

7 March 2023

## **Electronic Communication**

Direction of Caroline Green, Chief Executive of the Oxford City Council, under The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Electronic Communications) Order 2006 and Paragraph 11 of Schedule 7 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012

Oxford City 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,
- Oxford City Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

hereby makes the following directions:

1. An individual who, in accordance with the 2006 and 2012 Regulations makes a claim for Housing Benefit under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, or an application for Council Tax Reduction under the Local Government Finance Act 2012, or gives notice of a change of circumstances, is authorised to do so by an electronic or telephone communication, provided that the individual uses the method approved by the Authority in relation to the claim or application.
2. The methods and form set out, at the time of, and for the purposes of, the delivery of such a claim or application as referred to in paragraph 1, are respectively –
  - Electronic applications for Council Tax Reduction/Housing Benefit provided they are made via the Authority's Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction online application form and are received in the Authority's official benefits computer system
  - Electronic notification of changes of circumstance made via the Benefits/Council Tax Reduction - "Change of circumstances" web form on the Authority's website.
  - Notifications submitted via any other Authority email addresses or phone numbers will not be acceptable.
  - The person making an electronic notification of a change of circumstances may be asked to sign the electronic document produced using a manual or electronic method.
  - Telephone applications for Council Tax Reduction/Housing Benefit provided they are made via the Authority's Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction online application form and are received in the Authority's official benefits computer system
  - Telephone notification of changes of circumstance made via the Benefits/Council Tax Reduction - "Change of circumstances" web form on the Authority's website.



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- To ensure the authenticity of the identity of the sender the electronic or telephone communication must include:
    - The claimant/applicant's name and any two of the following
    - The address of the Housing Benefit claim/Council Tax Reduction application
    - The claimant/applicant's date of birth
    - The claimant/applicant's National Insurance Number
    - The claimant'/applicant's Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction reference number
3. The Authority 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 Authority or its agent. Where it has not been verified the Authority may request to see the original where its authenticity cannot be corroborated by other means.
  4. Electronic applications or reporting of changes can be made on 01865 249811
  5. The person must keep a copy of any electronic communication, reference number generated, claim, certificate, notice, information, or evidence so that it can be produced where the Authority 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 Authority.
  6. Electronic communication received outside the normal hours of a working day will be treated as received the next working day.
  7. The Authority's 'official computer system' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic claims is provided by Civica. The Authority's 'official computer system' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic notices of changes of circumstances is also provided by Civica. This system covers both the document imaging and the database of awards.
  8. The Authority may require further information or original supporting evidence before the change of circumstances notified in relation to Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction can be assessed. The Authority may verify claims, certificates, notices, 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.
  9. Any notification received that:
    - Does not conform to any of the relevant standards will be invalid,
    - Does conform to the above standard but is not accepted by the Authority's official computer system, is not regarded as having been delivered.This direction may be withdrawn or amended at any time by the issue of a further direction.

Yours sincerely



**Caroline Green**  
**Chief Executive**



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