

DIRECTION OF STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL UNDER THE HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT (ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS) (MISCELLANEOUS BENEFITS) ORDER 2006

The Chief Executive of Stockton on Tees Borough Council, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Schedule 11 to the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006, paragraph 2 of Schedule 9 of the Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006, paragraph 2 of Schedule 8 to the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006 and paragraph 2 of Schedule 10 of the Council Tax Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) hereby makes the following directions—

1. An individual who, in accordance with the 2006 Regulations notifies the Benefits Service at Stockton on Tees Borough Council of an amendment to a claim or a change in circumstance is authorised to do so by an electronic communication, provided that the individual uses the method approved by the Authority.
2. Electronic notification of amendments to claims or changes of circumstance may be made by online forms available on the councils website www.stockton.gov.uk , by notification via the Councils website, from an account within the Civica Open Access module of the Benefit Service official computer system, or by e-mail to the Benefit service e-mail account- benefits.section@stockton.gov.uk
3. Amendments and notifications submitted via any other Authority email address will where possible be forwarded to the correct address. All claims and notifications received at the correct e-mail address will be acknowledged upon receipt.
4. The person making an electronic amendment or notification may be asked to sign the electronic document produced using a manual or electronic method.
5. To ensure the authenticity of the identity of the sender the electronic communication must include:
The claimant's name and any *two* of the following
 - The address of the benefit claim
 - The claimant's date of birth
 - The claimant's National Insurance number
 - The claimant's Benefit reference number
6. 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.
7. 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.

8. Electronic communications received after 5pm Monday to Thursday and after 4.30pm on Friday or on a Saturday or Sunday will be treated as though they are received on the next following working day. Monday to Friday are deemed to be working days except where they are statutory holidays or the Authority has decided that the offices will be closed to the public for whatever reason.
9. The Authority's 'official computer systems' for the purposes of recording information relating to electronic communications are:-
 - Civica Open Revenues System.
 - Lagan "Frontline" system
 - Stockton Borough Council e-mail account benefits.section@stockton.gov.uk
 - Northgate "Information@ Work" document management system
10. The Authority may require further information or original supporting evidence before the reported amendment or change can be processed. 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.
11. Any 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 Authority's official computer system, is not regarded as having been delivered.
12. This direction may be withdrawn or amended at any time by the issue of a further direction.

Signed



Neil Schneider
Chief Executive
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
21/2/2011