

Direction of Derek Brown, The Chief Executive of The Highland Council under the Housing Benefit (Electronic Communications) (Miscellaneous Benefits) Order 2006 and Council Tax Benefit (Electronic Communications) (Miscellaneous Benefits) Order 2006 and Council Tax Reduction Regulations (Scotland) 2021 and Council Tax Reduction Regulations (State Pension Credit) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

The Highland Council, ("the Authority") 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;**
- **Part 4, Regulation 30 of the Council Tax Reduction (Scotland) Regulations 2021; and**
- **Part 11, Regulation 71 of The Council Tax Reduction (State Pension Credit) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.**

(the regulations), hereby makes the following directions-

1. An individual who, in accordance with the regulations:
 - Makes a new claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction
 - Makes a backdated claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction
 - Amends an existing claim at any time before a decision is made on the claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction
 - Reports a change of circumstances for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax Reduction

Under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 is authorised to do so by an electronic communication by using The Highland Council's website, provided that the individual uses the method approved by The Highland Council.

2. The methods approved for the purposes of paragraph 1 are by electronic communication including any electronic form authorised for use by the Council and submitted in accordance with its instruction by using The Highland Council's website.
3. An electronic communication made in a method outlined in paragraph 2 above, will be regarded as being made on the day that it is received by The Highland Council, provided it complies with The Highland Council's published requirements. Any communication where The Highland Council is unable to authenticate the identity of the sender shall be deemed to be invalid.

4. The Highland Council may require further information and supporting documentation in respect of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax Reduction.
5. The method approved by The Highland Council for authenticating the identity of the individual submitting the electronic communication is by full name, address, date of birth and national insurance number in respect of the benefit claimant/applicant. Furthermore, the claimant/applicant must provide all requested information and evidence in accordance with paragraph 4. In respect of changes of circumstances the claimant/applicant must provide information about what has changed, the date of change and supply any additional evidence and information which The Highland Council requests in accordance with paragraph 4.
6. Original documents must be provided for the claimant/applicant/partner for proof of identity and proof of national insurance number. Submitting proof of identity and proof of national insurance number electronically will be accepted by The Highland Council.
7. It is advisable that the person who submits electronic correspondence keeps a copy of all communications, either written or electronic, so it can be produced where The Highland Council so requires. Failure to provide such evidence, upon reasonable request made by The Highland Council so requires. Failure to provide such evidence, upon reasonable request by The Highland 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.

Derek Brown
Chief Executive
16 May 2024