

**DIRECTION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL  
REGARDING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS FOR HOUSING BENEFIT AND  
COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT**

CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL (The Authority”) in accordance with paragraph 2 of:-

- 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 9 of the Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006
- Schedule 8 to the Council Tax Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006
- Schedule 7 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 and 2012 Regulations and the Council’s approved Council Tax Support Scheme, makes a claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support 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, are respectively –

- electronic applications for council tax support and/or housing benefit provided they are made via the Council’s Benefits E-benefits self-serve application on the Council’s website or via an assisted e-benefits phone or face to face interview with an officer of the Council or a person acting as its agent and are received in the Council’s official benefits computer system.
- Electronic amendments to claims (ie changes to claims prior to the initial decision on an award of benefit) made either via e-benefits self-serve application or via a phone or face to face assisted interview with an officer of the Council or a person acting as its agent or by email to [customer\\_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk](mailto:customer_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk) , [benefits@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@lincoln.gov.uk) or [customer.services@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@lincoln.gov.uk) , [NKbenefits@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:NKbenefits@lincoln.gov.uk)
- Electronic notification of changes of circumstance made either via online electronic forms on the Council’s website [www.lincoln.gov.uk](http://www.lincoln.gov.uk) or [www.n-kesteven.gov.uk](http://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk), or provided for reporting changes of circumstances or via a phone or face to face assisted interview with an officer of the Council or a person acting as its agent or by email to [benefits@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@lincoln.gov.uk) or [customer.services@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@lincoln.gov.uk); [NKbenefits@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:NKbenefits@lincoln.gov.uk), or [customer\\_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk](mailto:customer_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk) ,
- Electronic communications sent via SMS text or to a named officer’s personal council email accounts will only be validly accepted if they are personally acknowledged by the named officer and received into the Council’s official computer system.
- Electronic applications for benefit by phone may be made via 01522 881188, 01522 873355 or 01529 414155 or direct dial to an officer of the Council who notes that information into the official computer system.
- Notifications submitted via any other Council email addresses or phone numbers will not be acceptable.
- The person making an electronic claim, amendment or change of circumstances 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 name and any two of the following
      - The unique identifier generated by the Council's electronic benefit service
      - The address of the housing benefit or council tax support claim
      - The claimant's date of birth
      - The claimant's National Insurance number
  - The Council 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 Council or its agent. Where it has not been verified the Council may request to see the original where its authenticity cannot be corroborated by other means. It is not a requirement that for every piece of information received an original must be seen.
  - The person must keep a copy of the electronic communication, reference number generated, claim, certificate, notice, information, or evidence so that it can be produced where the Council so requires. Failure to produce on reasonable request the evidence requested may be deemed to show that an electronic communication was not successfully made to the Council.
  - Electronic communications will be treated as made on the day that it is received by the Council provided that the person has complied with the instructions given by the Council. The Council cannot guarantee that its electronic systems are working at all times and any time/date stamp from the Council's electronic systems will be treated as the date of receipt.
  - The Council's 'official computer system' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic communications is provided by Northgate Information Systems Ltd for Revenues and Benefits and Information @ Work for the document information and workflow system.
3. The Council may require further information or original supporting evidence before the claim for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit or Support can be revised. The Council may verify claims, certificate, notice, 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.
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 Council's official computer system, is not regarded as having been delivered.
5. This direction may be withdrawn or amended at any time by the issue of a further direction.

*Angela Andrews*

Signed by Angela Andrews  
Chief Executive

Date 7/7/16