

## TELL US ONCE

Usually when families are registering births or deaths, they have also had to contact a range of different agencies to notify them of these changes which can be complex, time-consuming and stressful, particularly at times of bereavement.

Stockton Council is making it quicker, easier and, in many cases, cheaper for residents to register changes in their personal circumstances with the introduction of the 'Tell Us Once' programme.

The 'Tell Us Once' scheme, (led from the Department of Work and Pensions or DWP) means that families will only need to contact the Council **ONCE** and, with their consent, their details will be automatically shared with other relevant agencies that need to know.

For many people, particularly those dealing with a bereavement, this can be a welcome relief from having to contact up to 24 separate agencies about issues ranging from Incapacity Benefit to State Pensions, Attendance Allowance and Council Tax.

As there is a statutory requirement to register births and deaths, Stockton Council has chosen to provide the service through the Registration Service with the TUO details being collected at the same time as registering. To the customer this will be a seamless process.

TUO has identified 24 core services (see fig.1) involved in the initial implementation of the programme, with the customer choosing which of these services are notified direct.

**Fig.1**

**Local Authority:**

Housing benefit  
Council Tax  
Council Tax benefit  
Adult Services  
Children's Services  
Blue Badge  
Electoral Services  
Library Service  
Council Housing  
Money owed to Council e.g. bulk waste removal

**HMRC:**

Working Tax Credit  
Child Tax Credit  
Child Benefit

**DWP:**

State Pension  
Pension Credit  
Attendance Allowance  
Disability Living Allowance  
Carer's Allowance  
Incapacity Benefit  
Income Support  
Jobseekers Allowance  
Bereavement Benefit

**Other contacts:**

Identity and Passport Service  
DVLA

TUO is not asking people to provide information that they do not already have to give. It simply makes it easier for them to provide it. The service is not compulsory for the customer, they can choose not to take up the service at the point of registration or they can decide which departments receive notification of their change.

The service is restricted to the notification of births and deaths initially with a future phase planned to deal with address changes.

The key benefits of the TUO service are:

### **Benefits to the Customer**

- improved customer experience / satisfaction
- Will be able to save time and potential burden by not having to contact government several times to repeat the same information.
- Will only need to purchase one birth or death certificate, rather than having to send several off in the post.
- Through personalised service, can be made aware of potential benefits they did not realise they were entitled to.
- As services will be notified about a birth or death faster people will be less likely to receive overpayments which they may have to pay back at a later date.

### **Benefits to the Council**

- reduced 'avoidable' contact
- reduced processing times
- reduction in overpayment of benefits.
- Avoiding misuse of assets such as medical equipment or Blue Badges due to quicker recall after a death.
- Improved internal & external relationships
- Reduction on pressure to frontline services i.e. telephone & counters.

### **Benefits to Employees**

- Offer citizens a personalised service as a result of specialist training they will have received.
- Not having to ask a citizen to repeat the same information they have given elsewhere.
- Not having to chase up incomplete or incorrect forms.
- A different kind of job satisfaction / feel good factor / making a difference and adding value
- Enables employees to develop new skills

### **Benefits to Government**

- Joined-up systems with easier verification
- Reduction in fraud, error and less duplication
- Efficiency savings

### **Financial Implications**

Financial benefits to the Council are expected to be in the region of:

<b>Area / Product</b>	<b>Savings Per Annum</b>
Housing Benefit	£20.5k
Reduction in avoidable contact	£21.5k
Blue Badge scheme	£10k
Adult and Children's Services	£37.5k

### **Initial Findings**

Stockton dopted the TUO service with effect from 31 October 2011, within the first three weeks 63% of customers registering births have taken up the option of using TUO and 55% of death informants.

All feedback received from customers has been extremely positive. The overriding theme being the pressure and time it takes off the birth and death informant.

Birth informants have also been pleased that Stockton has chosen to offer the additional service of verifying child benefit claim forms and forwarding on their behalf to HM Revenue, Child Benefits Office.

As few examples of customer feedback are as follows:

*“Great service – I found it beneficial in relation to the child benefit form – takes the pressure off new parents”*

*“TUO service has really helped me when I need help – the last thing I wanted to do was talk to people – it has taken a lot of pressure of me”*

*“TUO service was fantastic – saved me a lot of time informing departments about the benefits I receive”*

*“The TUO service was very helpful – I didn’t know where to start – this service has taken a load of my mind”*

*“I’m happy that I don’t have to send my son’s birth certificate with my Child Benefit Claim Form”*

*“I was dreading making the phone calls – I am very grateful that you will inform them for me – having to constantly repeat what is happening is heart-breaking”*