

LOLA HOUSING BENEFITS SYSTEM (1988)

Introduction

Phil Brown was the Project Manager for development of the LOLA Housing Benefits application.

LOLA Housing Benefits System (1988)

The original government legislation was termed “The Housing Benefits General Regulations 1987” and the statutory implementation date was 1 April 1988.

Housing Benefits was designed to be an on-line and batch system based on IMS databases, to enable on-line real-time calculations of Housing Benefits (rent and rate rebates) for Public tenants and Private tenants.

Rate rebates for Owner-occupiers was also included.

The Housing Benefits system was implemented successfully to meet the 1 April 1988 statutory deadline, for all 4 London boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Hillingdon and Tower Hamlets which was a major success story for LOLA.

Much credit was due to all LOLA staff involved in the development and also to the boroughs users who co-operated closely with LOLA staff throughout.

The most innovative facility, enabled on-line retrospective calculations of Housing Benefits back to any date in the past, over unlimited multiple Housing Benefit history periods.

The 2 main sub-systems comprised :-

Housing Benefits – Public Sector

1. On-line suite of transactions : comprehensive facilities, including maintenance of Housing Benefit records, calculation of Housing Benefit, applying account adjustments and setting up Housing Benefit overpayments recovery.
2. Weekly batch suite : including the production of Benefit letters to tenants automatically generated and posted. Around 60 letter formats existed, depending on the many reasons for Housing Benefit re-calculation.
3. Bulk Mid-Year Housing Benefit recalculation suite : comprising Income Up-rating and up-rated Needs Allowances, normally effective in October each year.
4. Bulk Housing Benefit re-calculation suite : based on annual rent and rate increases, normally effective from week 1, the 1st Monday in April each year.
5. Weekly 2-way batch interfaces : with the Housing Rents system.

LOLA HOUSING BENEFITS SYSTEM (1988)

Housing Benefits – Private Sector

- a) Equivalent Housing Benefit Private sector facilities to Public sector (1, 2 and 3 above).
- b) Bulk Housing Benefit re-calculation suite : based on annual rate increases, normally effective from the 1st April each year.
- c) Weekly 1-way batch interface to the Creditors system : to enable Housing Benefits payments to be made, direct to the tenant or landlord.

Housing Benefits Timeline

April 1982 – “LOLA Rent and Rate Rebates” goes Live (PIPS based applications – see the write-up in the “PIPS” application section).

April 1988 – “LOLA Housing Benefits” goes Live.

Late 1990’s / early 2000’s - Hackney, Haringey and Hillingdon migrate Housing Benefits to packages running on in-house Client Server computers.

2002 – Tower Hamlets transfer support of LOLA systems including Housing Benefits to IT NET. Subsequently also migrate LOLA systems to Client Server packages.

LOLA Community Charge benefits (1990)

The LOLA Community Charge Benefits system was later developed as an independent system, but fully compatible with the Housing Benefits system.

This enabled the user to calculate a tenant’s Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit in a single linked on-line transaction.

This efficient time-saving facility was well received by the borough users.

See the Community Charge and Community Charge Benefits applications sections for more details.

LOLA Council Tax Benefits (1993)

Similarly the LOLA Council Tax Benefits system was also developed as an independent system fully compatible with the Housing Benefits system.

This enabled the user to calculate a tenant’s Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit in a single linked on-line transaction.

See the Council Tax and Council Tax Benefits applications sections for more details.

FOCUS – Data analysis

All the above Benefit systems created extract files weekly, providing comprehensive data for user interrogation and analysis using the FOCUS database facilities.

LOLA HOUSING BENEFITS SYSTEM (1988)

Summary

LOLA Housing Benefits, Community Charge Benefits and Council Tax Benefits were innovative systems, developed by a highly skilled and motivated team of LOLA staff which utilised the full capabilities of the IMS database architecture and the PL/1 programming language to create comprehensive user-friendly facilities which fully complied with government legislation.

Phil Brown
10 MAY 21