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006 and Schedule 10 to the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006 and paragraph 2 of Schedule 8 to the Council Tax Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006, hereby makes the following directions: –

1. An individual who, in accordance with the 2006 Regulations makes a claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax 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. The methods and form set out, at the time of, and for the purposes of, the delivery of such a claim as referred to in paragraph 1, on the Authority's website, are respectively–
 - (a) The methods approved by the Authority for–
 - (i) Authenticating the identity of the individual making the claim;
 - (ii) Submitting the claim;
 - (iii) Authenticating the claim delivered; and
 - (iv) Electronic communication
 - (b) The form approved by the Authority in which the claim is to be delivered.
3. The method for the purposes of making a claim, as referred to in paragraph 2 is:
 - On-line application form available on the councils website www.southsomerset.gov.uk
 - Authentication of the identity of the individual making the claim will be carried out before the claim is decided.
 - Authentication of the information supplied will be carried out before the claim is decided

4. An individual who, in accordance with the 2006 Regulations reports a change in circumstance for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 is authorised to do so by an electronic communication (as defined by Section 15(1) of the Electronic Communications Act 2000), provided that the individual uses the method approved by the Authority.
5. The methods for the purposes of reporting a change in circumstance, as referred to in paragraph 4 are:
 - a. notification via the councils website (Web forms)
 - b. Telephone
 - c. Email to benefitsunit@southsomerset.gov.uk
 - d. Electronically through Jobcentre Plus agreed methods
 - e. Electronically through The Pension Service agreed methods
6. A notification, made in a method outlined in paragraph 5 above, will be regarded as being made on the day that it is received by South Somerset District Council, the Job Centre or The Pension Service, whichever is the earlier, provided it complies with the requirements publicised.
7. South Somerset District Council may require further information or supporting documentation in connection with the reported change in circumstance, before the claim for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit can be revised.
8. An individual who submits an electronic claim or notification of a change of circumstances must keep a record of all communications with the council in either written or electronic form. Failure to provide such evidence, upon reasonable request by the council, may be deemed to show that an electronic communication was not successfully made. Additionally this could weaken their defence against an overpayment recovery decision or prosecution.

Signed



Mark Williams
Chief Executive
South Somerset District Council

Dated 11 October 2012