
EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

This Order amends regulations so as to facilitate the use of electronic communications and electronic storage in relation to awards of housing and council tax benefit and certain social security benefits.

Article 2 extends the scope of regulation 32ZA of, and Schedule 9ZC to, the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987/1968) (“the Claims and Payments Regulations”) to enable a person to give any certificate, notice, information or evidence, including notice of a change of circumstances, in relation to incapacity benefit, a retirement pension or state pension credit by means of an electronic communication, subject to the provisions set out in that Schedule.

Schedule 9ZC sets out the conditions to be satisfied where information, including a change of circumstances, is notified by means of an electronic communication and makes other provision which applies to electronic communications. Those conditions, which are framed with reference to directions given by the Secretary of State, relate to the circumstances in which a person is permitted to use an electronic communication and to the method and form of the communication.

Article 3 amends the Social Security (Notification of Change of Circumstances) Regulations 2001 (S.I. 2001/3252) to allow for the use of electronic communications in connection with awards of housing benefit, council tax benefit, incapacity benefit, retirement pension and state pension credit. Those Regulations prescribe the person to whom and manner in which a change of circumstances must be notified for the purposes of sections 111A and 112 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (offences relating to failure to notify a change of circumstances).

Article 4 extends the circumstances in which electronic communications may be used in connection with awards of council tax benefit where the authority administering the claimant's council tax benefit agrees that births or deaths may be notified to the Secretary of State.

It amends regulation 74A of the Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/215) so that, where the authority administering the claimant's council tax benefit agrees that births or deaths may be notified to the Secretary of State, a person may also report a death to the Secretary of State by means of an electronic communication, subject to the provisions set out in Schedule 9ZC to the Claims and Payments Regulations. Article 5 amends the Council Tax Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/216) to similar effect and articles 6 and 7 make similar provision to, respectively, articles 4 and 5 in the case of housing benefit legislation.

An electronic copy of the directions referred to in Schedule 9ZC to the Claims and Payments Regulations is available on the Department for Work and Pensions publicly accessible website at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist%2Dguides/> and a hard copy may be obtained from Tell Us Once Delivery Partnerships, Level 3, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam Street, London, WC2N 6HT.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as it has no impact on the private sector or civil society organisations.

Changes to legislation:

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Social Security (Electronic Communications) (No. 2) Order 2011.