

# **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 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in April each year.
5. Weekly 2-way batch interfaces : with the Housing Rents system.

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### 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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### **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.

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