Preventing for Council Tax Benefit:
A study of Local Authorities

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1.0 Introduction and summary

1.1 The Council Tax has replaced the Community Charge as the means by which Local Authorities raise tax to help fund their services. The new tax came into effect on the 1st April 1993 and, as with its predecessor, there is a corresponding benefit scheme available for those on low incomes.

1.2 The Department of Social Security (DSS) is the central government department ultimately responsible for the new Council Tax Benefit (CTB). However, the day to day administration of the benefit scheme, as with the tax itself, is carried out by Local Authorities.

1.3 The aim of the research was to monitor how Local Authorities were handling the introduction of CTB, prior to its implementation.

1.4 Public Attitude Surveys (PAS) was subsequently commissioned to conduct a survey of Local Authorities, and the decision was made to carry out the project by telephone. In developing the methodology and questionnaire, researchers carried out pre-pilot interviews with four Local Authorities. This was followed by a more formal pilot study with a sample of 27 authorities. Following this developmental work, interviews were carried out with all Local Authorities in Great Britain who would administer CTB.

Interviewing was undertaken between the 20th January and the 5th February 1993.

1.5 A copy of the questionnaire used in the study is appended at Annex I. A copy of the explanatory letter that was sent out to Local Authorities in advance of the interviews is attached at Annex II.

1.6 The key findings from the survey can be summarised as follows-the reference given is to guide the reader to the appropriate section of the main commentary:

* the majority of authorities in England and Wales were administering Housing Benefit (HB) and CTB in a combined section (3.2).

  in Scotland it was the Regional Councils that were largely responsible for the benefit, with some of the District Councils acting as their agents (3.4).

* in the majority of authorities the Finance Department had responsibility for CTB (3.5).

  half of all authorities had taken on extra staff to cope with the implementation of CTB (4.1); those that had not done so either thought extra staff were not required or that budget restrictions prevented them from doing so (4.2).

  a total of 992 extra staff had been taken on to help with the implementation arrangements (4.3). Not all of these staff were full time, and just over half of all authorities thought that some of these extra staff might be kept on after the implementation period (4.4).

  CTB staff had, in the main, received some training on the new benefit at the time of interview, but only a third of authorities had fully trained all their staff. Only two (of the smaller) authorities thought they would not have all their staff fully trained by 1st April (4.5, 4.6).

  the majority of authorities thought that future staffing levels would be similar to or lower than those required to administer Community Charge Benefit (CCB) (4.8).

  few authorities were changing their hardware arrangements to handle CTB. They were either using their existing CCB hardware or upgrading it to cope with CTB (5.2).
ICL were the main supplier of computer hardware for CCB with around half the market; even allowing for one or two new entrants to the market they were still the lead supplier of CTB hardware (5.3-5.5).

virtually all authorities had tested their hardware and few reported any major problems; only one thought the system might not be working satisfactorily by 1st April (5.6-5.8).

ICL were also an important provider of CCB software, although a number of authorities had written their own programming or had used software houses. The situation was similar for CTB (6.2-6.4).

fewer authorities had tested their software than their hardware but, again, there were few problems identified. Four authorities were not expecting the software to be functioning by 1st April (6.5-6.7).

the great majority of authorities had taken advantage of the provisions of the Council Tax Benefit (Transitional) Order 1992, in converting their HB/CCB caseloads to CTB. Only 12% of authorities required claims from existing recipients (7.1). at the time of interview, few authorities had processed all of their current caseload. However, all but six thought that they would have started the process by the middle of March (7.2-7.3).

all but five authorities had claim forms specifically for CTB available by the end of March (7.4).

* at the time of interview two thirds of all authorities had liaison arrangements in place with their linked Benefits Agency (BA) office(s) as outlined in Circular HB/CCB (92)28; all but four expected to have the link in place by 1st April (7.6-7.7).

* the CCB caseload across all authorities was 7.4 million, of which an estimated 5.7 million cases would transfer to CTB; the total estimated CTB caseload was 6.2 million (8.2-8.4).

virtually all authorities had carried out local publicity about CTB and much of this had been on stream since the latter part of 1992 (9.1-9.2).

a wide variety of media had been used by authorities, with the most common approach being a general mailshot to all households; some authorities had also carried out more targeted publicity (9.3).

the local publicity tended to provide general information on CTB along with an explanation of particular features of the new benefit, such as the second adult rebate (9.4).

1.7 It was clear that the vast majority of authorities had responded extremely well to the challenge of introducing CTB; there were only a handful of authorities who reported problems which might not have been cleared by 1st April.
2.0 Survey methodology

2.1 It was decided to conduct a telephone survey, because this method would achieve a better response rate and data quality than a postal survey. There was insufficient time for face-to-face interviews. By using a telephone survey, the interviewer would be able to ensure that the most appropriate person would be interviewed, and responses to open-ended questions could be collected in more detail than is usually possible with a self-completion questionnaire.

2.2 There were two developmental phases for the design of the questionnaire: pre-pilot interviews, followed by a more formal pilot survey.

2.3 Five authorities, one from each group, were selected for the pre-pilot stage. The DSS provided PAS with named contacts in each one. A draft questionnaire was developed on the basis of the brief prepared for the project and subsequent discussions with research and policy staff in the Department. The aims of the pre-pilot were to test the planned questions and to seek ideas about the most effective way to approach authorities. The pre-pilot contacts were sent drafts of the questionnaire and an introductory letter in advance, for them to consider.

The pre-pilot interviews were carried out over the telephone by the research executives responsible for the project in the first week of January 1993. Of the five contacts provided it proved possible to speak to four in the time available.

One of the key findings from this stage was that Local Authority administration of CTB in Scotland was undertaken at a different level to England and Wales. The interviewers were advised to approach authorities at regional level rather than district level.

Another key message from the pre-pilot was the need to find a person in the authority with a good knowledge of both the policy and operational aspects of the new benefit. In addition, it was felt that it would help authorities if they were forewarned about the range and detail of information required. As a result it was decided to send an introductory letter, and a topic list of the issues to be covered in the interview, to all Local Authorities before the fieldwork began.

These were sent out via the Department's mailing system to several key people in each authority, such as the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and the Director of Housing. Letters were dispatched in advance of the pilot interviews.

2.4 The pilot interviews were carried out by senior interviewers from the PAS Telephone Unit. Twenty-seven interviews were carried out between the 12th and 14th January. All interviewers were briefed and de-briefed by the PAS researchers responsible for the project, and researchers and policy staff from the Department of Social Security.

As a result of the pilot interviewing, amendments were made to the questionnaire in advance of the main fieldwork.

2.5 Interviewers working on the main stage of the project were briefed on the 20th January, and interviewing was completed by the 5th February. Interviews were achieved with every Local Authority in England and Wales and with every Regional Authority in Scotland: a total of 413 interviews. The quality of data collected from the authorities was of a very high standard.
2.6 The questionnaire covered the following six areas:

- **organisation** - which department was responsible for the administration of CTB?
- **staffing and training** - what training arrangements had been made for staff?
- **computer hardware and software** - which computer hardware and software would be used for its administration?
- **conversion and claims procedure** - how were the public to apply for the benefit, and how had authorities converted the existing HB and CCB cases?
- **caseload** - what was the expected caseload of the new benefit?
- **publicity** - had authorities carried out any local publicity for the new benefit?
3.0 Organisation of the Council Tax Benefit

3.1 The first section of the questionnaire concentrated on the organisation of the new benefit within the Local Authority and, in particular, how the overlap with HB was being handled. In England and Wales respondents were asked whether CTB would be administered by the same department as HB, by separate sections working closely together or by completely separate sections.

3.2 Figure 1 shows that the most common approach was for a combined section to handle both benefits. Ninety per cent of all authorities had adopted this solution, with only 7% relying on separate departments working closely together; the remainder (3%) were administering the benefits with totally separate sections.

3.3 There was little variation by type of authority except that non-Metropolitan Authorities (by far the largest single category) were more likely to have decided upon a combined approach. Ninety-four per cent of the 293 such authorities fell into this category.

3.4 In Scotland the Regions were primarily responsible for the new benefit, with some of the Districts acting as their agents. The following verbatim replies describe some of the approaches adopted in Scotland:

"The Regional Council is responsible for all non-tenants and those not on Housing Benefit. The Districts will take applications from all tenants and they will pass data on to the Regional Council who will process the applications."

"The Region will deal with all aspects of CTB."

![Fig. 1: Organisation of HB and CTB](image)

Base = all in England and Wales, 388
We don't have Districts. We are a single tier authority ... a very close knit unit of three people.'

'The Region is responsible for all aspects of CTB. There is an agency arrangement with the Districts but they won't handle the input etc. Region will do all the advertising. Districts will handle the application, they will pass it on to the Region.'

3.5 All authorities were asked which department had responsibility for the CTB section, and the replies to this question are shown in Figure 2. In eight out of ten authorities responsibility for the benefit lay with the Finance Department. The Housing Department

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**Fig. 2: Department responsible for CTB**

![Bar chart showing departmental responsibility for CTB across different regions.](chart1)

**Fig. 3: Department responsible for CTB (analysis by size - CTB caseload)**

![Bar chart showing departmental responsibility for CTB by caseload size.](chart2)
had responsibility in 7% of authorities, and responsibility was shared in 4% of cases. In a small number of authorities, the Treasurer's Department (3%) or the Revenue Department (1%) were responsible. It is possible that these were local terms for the 'Finance Department'.

3.6 There was little variation between type of authority for these arrangements, although Metropolitan Authorities were slightly more likely to vest responsibility in the Housing Department. Nevertheless, 61% of this group still reported that the Finance Department was the lead department.

3.7 There did appear to be some variation in which department had responsibility, according to the size of the authority. This is shown in Figure 3. As the size of the CTB caseload increased, the less likely it was for responsibility to lie solely with the Finance Department. Larger authorities were relatively more likely to have some responsibility located in the Housing Department, either on its own or in combination with the Finance Department.
4.0 Staffing and training issues

4.1 Asked whether or not they had taken on any extra staff (either directly or indirectly) to implement CTB, 50% of authorities reported having done so. This is shown in Figure 4. Whilst there was no variation by size of authority in this respect, there was again some variation by type of authority with, for example, London Authorities being more likely to have taken on extra staff.

4.2 The most common reason for not taking on extra staff was that there was simply no need (mentioned by 71% of those not taking on extra staff), or that the caseload (and hence the workload) was expected to decrease (5%). Nineteen per cent would have liked to have taken on extra staff but felt unable to do so due to budget restrictions.

4.3 At the time of interview (end January/early February 1993) nearly all the authorities that were planning to take on extra staff had actually done so (94%). This ranged from two or three staff in the smaller authorities, to thirteen in the largest.

4.4 Not all of these additional staff had full time posts and indeed, a third (31%) of the authorities that had taken on extra staff did not expect to retain them after the implementation period. The remainder either thought that some of the extra individuals might be retained (59%) or that it was too early to tell either way (11%).

4.5 In the majority of authorities (84%), all staff had received some training, and a further 6% said that ‘most’ had received some training. Eleven per cent of authorities reported that ‘some’ or ‘none’ of their staff had received training.

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**Fig. 4: Extra staff taken on for CTB**

![Bar Chart]

- **Total (413)**
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don’t know

**Base** - all authorities, 413
4.6 However, not all staff were fully trained by the end of January: only a third (31%) of authorities reported that all their staff had received full training. A quarter (24%) said that none of their staff had yet been fully trained. Looking ahead, nearly all authorities (95%) were confident that all their staff would have received full training by the 1st April. Indeed, it was two of the smaller authorities which reported that only some or none of their staff would be fully trained by April.

4.7 There was a wide variety of approaches to training adopted by the various authorities, as illustrated by the following responses:

   ‘In-house training on new computer systems.’
   ‘Had (computer company) train senior staff that will then be passed down; in-house, more specific detail on administration of system.’
   ‘They have had practice notes relating to benefit disregards and exemptions.’
   ‘Small training session including rebate training. Making staff aware in detail of CTB arrangements especially between CCB and CTB.’
   ‘Outside consultants’ training on administration, legislation and computers.’
   ‘Association of District Councils sent in consultant at various times to cover all concerned.’
   ‘In-house-organised courses ourselves.’
   ‘Extensive training of Council Tax in its entirety. Two hours per week for eight weeks including benefit in great depth on going, systems training on going.’

4.8 One of the key features of the new Council Tax is that it has returned to a system based on the property rather than one based on individuals, as was the case with the Community Charge. Caseloads are therefore expected to reduce, and authorities were asked to forecast future staffing levels after the implementation period. Did they anticipate a need for more or fewer staff to administer the CTB system compared with CCB?

Figure 5 shows that the bulk of authorities expected their staff complement to either remain the same (53%) or to decrease (35%). Only thirteen authorities anticipated a long term need for more staff.

Fig. 5: Predicted future staffing levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total (413)</th>
<th>London (33)</th>
<th>Met (18)</th>
<th>Non-met (293)</th>
<th>Wales (37)</th>
<th>Scots (12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
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</table>

Base = all authorities, 413
5.0 Computer hardware

5.1 One of the main problems with the introduction of the Community Charge Benefit was the need to develop new computer systems (both hardware and software) to handle the new tax and benefit. In the light of such problems the Department wished to assess how authorities intended to deal with the hardware and software aspects of CTB.

5.2 For computer hardware, the majority of authorities had decided to use either existing CCB hardware (58%) or to upgrade it to cope with CTB (28%). The remainder (14%) had decided to use different hardware altogether.

5.3 Four manufacturers had previously dominated the provision of hardware used to process the CCB system, and between them they had accounted for 90% of all authorities' hardware. ICL had been particularly dominant:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Share of Local Authority market (CCB)</th>
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<tr>
<td>ICL</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonnell Douglas</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull (Honeywell)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 With the introduction of CTB, some new hardware suppliers were being used by Local Authorities. Fifty-seven authorities had changed their hardware supplier: twelve of these had changed to a company called 'Sequent' although the more established companies were still doing well. For example, ten authorities switched to ICL and eight changed to IBM.

A variety of reasons were given for changing hardware: thirteen authorities had changed their software and therefore thought new hardware would be more appropriate, ten had taken the opportunity to change all their hardware at the same time and seven had been tempted by a good price/better deal.

5.5 In spite of some authorities switching their hardware suppliers, the net effect of these changes was that ICL still dominated the market, while the newest entrant, Sequent, accounted for only 3% of all authorities:

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<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Share of Local Authority market (CTB)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull (Honeywell)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequent</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

5.6 In light of the problems experienced with CCB it was hoped that authorities would have tested their hardware system well in advance of the introduction of the new benefit and this indeed appeared to be the case.
At the time of interview some three quarters (76%) of all authorities had tested their hardware, with Metropolitan Authorities being the most advanced in this respect (88% had tested their hardware).

5.7 Virtually all (94%) of those that had tested their hardware were satisfied with its performance. Only four authorities reported any problems and these were of a minor nature and were expected to be readily solved, through a combination of in-house effort allied with some input from the supplier.

5.8 Only one authority did not expect their hardware to be functioning satisfactorily by the 1st April. This authority had switched supplier because of limitations with the original hardware in handling the HB interface with CTB. Whilst they had tested the new hardware, they were unsure whether it was working satisfactorily, and were pessimistic that it would be functioning properly by 1st April. However, no particular reason for this pessimism was provided.
6.0 Computer software

6.1 Authorities were asked about the computer software being used to handle the new benefit. As with computer hardware, the majority of authorities had chosen to use their existing CCB software (65%), but with necessary modifications to the programming for the new benefit. Virtually all of the remainder (32%) had decided to use different software altogether.

There was some evidence that those authorities that had made progress in converting their existing HBICCB caseload had decided to modify their existing CCB software. Thus, 72% of those who had started on the conversion process had elected to use modified CCB software.

6.2 Again, ICL had been the main supplier of computer software for CCB, although to a far lesser extent than with computer hardware: the company had accounted for 30% of all authorities. With software there is obviously a greater range of options open to authorities, because they do not have to use that provided by the hardware manufacturer, and 19% of all authorities had written their own programming for CCB. Software companies had also shared the market: West Wiltshire had 13% of the CCB software market, followed by McDonnell Douglas (8%) and CMG (5%).

6.3 There appeared to be some new software suppliers for Council Tax Benefit. Twenty-eight of the 133 authorities (21%) which had changed their software supplier switched to Oracle. However, the more established companies were still doing well with nineteen authorities changing to ICL software. Eighteen authorities changed to writing their own software.

A variety of reasons were given for changing software—eighteen authorities had little option because their previous supplier had gone out of business, twelve thought that their CCB software was incompatible with the CTB hardware, and eleven had been tempted by a good price/better deal.

6.4 In spite of some authorities switching their software supplier, the net effect of these changes was that ICL still dominated the market, with the newest entrant, Oracle, accounting for only 7% of all authorities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Share of Local Authority market (CTB)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICL</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house software</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Wiltshire</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonnell Douglas</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oracle</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull (Honeywell)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5 Fewer authorities had tested their software than was the case with hardware. At the time of interview around two thirds (62%) of all authorities had done so, and Metropolitan Authorities were again the most advanced in this respect (79% of these had tested their software).
6.6 The majority (83%) of those that had tested their software claimed to be satisfied with its performance. Only 24 authorities (9%) reported any problems and these were of a relatively minor nature: for example, part of the system was still not present (seven authorities), there were a few remaining bugs (seven authorities), or there were problems in relation to particular (new) features of the CTB system (five authorities), such as the second adult rebate. The majority of these difficulties were expected to be solved shortly, primarily with input from the software supplier.

6.7 Only four authorities were not expecting their software to be functioning satisfactorily by the 1st April:

Because of problems with their current system, the first authority had opted for new software to handle CTB. The second authority, on the other hand, had stayed with in-house software for the new benefit, but did not think it would be functioning satisfactorily by 1st April. The third authority had switched from in-house software to an outside supplier, to be more compatible with the Council Tax system. The final authority had switched to another operating system, and at the time of interview was still awaiting delivery and testing of the new software. The expectation was that it would be up and running by the end of April.
7.0 Claims procedure

Conversion

7.1 To assist authorities in converting the existing CCB and HB caseloads to the new benefit, the Department introduced a number of measures under the Council Tax Benefit (Transitional) Order 1992. The purpose of this Order was to enable authorities to convert their caseloads without unduly disrupting their normal CCB and HB procedures. In particular, the Order waived the need for new claims to CTB from existing HB/CCB claimants. This allowed CTB claims to be assessed on the basis of information already held by the authority.

It was found that the majority of authorities (88%) had, to a greater or lesser extent, taken advantage of these provisions. Only 12% of authorities required fresh CTB claims from their existing claimants.

Forms

7.4 Although authorities were able to transfer over many current HB and CCB recipients, there would still be new claims for CTB from other members of the public. To handle new claims authorities could choose either to use existing HB and CCB forms to collect the relevant details, or devise a new form specifically for CTB. Authorities were therefore asked whether or not they had new CTB claim forms available for new claimants. As can be seen from Figure 6, some two thirds of authorities (62%) already had specific CTB claim forms. All but five of the rest expected to have forms ready by the end of March.

7.5 Reasons given by the five authorities who did not expect to have new claim forms by the end of March were as follows:

One blamed late development of the form and printing deadlines, although the form would be available by the 1st April. The second said they had large supplies of existing forms which they thought too expensive to replace. The third authority had also decided to use existing forms. The fourth authority had originally decided to use their existing forms, but had since decided to completely re-draft them to take account of the second adult rebate. The fifth authority was relying on the fact that existing HB/CCB recipients would automatically be tested for the new benefit, and had not yet introduced a new CTB fo–ni.

Benefits Agency liaison

7.6 Local Authorities were required by the DSS to provide their linked Benefits Agency office with a list or schedule of all cases where Housing Benefit was being paid to boarders. The DSS also suggested that authorities liaise with their linked Benefits Agency office to identify certain owner-occupiers and all sub-tenants. Circular HB/CCB (92)28 set out these required arrangements, so that authorities would be notified of any changes in an Income Support claimant’s circumstances.
As can be seen from Figure 7, just over two thirds of all authorities (69%) had the necessary arrangements in place at the time of interview. Urban authorities such as the London Boroughs and the Metropolitan Councils outside of London were less likely to have the arrangements in place.

7.7 All but four authorities expected arrangements to be sorted by the 1st April. Of those that did not:

The first authority felt that, with the introduction of the Benefits Agency, there had been difficulties in the archiving of material which was causing problems. The second authority simply had not got round to the issue, due to pressure of work. One authority had to deal with six different Benefits Agency offices, and reported that some of them were not overly concerned about these liaison arrangements. Another cited problems with the Benefits Agency in terms of obtaining correct decisions.
8.0 Council Tax Benefit caseload data

8.1 Because the Council Tax is based on houses rather than on individuals (as with Community Charge), it was expected that the caseload would decrease. Local Authorities were therefore asked for their current CCB caseload, the proportion of it that they thought would be eligible for CTB, and for their anticipated CTB caseload after the implementation period.

8.2 All but one authority was able to give a figure for their current caseload. Assuming this authority was similar to the others within the same category (London, Metropolitan etc.) this resulted in a total CCB caseload figure of 7.4 million, with an average of 17,897 per authority. This average concealed a wide range from 9,993 in the case of the Welsh Authorities up to 82,848 for Scottish Regions.

8.3 Asked about the proportion of the current caseload eligible for CTB, the total transfer looked to be about 5.7 million, again correcting for those that did not yet know (25 authorities).

8.4 Slightly more authorities (30) were unsure as to their expected CTB caseload, but if an estimate is used then the total figure was in the region of 6.2 million, a drop of 17%. As with CCB there was a large variation in the average CTB caseload, ranging from 7,943 in Wales to 51,642 in Scotland.

Thirty-four authorities expected a greater caseload, yet only one of these thought that they would need more staff in the future. Twenty-two were of the view that current staffing levels would cope with the increased CTB caseload, and ten authorities expected staff numbers to decrease, despite the anticipated increase in caseload. Of interest is that twelve of the authorities that anticipated a smaller caseload expected to retain their extra staff after the implementation period. However, in general the figures suggest that there should be few long term staffing increases due to the administration of the new benefit.
9.0 Publicising the new benefit

9.1 Local Authorities were under no compulsion to publicise the new benefit, and there had in fact been some limited national publicity. However, virtually all authorities (97%) had or were intending to publicise CTB locally. Those that had decided against publicity were either non-Metropolitan authorities in England or Welsh Authorities: both of these had smaller than average CTB caseloads.

9.2 Some of the local publicity had started a long time ago: 68% of authorities carrying out publicity started in 1992, and the rest were due to start early in 1993.

9.3 A variety of media were used to publicise the new benefit, with the most common approach being a mailshot or leaflet to all households. This method was used by three quarters (76%) of those publicising CTB. Advertising in the local press was also common (67%). Approximately a third of authorities held meetings (36%) and/or distributed leaflets at the usual outlets (Post Offices, libraries etc.). Smaller proportions made use of local radio (16%) or posters (10%).

One or two instances of more innovative methods were cited. For example, twelve authorities were holding exhibitions; two were using interactive touch screens; seven authorities were using local TV advertising; and six had infolination buses.

Many authorities used, or intended to use, a combination of two or more methods of publicity to reach potential claimants: publicity which, in the main, was targeted at the general public. Sixteen per cent of publicising authorities specifically mentioned more targeted publicity, aimed at those currently in receipt of CCB/HB, single person households (presumably explaining the second adult rebate), council tenants and those currently not on CCB/HB.

9.4 Asked for the `message' of all this publicity, the most common reply (cited by 56% of those carrying out publicity) was that general information about CTB was being provided. A similar proportion said the publicity explained particular features of the benefit, such as the second adult rebate (53%), and 47% said that they were trying to encourage take up of the new benefit. Smaller proportions were explaining that current recipients of CCB/HB need not bother re-applying (24%), and one in ten were giving examples of income and likely benefit levels.
Appendices

Annex I: Questionnaire

Annex II: Introductory letter and accompanying question list
COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT PRE-IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY
MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

READ OUT AS NECESSARY: Good morning/afternoon. My name is........ from Public Attitude Surveys Limited. We have been commissioned by the DSS to carry out the survey looking at the implementation of the new Council Tax Benefit (REFER TO CIRCULAR HBICCB (93)1 - FAX COPY IF NECESSARY). I understand that you would be best informed to tell me about the new set up within your local authority. My questions should only take about 20 minutes - they cover many aspects of the implementation - for example your computer systems, publicity, staffing and so on.

STRESS TO ALL: Please note that we are interested solely in the Council Tax Benefit; rather than the Council Tax itself.

1. Organisation

To begin with I would like to ask you one or two questions about the organisation of the Council Tax Benefit within your Authority ...

Q.1 Will Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) be administered by... READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

a combined section
or a separate section with close liaison
or by totally separate sections
(DON'T KNOW)

Q.2 Will your CTB section be the responsibility of the...

The Finance Department
or the Housing Department
or some other Department (CODE AND WRITE IN)

(DON'T KNOW)
2. **Staffing/Training**

I would now like you to consider the staffing arrangements for the CTB along with any training they may have received ...

Q.3a Has your Authority had to or does it intend to employ extra staff to implement the CTB scheme? Please include any extra staff you have taken on to free up existing employees to work on CTB implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>1 - SKIP TO Q.4a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
<td>8 - SKIP TO Q.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.3b Is there any particular reason why have you not taken on any extra staff to work on CTB implementation? DO NOT PROMPT

- NOT NEED EXTRA STAFF
- NEED EXTRA STAFF BUT UNABLE TO TAKE ANY ON DUE TO BUDGET RESTRICTIONS
- OTHER REASON (CODE AND WRITE IN)

| (DON'T KNOW) | 8 |

Q.4a And have you already taken on these extra staff or are you planning to take them on?

| ALREADY TAKEN ON | 1 |
| PLANNING TO TAKE ON | 2 |
| (DON'T KNOW) | 3 |

Q.4b How many extra staff have you/will you employ? WRITE IN

(18-20)

Q.4c Will any of these extra staff be retained after the implementation period for the CTB?

| YES | 1 |
| NO | 2 |
| (DON'T KNOW) | 6 |
Q.5 What type of training have you done or are you planning for your CTB staff on the new scheme? WRITE IN FULL DETAILS OF TRAINING DONE AND PLANNED

Q.6a What proportion of your CTB staff have received any training on the new scheme to date? Is it READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All of your staff</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of them</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of them</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of them</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.6b And what proportion of your CTB staff have received full training on the new scheme to date? Is it READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All of your staff</th>
<th>1 - SKIP TO Q.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of them</td>
<td>2 - ASK Q.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of them</td>
<td>3 - ASK Q.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of them</td>
<td>4 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
<td>8 - SKIP TO Q.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.7 What proportion of your staff will have received full training by 1st April 1993? Will it be.............READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All of your staff</th>
<th>1 - SKIP TO Q.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of them</td>
<td>2 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of them</td>
<td>3 - ASK Q.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of them</td>
<td>4 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
<td>8 - SKIP TO Q.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.8 When do you expect to have fully trained all of your CTB staff on the new scheme? WRITE IN DATE

(22)
(23)
(24)
(25)
(26)
(27)
(28)
(29)
(30)
ASK ALL

Q.9 Looking ahead to the period after the CTB is implemented, do you expect to be employing more or less staff that you did to administer the CCB system or will there be no change? ONE CODE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MORE STAFF THAN CCB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO CHANGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LESS STAFF THAN CCB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Computer hardware

I would now like to ask you about the computer hardware you are using for the CTB system.

Q.10 Which of the following hardware options have you adopted for the implementation of CTB? READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CTB dealt with on existing CCB hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Existing CCB hardware used with additional hardware added/upgraded for CTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Different hardware used altogether for CTB or some other arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(CODE AND WRITE IN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.11 Who is the supplier of your CCB hardware?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ICL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>IBM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BULL (HONEYWELL BULL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MCDONNELL DOUGLAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASK ALL WHO HAVE CHANGED HARDWARE SUPPLIER AT 0.10 (CODE 3). REST, SKIP TO 0.14

Q.12 Who is the supplier of your CTB hardware?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ICL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>IBM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BULL (HONEYWELL BULL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MCDONNELL DOUGLAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(DON'T KNOW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.13 Why have you changed your hardware supplier to handle the CTB scheme? PROBE FULLY
Q.14  ASK ALL. Have you tested your hardware to ensure that it can handle the CTB scheme? PROMPT IF NECESSARY: 'As far as you are aware, have you tested it?'

YES

NO

(DON'T KNOW)

Q.15  Is the hardware functioning satisfactorily for the CTB scheme?

YES

NO

(DON'T KNOW)

Q.16a  What problems are you having with the CTB hardware? WRITE IN

Q.16b  And what have you been doing about solving these problems? PROMPT: 'What else?'

CALLED IN SUPPLIER

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS IN HOUSE

OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN)

(DON'T KNOW)

ASK ALL WHOSE HARDWARE IS NOT FUNCTIONING SATISFACTORILY AT 0.1410.15

Q.17  And do you expect it to be functioning satisfactorily by the 1st April 1993?

YES

NO

(DON'T KNOW)
4. **Computer software**

   And now the computer software you are using for CTB

**ASK ALL**

Q.18 Which of the following software options have you adopted for the implementation of CTB? READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

- Existing CCB software used but modified to cope with CTB 1
- Different software used altogether for CTB or some other arrangement (CODE AND WRITE IN) 3
- (DONT KNOW) 8

Q.19 Who is the supplier of your CCB software?

- WRITTEN IN HOUSE 1
- ICL 2
- IBM 3
- BULL (HONEYWELL BULL) 4
- MCDONNELL DOUGLAS 5
- WEST WILTSHIRE 6
- CMG 7
- OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN) 8
- (DONT KNOW) 8

ASK ALL WHO HAVE CHANGED SOFTWARE SUPPLIER AT 0.18 (CODE 2). REST SKIP TO 0.22

Q.20 Who is the supplier of your CTB software?

- WRITTEN IN HOUSE 1
- ICL 2
- IBM 3
- BULL (HONEYWELL BULL) 4
- MCDONNELL DOUGLAS 5
- WEST WILTSHIRE 6
- CMG 7
- OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN) 8
- (DONT KNOW) 8

Q.21 Why have you changed your software supplier to handle the CTB scheme? PROBE FULLY
Q.22 Have you tested your software to ensure that it can handle the CTB scheme? PROMPT IF NECESSARY: ‘As far as you are aware, have you tested it?’

YES

-----------
NO
(DON’T KNOW)

Q.23 Is the software functioning satisfactorily for the CTB scheme?

YES

-----------
NO
(DON’T KNOW)

Q.24a What problems are you having with the CTB software? WRITE IN

Q.24b And what have you been doing about solving these problems?

PROMPT: ‘What else?’

CALLED IN SUPPLIER
DEALING WITH PROBLEMS IN HOUSE
OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN)

ASK ALL WHOSE SOFTWARE IS NOT FUNCTIONING SATISFACTORILY AT Q.22/Q.23

Q.25 And do you expect it to be functioning satisfactorily by the 1st April 1993?

YES

-----------
NO
(DON’T KNOW)
5. **Claims procedure**

I would now like you to think about the claims procedure for CTB ...

**ASK ALL**

**Q.26** What arrangements are being made to convert the existing caseload to CTB? **PROMPT IF NECESSARY:** How do you intend to convert existing HB/CCB recipients to CTB? **CODE ONE ONLY**

- AUTOMATICALLY RE-ASSESS ALL EXISTING HB **AND** CCB RECIPIENTS FOR CTB WITHOUT REQUIRING THEM TO MAKE A CLAIM
- REQUIRING NEW CTB CLAIMS FOR ALL EXISTING HB **AND** CCB RECIPIENTS
- OTHER ARRANGEMENT (CODE AND WRITE IN)

(DON'T KNOW)

**Q.27a** Have you started to assess your existing HB and CCB cases for CTB?

- **YES** 1 - ASK Q.27b
- **NO** 2 - SKIP TO Q.27c

(DON'T KNOW)

**Q.27b** What proportion have been assessed to today's date? Is it .... **READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY**

- All of them
- Most of them
- Some of them
(DON'T KNOW)

**Q.27** When do you intend to start assessing your existing HB and CCB claims for CTB? **WRITE IN DATE**

(DON'T KNOW)
Q.28 Are your CTB claim forms currently available to the public?

YES

-----------------------------------

NO

-----------------------------------

(DON'T KNOW)

-----------------------------------

(63)

1 - SKIP TO Q.31

2 - ASK Q.29

8 - SKIP TO Q.31

Q.29 When will they be available to the public?

JANUARY

-----------------------------------

FEBRUARY

-----------------------------------

MARCH

-----------------------------------

APRIL OR LATER (WRITE IN)

-----------------------------------

(DON'T KNOW)

-----------------------------------

(64)

1 -

2 - SKIP TO Q.31

3 -

4 - ASK Q.30

8 - SKIP TO Q.31

Q.30 Are there any particular reasons why your claim forms will not be available until then? WRITE IN

(65)

(66)
Q.31 **ASK ALL** Have you established liaison arrangements with your local Benefits Agency office(s) for the transitional arrangements outlined in HB/CCBCircular (92/28)? PROMPT IF NECESSARY: This was the circular which asked Authorities to provide their linked Benefits Agency office(s) with a list of boarders on Housing Benefit and Income Support? TRY AND OBTAIN DEFINITIVE ANSWER WHEREVER POSSIBLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>(DON'T KNOW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - SKIP TO Q.33</td>
<td>2 - ASK Q.32a</td>
<td>8 - SKIP TO Q.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.32a Will the necessary arrangements be in place by the 1st April 1993?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>(DON'T KNOW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - SKIP TO Q.33</td>
<td>2 - ASK Q.32b</td>
<td>8 - SKIP TO Q.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.32b What problems are you having establishing the necessary arrangements?

PROBE FULLY

Q.33 **ASK ALL** What is your existing CCB caseload? PROMPT IF NECESSARY: By caseload we mean the number of cases, rather than the number of individuals covered by these cases? WRITE IN

Q.34 How many of your current CCB caseload do you expect to be eligible for CTB? WRITE IN

Q.35 What do you think will be your CTB caseload when the new scheme is up and running? Please include those from your current HB and CCB caseload along with any new claims you are expecting. WRITE IN

6. **CTB Caseload**

I now need to obtain some details about caseloads etc....
7 Publicity

The final topic I would like to ask you about is that of publicity about CTB

ASK ALL

Q.36 Have you already publicised/do you plan to publicise CTB locally? By publicity I mean anything that you have produced which explains about CTB, for example, leaflets, mailshots and advertising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>(DON'T KNOW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (SKIP TO Q.37)</td>
<td>2 (SKIP TO Q.40)</td>
<td>8 (DON'T KNOW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.37 When did you/will you start local publicity about CTB? ONE CODE ONLY

| 1992:SEPTEMBER | 1 |
| 1992:OCTOBER | 2 |
| 1992:NOVEMBER | 3 |
| 1992:DECEMBER | 4 |

| 1993:JANUARY | 5 |
| 1993:FEBRUARY | 6 |
| 1993:MARCH | 7 |
| 1993:APRIL | 8 |
| 1993:MAY OR LATER | 9 |

Q.38 What publicity have/will you be carrying out about CTB - what media have you been using? PROMPT: 'What else?' CODE/WRITE IN ALL MEDIA

| LOCAL PRESS | 1 |
| LOCAL RADIO | 2 |
| LOCAL TV | 3 |
| LEAFLET PRODUCTION - AVAILABLE AT NORMAL OUTLETS | 4 |
| MAILSHOT/LEAFLET - TO ALL HOUSEHOLDS | 5 |
| MAILSHOT/LEAFLET - TO SELECTED HOUSEHOLDS (WRITE IN TARGET GROUP) | 6 |
| COMMUNITY/GROUP/PUBLIC MEETINGS | 7 |
| LOCAL EXHIBITION | 8 |

| OTHER (CODE AND WRITE IN) | 1 |

| NOTHING/NO PUBLICITY | 7 (SKIP TO Q.40) |
| (DON'T KNOW) | 8 |

(30) (31) (32) (33) (34)
Q.39 What have you been saying in your publicity - what has it been telling people? PROBE FULLY
8. Willingness to be re-interviewed

ASK ALL.

Q.40 When we have looked at the results of this survey we might want to get in touch with some Authorities again. Would you have any objection to PAS re-contacting you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES, OBJECT</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO, WILLING</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.41 It may also help the DSS to be able to identify any problems being faced by individual Authorities. Would you have any objection to us passing your specific replies to the DSS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES, OBJECT</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO, WILLING</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Classification details

(MAIN) RESPONDENT DETAILS:

Name:..................................................................................................
Title:.....................................................................................................
Address :.............................................................................................
..................................................................................
Telephone number/extension/direct line: ...............................................
Fax number/extension/direct line: ..........................................................

I certify that this is a true record of an interview for this survey with a person unknown to myself and has been conducted within the code of conduct..

SIGNED: DATE: NO.

(43 46)
To:
The Chief Executive
The Director of Finance
The Director of Housing
  Metropolitan District Councils
  Non-Metropolitan District Councils
  London Borough Councils
  Scottish Regional and Islands and District Councils
  Common Council of the City of London
  Council of the Isles of Scilly

General Manager
Chief Finance Officer
  Development Corporations and Commission
  for the New Towns

Secretary
  Scottish Homes
  Development Board for Rural Wales

7 January 1993

Dear Sir /Madam

COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT: MONITORING LOCAL AUTHORITY PREPARATIONS

This circular advises authorities of this Department's plans for monitoring the introduction of Council Tax Benefit. Similar arrangements were made for Community Charge Benefits.

Our monitoring will be based on a telephone survey of all authorities and will assess how far advanced authorities are with their preparations for the introduction of the Council Tax Benefit scheme. This information will be used to identify any problem areas and to enable DSS to decide whether any help can be offered to authorities facing difficulties.

The telephone survey will be carried out by Public Attitude Surveys Ltd. (PAS), an established independent market and social research agency with experience in the local authority field. The interviews will be carried out between 12 January and 5 February. It is estimated that each telephone interview will take no longer than 20 minutes. PAS will find it extremely helpful if authorities can arrange for their enquiry to be referred directly to the appropriate contact point.
The survey will focus solely on authorities' preparations for the introduction of the Council Tax Benefit scheme and will not cover implementation of the council tax itself. The attached questionnaire outlines the areas to be covered and has been approved in draft by Local Authority Associations. The results of the survey will be made available to Associations.

We would greatly appreciate the participation of all authorities in this survey since the greater the response, the more effectively we will be able to monitor progress and identify areas of difficulty. All information provided will, of course, be confidential between PAS and the Department.

If you have any queries about this circular please contact Steven Effingham on 071-962-8347.

Yours faithfully

D Jackson

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Organisation**
   Q.1 Will you be combining the administration of HB and CTB?
   Q.2 Which department will be responsible for CTB?

2. **Staffing/Training**
   Q.3 Has your Authority had to or does it intend to employ extra staff to implement the CTB scheme? Please include any extra staff you have taken on to free up existing employees to work on CTB implementation.
   Q.4 How many extra staff have you/will you employ?
   Q.5 Will any of these extra staff be retained from April 1993 or are they only to help set up the scheme?
   Q.6 What type of training are you planning for your CTB staff on the new scheme?
   Q.7 What proportion of your CTB staff have received any training on the new scheme to date?
   Q.8 And what proportion of your CTB staff have received full training on the new scheme to date?
   Q.9a What proportion of your staff will have full received training by 1st April 1993?
   Q.9b When do you expect to have fully trained all of your CTB staff on the new scheme?

3. **Computer hardware**
   Q.14 What hardware options have you adopted for the implementation of CTB?
   Q.11 Who is the supplier of your CCB hardware?
   Q.12 Who is the supplier of your CTB hardware?
   Q.13 Have you changed hardware supplier to handle the CTB scheme? Why?
   Q.14 Have you tested your hardware to ensure that it can handle the CTB scheme?
   Q.15 Is the hardware functioning satisfactorily for the CTB scheme?
   Q.16 Are you having any problems with the CTB hardware? What are they?
   Q.17 And do you expect it to be functioning satisfactorily by the 1st April 1993?
4. **Computer software**

Q.18 What software have you adopted for the implementation of CTB?

Q.19 Who is the supplier of your CCB software?

Q.20 Who is the supplier of your CTB software?

Q.21 Have you changed software supplier/added on new software to handle the CTB scheme? Why?

Q.22 Have you tested your software to ensure that it can handle the CTB scheme?

Q.23 Is the software functioning satisfactorily for CTB?

Q.24 Are you having any problems with the CTB software? What are they?

Q.25 And do you expect it to be functioning satisfactorily by the 1st April 1993?

5. **Claims procedure**

Q.26 What arrangements are being made to convert existing Housing Benefit/Community Charge Benefit recipients to CTB?

Q.27 Are your CTB claim forms currently available to the public?

Q.28 When will they be ready?

Q.29 Have you established liaison arrangements with your local Benefit Agency office/s for the transitional arrangements outlined in HB/CCB Circular (92)28?

Q.30 Will the necessary arrangements be in place by the 1st April 1993?

6. **CTB Caseload**

Q.31 What is your existing CCB caseload?

Q.32 What is your estimated CTB caseload?

Q.33 What proportion of your estimated CTB caseload do you expect to have assessed by the end of March 1993?

7. **Publicity**

Q.34 Have you already been publicising CTB locally?

Q.35 Will you be publicising CTB locally?

Q.36 When did you start/when will you start your publicity?

Q.37 What publicity have/will you be carrying out - about what and on what media?