

Housing Benefit Quarterly Performance Statistics

Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publishes these statistics of quarterly performance for local authority administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB and CTB) to improve openness and accountability of HB and CTB performance. This is part of our strategy for Housing Benefit reform. It is right and proper that the public see how well or how badly their council is doing.

Housing Benefit is a vital weapon in our attack on poverty and is an important part of our Welfare to Work programme. Good Housing Benefit performance can have a significant impact in tackling poverty and providing opportunity, whereas poor performance restricts opportunity and leaves people facing financial problems. We are using the statistics to challenge poor performance.

Published Data

The quarterly statistics cover the following areas of performance:

Number of cases referred to the LA fraud/investigation section for further action

Measures the volume of referrals received, which include referrals by HB/CTB section staff, anonymous telephone calls and referrals from other agencies or individuals.

Number of cases actually investigated by the fraud section

Measures number of cases where a fraud investigation was **closed** during the quarter. A fraud investigation is work carried out to gather evidence on a claimant, landlord or associated party, who is suspected of HB/CTB fraud, e.g. interviewing witnesses or suspects, undertaking surveillance.

Number of full-time equivalent fraud investigators

Measures the number of fraud investigators. A fraud investigator means a member of staff whose principal or only duty is to undertake fraud investigations.

Number of cautions

Measures the quarterly number of claimants offered a formal caution as an alternative to prosecution for HB or CTB and the claimant accepted the caution, refer to Home Office circulars 59/1990 and 18/1994 for formal cautions and the Fraud Investigators Manual (FIM).

Number of administrative penalties

Measures the quarterly number of claimants offered an administrative penalty as an alternative to prosecution for HB or CTB and the claimant accepted the administrative penalty (refer to Social Security Administration Act 1997 and FIM).

Number of successful prosecutions

For England and Wales, measures the quarterly number of cases where the claimant has been found guilty of HB or CTB fraud, irrespective of the sentence imposed. For Scotland, measures the quarterly number of cases referred to the Procurator Fiscal for prosecution.

Matches received

Measures the total number of data-matches received since 1 April 2007 as of the end of the quarter.

Matches resolved within two months

Measures the total number of matches received since April 2007 that were resolved within two months of being received by the LA.

Number of positive hits

Measures the number of data matches resulting in a reduction in the weekly amount of benefit

Percentage of positive hits returned

Measures the number of data matches resulting in a reduction in the weekly amount of benefit against the total number of data matches resolved.

Changes to deadlines for submitting data to DWP

Please note that from now on local authorities will be expected to adhere to the 4-week deadline for HB and CTB data returns, as set out in the Stats 124. This will apply to all quarterly returns.

Authorities should ensure that data returns are sent to the DWP Information Directorate in good time for receipt **before** the deadline expires. Data received after the deadline will not be published on the DWP website or included in the quarterly management reports issued to Chief Executives by the Local Authority Performance Division.

CPA Scoring (English LAs only)

CPA self assessments for 2005/06 (due to be completed by 31 July 2006) should have been calculated using the pre-April 2006 Performance Standards 1-4 score grade ranges for the *Claims administration* theme.

From 1 April 2006 CPA scoring for this theme will be based on the new grade ranges.

Further information

For further information on the scoring methodology and grade ranges see HB/CTB Circulars **A3/2006**, **A7/2006** and **A12/2006**.