



Local Authorities & The Valuation Office Agency: Working Together to Support Our Shared Customers

Local Authorities & the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) together play an essential role in the administration of Business Rates, Council Tax and Housing Benefits. This document sets out how we can work together to deliver an effective, efficient and consistent service.

Working together

We will work with each other to make the best use of our resources, consulting with each other to ensure we have a clear understanding of our respective roles.

We will share updates with one another regularly about any changes to our processes where it affects the other or our shared customers.

Our respective responsibilities for the delivery of services and functions are set out at the end of this document.

Customer first

We will work together to provide the best possible service to our shared customers. We will seek out opportunities to improve the customer experience whilst ensuring we deliver value for money for the taxpayer, by providing a quality, efficient and sustainable service.

Responsiveness

The VOA provides a single contact route for general BA enquiries, in addition to alternative routes for more specific enquiries such as Local Authority Gateway

and BAR submissions, where applicable, we endeavour to deal with these in line with our agreed timeliness targets.

Getting things right

We will ensure that the information we share with each other is accurate and complete, and we will explain our decisions and actions clearly. If mistakes occur, we will correct them as soon as possible.



Data and security

We will work together to improve the range and quality of data that we are able to provide and the way in which we share it. We will share data safely and securely in compliance with the law, protecting our shared customers.

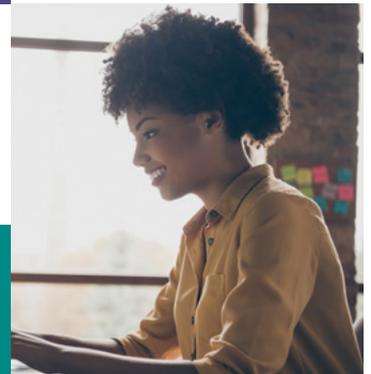
Accountability

We will seek out areas for improvement, particularly those which will benefit our shared customers.

We will also seek improvements to the ways in which we work together, making the most of opportunities such as our stakeholder forums or working groups. If you would like to know more about these or want more information about how to get involved then please email stakeholderengagement@voa.gov.uk. We will identify and raise any issues as soon as possible, and we will try to resolve them as fairly and as quickly as we can. There can be no financial redress considered between public bodies.

Welsh Language

The VOA has a duty under the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011 to provide all customer services in Welsh, and to treat English and Welsh on a basis of equality. The VOA is committed to treating Local Authorities in the same manner in which it treats individuals, and as such we will work with Local Authorities in Wales in English, Welsh or bilingually where appropriate. More details on our commitment to delivering in Welsh can be found in the VOA's Welsh Language Scheme.



VOA Contacts and Information

General queries:

LAs should send all general enquiries to: baenquiries@voa.gov.uk

Local Authority Engagement Team

The VOA's Local Authority Engagement Team is the key corporate and strategic contact point for Local Authorities and will continue to focus on ways we can develop and improve our strategic and operational relationships. The Local Authority Relationship Managers can provide help and advice on Council Tax and Business Rates matters. They can be contacted via LAengagement@voa.gov.uk.

Local Authority Information Gateway

The Local Authority Information Gateway is provided under the 2016 Enterprise Act to allow the VOA to share NDR information with Billing Authorities who have signed up to our Information Sharing Agreements. This includes building plans, occupier details, and locations of properties. Other requests will

also be considered, where they align with a qualifying purpose. [Further information](#) can be found on GOV.UK, or from the Local Authority Engagement Team.

Welsh Service

We have a service for Local Authorities or individuals to contact should they require services in Welsh or translations of documents currently available only in English. This can be reached at welsh_languageiaithgymraeg@voa.gov.uk

Rent Officer Functions

For all queries regarding Rent Officer Functions, including Fair Rents and Housing Allowance, the ROF team can be contacted via helpdesk@voa.gov.uk

Further links

The VOA's Billing Authority [submissions standards](#) provide further details on report submission and submission contacts. Further information for local authorities can be found as [guidance on GOV.UK](#). VOA's operational service standards can be found within its published [Annual Business Plan](#).



VOA and LA Functions

Non-Domestic Rating and Council Tax

The VOA compile and maintain statutory lists of the rateable values for non-domestic properties and statutory lists of Council Tax bands for domestic properties.

Billing Authorities are responsible for billing and collection, as well as notifying the VOA of changes to the lists. This includes submitting Billing Authority Reports (BARs) and Occupier Lists.

Action	Business Area	The VOA will:	Local Authorities will:
Billing Authority Report (BAR) Submission	NDR & CT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify Local Authorities when we no action or reject a BAR (via BATrans) giving a reason code to explain why. Aim to meet the timeliness targets set out in our current business plan found here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular submissions of reports meeting the BAR Submission Standards. Provide Billing Authority reference numbers when requests are submitted or within three working days of a request. Submit BARs using the online BARs system.
Changes to the lists	NDR & CT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the Non-Domestic Rating or Council Tax valuation list within two weeks, upon agreement or decision. Notify Local Authorities via BATrans of any reports which have resulted in a change to the list. Publish the dates for update schedules via BATrans regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of the online services and guidance.
Occupier Lists	NDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify the Local Authorities of any change to the frequency of occupier list submission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide occupier lists on a regular basis (Wales). Occupier lists are now required quarterly on or before January 15th, April 15th, July 15th and 15th October (England). The email address for all contact regarding these, including submission is occupierlists@voa.gov.uk
Certificates	NDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue Transitional Certificates (England only) where appropriate. Aim to provide renewable energy certificates as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving your request. If we are unable to provide a certificate, we will tell you why. Aim to issue Section 44a certificates within 28 days of your request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make all requests for certificates to the centralised BA Enquiries inbox or submit as a BAR.

Action	Business Area	The VOA will:	Local Authorities will:
Estimates	NDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue estimates of rateable value where requested for rates retention purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit appropriate requests for estimates as a BAR - including sufficient information to enable estimates to be provided – where applicable.

Rent Officer functions

Together we support the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in Housing Benefit (HB) and

Local Housing Allowances (LHA) for England, the VOA produces LHA rates in over 150 Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMAs).

The VOA will:	Local Authorities will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to meet the timeliness targets set out in our current business plan found here. Determine Housing Benefit cases (without inspection) within the period specified within our Service Level Agreement with DWP. Determine Housing Benefit cases (which need inspection) within the period specified within our Service Level Agreement with DWP. Determine PTD cases within the period specified within our Service Level Agreement with DWP. Consider redetermination cases within the period specified within our Service Level Agreement with DWP. Provide appropriate substitute determinations in cases where an error has been identified Monitor LHA Datashare uploads and issue reminders where the upload is not provided, and provide feedback where it appears technical issues have arisen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer all cases that are exempt from LHA, providing full details of the claim to allow the Rent Officer to make the required determinations. Refer any case where the rent includes any amounts for board and attendance so that the rent officer can determine whether these amounts are a substantial part of the rent under the tenancy. Where care and support is provided, the rent referred will be net of any amount that the local authority has determined as attributable to care and support. The local authority will indicate clearly on the referral the amount that they have deducted for care and support where these circumstances apply. Indicate clearly on the form if there is a non-resident carer. Aim to refer cases in line with our Service Level Agreement. Provide a unique identifying reference number for all referrals. Provide the landlord's name, address and contact details in all PTD cases. Provide the relevant information to VOA about "potentially violent people" (PVPs) that they identify and whom VOA staff are likely to come into contact with. Upload 'LHA Datashare' via LHA direct or EIS within five working days of the start of the month, to provide details of all LHA claims made irrespective of whether they are successful or unsuccessful.