

# *Benefit Challenges*

## **THE CHALLENGES FACING LOCAL AUTHORITY BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION 2008**

**Monday 23rd June 2008**

**Local Government House, Smith Square, Westminster, London SW1**

This conference examines the current key challenges to the administration of Housing Benefit. It focuses on the main issues that affect service delivery, looking at important ongoing and proposed changes to the service framework.

Normally change is driven by changes in legislation but now the changes are being driven by external pressures of funding, harmonisation and recession.

Specifically the conference will examine the impact of the current local authority pay reviews and the development of pay and grading arrangements within the context of single status, the administration grant cut, the development of shared services and the transformation agenda. The conference will also provide an overview of the Government's objectives for the future of welfare benefits and the role of local authorities within this. The conference will focus on how these changes affect benefit administration, how authorities can prepare for change and the impact on customer service.

This is an important conference for benefit and revenue managers as it sets out the future framework in which authorities will deliver the benefits service.

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## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Chief Finance Officers & Treasurers
- Heads of Revenues
- Revenues & Benefits Managers
- Head of Benefits Service
- Revenues & Benefits Policy Officers

## REGISTRATION

### **Online**

You can register for this conference online at [www.psstrategies.co.uk](http://www.psstrategies.co.uk)

### **Fax / Post**

Please complete the enclosed booking form and fax, email or post it to the address shown on the form.

Further booking forms are available from the conference administration team on 01483 203536 or by emailing [benedictbr@btinternet.com](mailto:benedictbr@btinternet.com)

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## SPEAKERS INCLUDE

- Peter de la Mothe, HB Info
- Trevor Oliver, Exchequer Manager,  
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Bill Hern, Deputy Head of Local Authority Performance Division,  
Department of Work & Pensions
- Tim Delany, Head of Revenues and Benefits,  
Central Sussex Partnership (CenSus)
- Malcolm Gardner, Head of Benefits and Revenues,  
The Impact Partnership, Rochdale
- Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

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## MORNING PROGRAMME

09.30 **Registration**

10.30 **Chairs introduction and opening remarks**

Peter de la Mothe, HB Info

### **Session 1: The National Review of Pay and Grading**

Following on from the 1997 Single Status Agreement and the 2004 National Pay Agreement local authorities are obliged to undertake local pay reviews which will provide the framework for the development of pay and grading arrangements within the context of single status. This will have far-reaching consequences for local authorities. This session will look the effects on staff morale, retention of staff, local structures and the impact on service delivery.

10.40 **The National Strategy for Local Government Workforce  
– objectives and challenges**

Speaker to be confirmed

11.10 **The Implications for Revenues and Benefit Administration**

Trevor Oliver, Revenues and Benefits Group Manager,  
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council

11.40 **Questions**

11.50 **Refreshments**

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## MORNING PROGRAMME

### **Session 2: Changes to the Administration Grant**

This session will examine whether the changes in the administration grant reflect the administration of benefit and how this will impact on the service. The session will examine the focus on efficiency savings that go alongside the reduction in grant and whether the objectives for funding the service could work in practice.

- 12.05 **Funding for Benefit Administration – grant reduction and increased efficiency**  
Bill Hern, Deputy Head of Local Authority Performance Division,  
Department for Work & Pensions
- 12.35 **An Examination of the Administration Grant Proposals**  
Speaker to be confirmed
- 1.05 **Questions**
- 1.15 **Lunch**

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## AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

### Session 3: Shared Services and Transformation

The transformation agenda and development and extension of shared services and collaborative working are key considerations for benefit and revenue managers. This session will look at these in-depth and examine how shared services and transformation can be successful. The session will examine shared services in action and the results and challenges of collaborative working.

2.00 **Collaborative Working – the key issues and challenges**

Tim Delany, Head of Revenues and Benefits,  
Central Sussex Partnership (CenSus)

2.30 **Sharing Services & the Transformation Agenda**

Malcolm Gardner, Head of Benefits and Revenues,  
The Impact Partnership, Rochdale

3.00 **Questions**

### Session 4: The Future for Welfare Benefits and the Role for Local Authorities

3.10 **Benefit Changes and the Impact on Local Authority  
Benefit Administration**

Child Poverty Action Group

This session will provide an examination of the future for welfare benefits. It will look at the main benefit proposals in the Welfare Reform Green Paper and some of the key implications of these including the new Employment and Support Allowance and Pathways to Work. The session will provide a view on central government's objectives for welfare benefits and how these are likely to alter the benefits system in the future. Local authorities will need to be aware of changes that will impact on the benefits service and the role of authorities in the welfare benefits system.

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## AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

3.40 **Questions**

### Session 5: Customer Focused Administration

3.50 **Innovative Approaches to Local Authority Benefits  
Customer Care**

Speaker to be confirmed

Many local authorities are introducing innovative methods to provide levels of excellence in benefits customer services. These include partnerships with the private sector, multi-agency approaches, one-stop shops and extended opening hours. Certain innovative approaches have involved joining up processes across sectors and organisations. This address will highlight these good practice examples and examine how they enhance a customer-focused benefit administration.

4.20 **Questions**

4.30 **Chair's Closing Remarks**

Peter de la Mothe, HB Info

4.35 **Conference End**

## PSS

Public Sector Strategies has been facilitating and producing conferences for the public sector since 1994, often in partnership with local government and central government agencies and departments. For a list of forthcoming events please visit [www.PSSstrategies.co.uk](http://www.PSSstrategies.co.uk)

## Conference Objectives

- To examine the current key challenges to the administration of local authority benefits services including ongoing and proposed changes to the service framework
- To look at the impact of the current local authority pay reviews and the development of pay and grading arrangements within the context of single status
- To examine the impact of changes to the benefits administration grant
- To focus on the development of shared services and the transformation agenda and the effect of these on the benefits service
- To examine the Government's objectives for welfare benefits, future benefit changes and the impact on benefit services within local authorities
- To examine innovative methods of improving customer service for Local Authority benefit customers including multi-agency and partnership approaches.
- To prepare authorities for changes to the framework within which benefits are administered.

## Further Information

For further information on this, or other Public Sector Strategy (PSS) conferences, please telephone PSS on **0118 933 2636** or email [info@PSSstrategies.co.uk](mailto:info@PSSstrategies.co.uk)  
For booking queries please contact Benedict Business Resources on 01483 203536.