

IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING BENEFIT SCHEME

In-house report 73

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**IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
BENEFIT SCHEME**

**A quantitative study carried out by the
Department of Social Security**

By

**Kim Shrapnell and Kirby Swales
DSS Social Research Branch**

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Contents

	Page
Summary	3
1 Introduction	5
2 Reviews	7
3 Schemes	14
4 Breakdown of Rent and Eligible Support Charges	16
5 Private Rented Sector Tenants – Community Care Assessments	18
6 Identifying Providers and other Issues	22
7 Conclusions	26
8 Appendix (copy of the questionnaire)	27

Executive Summary

The overall objective of the research was to provide an early picture of the implementation of the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme (THBS).

The THBS came into force in April 2000, to assist in preparation for the introduction of the 'Supporting People' programme. Once 'Supporting People' is implemented, HB will no longer pay for those support services to be met by the 'Supporting People' programme. The amount of HB which pays for those services will be transferred to the 'Supporting People' budget. An important function of the THBS is to identify how much Housing Benefit currently pays for support services.

The main aims of the survey were to find how local authorities (LAs) were progressing in identifying customers in supported accommodation, contacting providers, and reviewing claims.

The key findings include

- Just over half (53 per cent) of LAs estimated they had under 500 claimants in supported accommodation. Just under a third (30 per cent) said they had between 500 and 1500, and 17 per cent had 1500 or more. The analysis suggests that the *proportion* of all HB claimants living in supported accommodation varies between LAs.
- At the time of the survey, 10 per cent of LAs had reviewed all their cases and 63 per cent gave a date when their reviews would be completed, of which the vast majority were before November 2000. The remainder (27 per cent) did not know when their reviews would be completed.
- Just over a third of LAs had less than 20 schemes in their area, and just over half had twenty or more. About one in ten (11 per cent) did not know how many schemes they had.
- LAs stated that the majority of known schemes had provided a breakdown of support charges. About one in five (18 per cent) LAs said that less than half of schemes in their area had not provided breakdowns.
- Very few LAs had restricted rent (4 per cent) or support charges (7 per cent) following review because they were considered 'excessive'.
- Almost three-fifths (58 per cent) of LAs knew they had at least some private tenants in supported accommodation. The majority of these said they had under 25 cases. Two-fifths of LAs had referred at least some private tenants for a CCA, and the majority of these had some or all of these returned.
- Three-quarters of LAs made at least one general comment about the THBS. The main issues they raised were the problems they had getting information from providers (58

per cent), the amount of time and resource the THBS scheme was taking (41 per cent), and problems identifying providers (32 per cent).

The research was based on a self-completion questionnaire sent to all LAs in England, Scotland and Wales. The fieldwork was carried out during summer 2000, soon after the THBS introduced. A 97 per cent response rate was achieved.

Chapter One: Introduction

In March 1999 the Government announced a new policy and funding framework for providing support to vulnerable people in different types of accommodation and tenure 'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities (LAs) to plan, commission and provide quality lower level support services which help vulnerable people live independently in the community.

'Supporting People' will bring together various funding streams (e.g. the support element of Housing Benefit (HB), and the Housing Corporation's Supported Housing Management Grant) into a single budget to be administered by local authorities from April 2003

Once 'Supporting People' is implemented, HB will no longer pay for those support services to be met by the 'Supporting People' programme and will be restricted to the payment of basic rent and eligible accommodation-related services. The amount of HB which pays for those support services will similarly be transferred to the 'Supporting People' budget.

In April 2000, the DSS introduced a time limited, transitional Housing Benefit scheme (THBS), to assist preparation for the introduction of 'Supporting People' One important function of the THBS is to identify the amount spent on support services through HB

Throughout June, July and August 2000, the Department of Social Security (DSS) ran a postal survey of all LA Housing Benefit managers to gauge how the implementation of THBS was progressing.

Aims of the survey

1.1 The survey aimed to gather information on key areas of THBS implementation, namely:

- the identification of customers receiving HB where rent included a charge for support and progress made in reviewing these cases,
- the identification of supported accommodation schemes in LA areas and progress made in obtaining cost breakdowns from providers,
- action taken in cases where rent was unreasonable or support charges excessive,
- referral of private sector customers for community care assessments (CCAs) and receipt of assessed cases from Social Services, and
- any other problems experienced in implementation, including the identification of providers

Methodology

- 1.2 A short postal questionnaire was developed by a core team of staff from the Housing Benefit policy team and the Social Research Branch at the DSS. Local authority associations and other key stakeholders also provided input into the development of the questions.

The questionnaire was piloted with 14 LAs. Pilot interviews were carried out over the telephone by the core team working on the project. Respondents were asked to comment on the structure and meaning of the questionnaire, and also asked to gauge how time consuming it would be for LAs to gather the information requested. Minor amendments were made to the questionnaire in light of the findings.

The postal questionnaire was sent to HB managers in all 409 LAs (including Scottish Homes). The fieldwork period ran from mid June to early August 2000. Two postal reminders were sent to non-responding LAs, as well as a final reminder by telephone at the end of the fieldwork period.

Response rate

- 1.3 Table 1.1 shows the response rate to the survey. Overall, 97 per cent of LAs returned a questionnaire with at least some, if not all, sections completed.

Table 1.1: Response to survey

Total number of contacts	409
Number of completed questionnaires received	398
Blank questionnaires returned	2
Non responses/missing	9
<i>Response rate</i>	<i>97%</i>

Non-responding authorities included 2 from outer London, 8 non-metropolitan councils (3 small, 2 medium-sized and 3 large), and 1 from Scotland.

Structure of Report

- 1.4 This report consists of 5 parts. Chapter 2 outlines findings on the number of supported accommodation cases and LAs' progress in reviewing such cases. Chapter 3 outlines LAs' estimates of supported accommodation schemes in their area and the proportion of these schemes that have provided a breakdown of support charges.

Chapter 4 describes the proportion of authorities that have restricted rent and support costs, and LAs' practices in relation to pooling support charges within the Housing Revenue Account. Chapter 5 gives estimates of the number of private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation, LAs' progress in referring these cases for a CCA and Social Services' progress in returning these referrals.

Finally, Chapter 6 outlines LAs' problems in identifying supported accommodation schemes and other comments they had on the THBS.

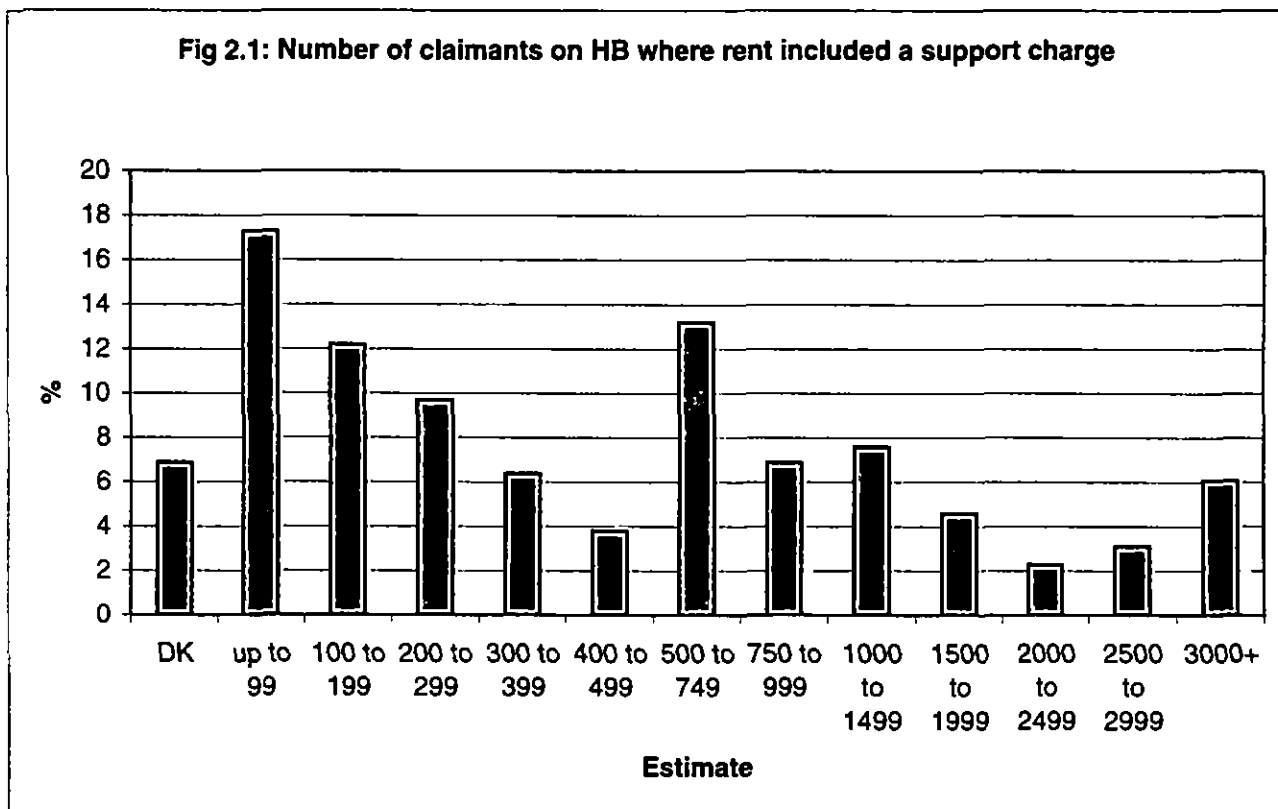
Chapter Two: Reviews

- 2.1 A key part of the THBS is the collection of information on support costs needed to implement 'Supporting People'. LAs need to identify the number of people in supported accommodation which will assist to inform the move of funding for these support services from a variety of sources to a single budget administered by LAs. Those that are defined as eligible for support costs include: elderly, disabled, people with learning disabilities or mental health problems, ex offenders, drug/alcohol users, and vulnerable young people.

Firstly, LAs were asked whether their HB sections flagged up, prior to April 2000, all those cases on HB where the rent included a support charge. Three-fifths of authorities said their HB section did flag up cases and two-fifths said their HB section did not. Scottish LAs (84 per cent) and English Metropolitan LAs (72 per cent) were most likely to have flagged their support cases, and inner London (39 per cent) and English non-metropolitan LAs of medium size (52 per cent) were least likely to have done so.

Authorities were asked to estimate cases on HB where rent included a support charge prior to April 2000 (fig 2.1). The most common estimate provided (17 per cent) was under 100 cases. Thirteen per cent of authorities estimated between 500 and 749, and 12 per cent of authorities between 100 and 199. Seven per cent of authorities were unable to provide an estimate.

Fig 2.1: Number of claimants on HB where rent included a support charge



Base 393

Excluding those that couldn't provide an answer, just over half (53 per cent) of all LAs estimated they had under 500 supported accommodation cases, 30 per cent had between 500 and 1000 and 17 per cent had 1500 or more

Table 2 1 shows the number of support cases by the total HB caseload For example, of LAs with a total HB caseload of 5000 or less, 68 per cent have less than 500 supported accommodation cases and 30 per cent estimate they have between 500 and 1500

In general, the larger the HB caseload, the greater was the number of supported accommodation cases However, this relationship was by no means direct or linear. For example, a quarter of large LAs (with caseloads of 10,000 or more) estimated that the number of supported accommodation cases is less than 500 Likewise, 12 per cent of medium-sized LAs estimated the number of supported accommodation cases to be over 1500

Table 2 1. Supported Accommodation cases by HB Caseload (Column percentages)

Support cases	HB Caseload			Total
	Under 5,000 (%)	5,000 to 10,000 (%)	10,000 plus (%)	
Under 500	68	61	25	53
500 to 1500	30	28	33	30
1500 plus	2	12	42	17
Base	128	131	107	366

Base Excludes those missing or did not provide an estimate (32)

Table 2 2 shows the average HB caseload by estimated number of supported accommodation cases. It also shows the rough proportion of the total HB caseload that has a charge for support. This shows the variability in the estimates of supported accommodation cases provided by LAs, when taking the total HB caseload into account.

Table 2.2 Average HB caseload by number of Supported Accommodation cases

Support Cases	Average HB caseload	Number of LAs	% of all HB cases with a support charge
up to 99	5440	68	1
100 to 199	6275	48	2
200 to 299	6267	38	4
300 to 399	9101	25	4
400 to 499	8020	15	6
500 to 749	7651	52	8
750 to 999	9837	27	9
1000 to 1499	14119	30	9
1500 to 1999	14875	18	12
2000 to 2499	16084	9	14
2500 to 2999	12261	12	22
3000+	33404	24	n/a
Don't Know	10519	27	n/a

Base 393 The percentage of all HB cases with a support charge (last column) is calculated by using the midpoint of the bands in the first column

For example, 68 LAs stated they had less than 100 support cases and, for this group, the average caseload is 5,440 HB recipients. Therefore, the number of supported accommodation cases makes up, on average, one per cent of total HB caseload (assuming LAs in this group have an average of 50 cases each).

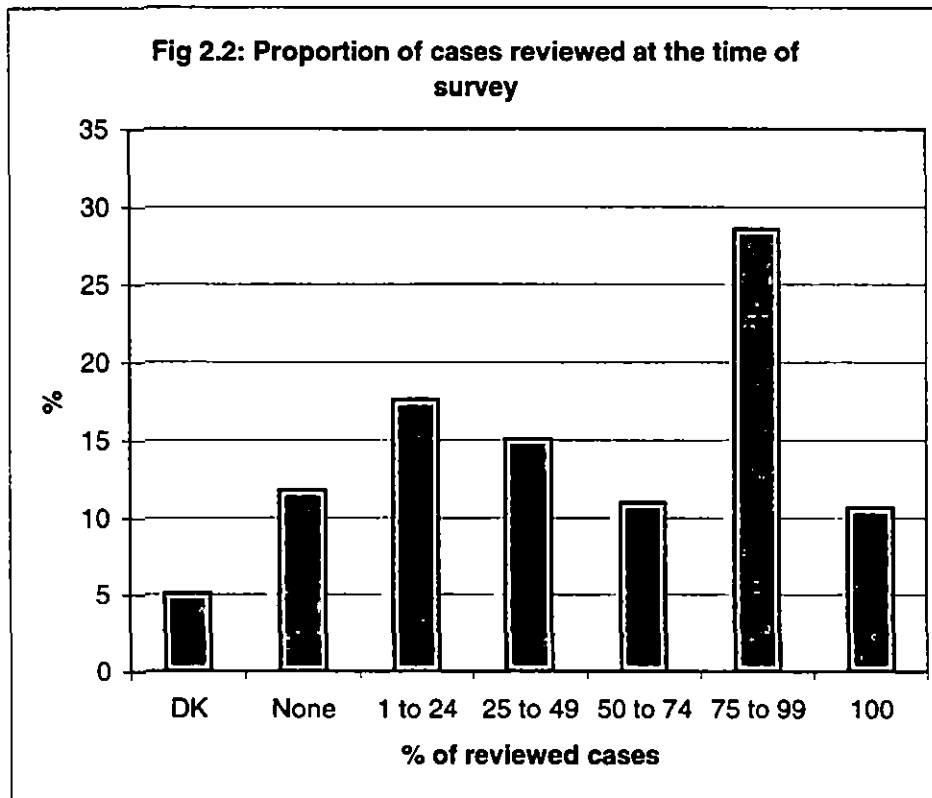
By contrast, 30 LAs estimated the number of supported accommodation cases were between 1000 and 1499. For this group, the average total HB caseload is 14,119 recipients. Therefore, the number of supported accommodation cases for this group makes up, on average, 9 per cent of total HB caseload.

The unweighted average percentage is just over 8 per cent. Applying this broad proportion to the total HB caseload gives about 336,000 Supported Accommodation cases. This compares with an estimate of 303,000 if the total is calculated from totalling the individual estimates for each LA. Note these estimates are very rough and should be treated as indicative only.

Those LAs who had 'flagged' their support cases prior to April 2000 were slightly more likely to state they had less than 500 support cases compared to those who didn't, even after taking caseload into account. Those LAs who had reviewed a large proportion of their cases (see next section) were no less likely than other LAs to estimate small proportions of their total HB caseloads in supported accommodation.

2.2 Next, LAs were asked what was the proportion of supported accommodation cases they had reviewed at the time of the survey. At the time of the survey, 11 per cent of authorities had reviewed all cases, and 29 per cent of authorities had reviewed between 75 per cent and 99 per cent of cases (see fig 2.2). Twelve per cent of authorities had not reviewed any cases and 5 per cent did not know how many cases they had reviewed.

Over half (53 per cent) of all LAs had reviewed more than half their cases.



Base: 391

Table 2.3 shows the proportion of cases reviewed by the number of supported accommodation cases. For example, of all LAs with between 500 and 1500 supported accommodation cases, 50 per cent had reviewed under half of their cases, including 11 per cent who had reviewed none.

LAs with smallest number of support cases were both more likely to have reviewed none, and more likely to have reviewed all their support cases. Three-fifths of those with the largest support caseloads had reviewed half or more of their cases.

Table 2.3. Proportion of cases reviewed, by number of support cases (column percentages)

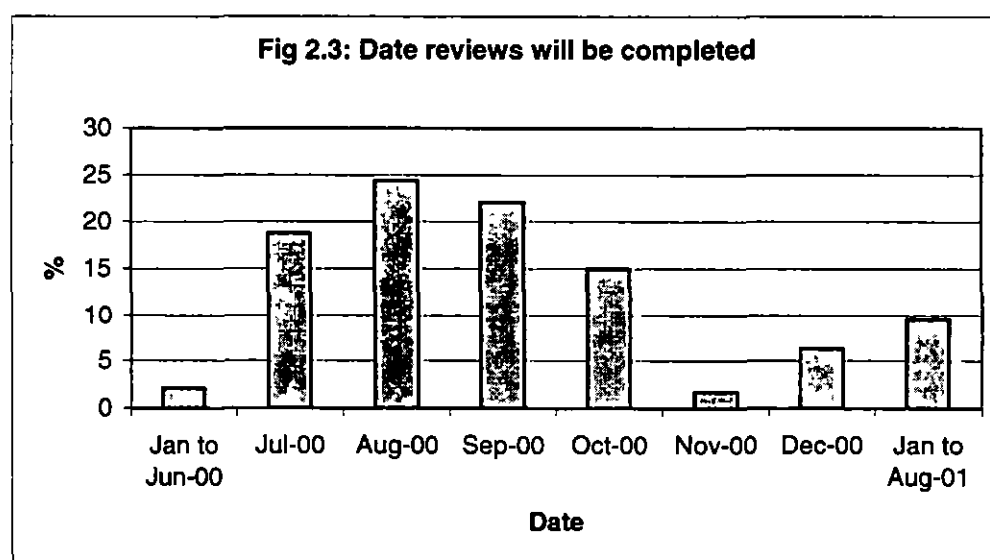
	Number of Support Cases			Total (%)
	Under 500 (%)	500 to 1500 (%)	1500+ (%)	
None	14	11	7	12
1 to 49%	32	39	36	35
50 to 99%	39	43	52	42
100%	15	8	7	11
Base	182	106	62	350

Table 2 4 shows the proportion of cases reviewed by the size and type of Local Authority. Scottish LAs were most likely to have carried out all their reviews, whilst medium sized non-Metropolitan authorities were least likely to have done so.

Table 2 4: Proportion of cases reviewed, by type of authority (row percentages)

	Proportion of cases reviewed				Base
	None	1 to 50%	50 to 99%	100%	
Inner London	20	20	40	20	10
Outer London	18	35	41	6	17
English Met	0	40	46	14	42
English non-Met (small)	15	32	36	17	72
English non-Met (medium)	15	37	44	5	103
English non-Met (large)	8	41	45	6	83
Wales	14	32	41	14	22
Scotland	17	14	38	31	29
Total	12	35	42	11	371

2 3 Authorities were asked when they expected to complete reviewing all their HB claims including a support charge. A large minority (27 per cent) of authorities did not know when reviews would be completed. Ten per cent of authorities said all known reviews had been completed and 63 per cent of authorities gave a specific date for completion. Figure 2 3 shows the dates given for the 63 per cent who gave a date.



Base 240

2.4 Of this 63 per cent, almost a quarter (24 per cent) said that reviews would be completed by August 2000. Just under 10 per cent said reviews would not be completed until between January and August 2001.

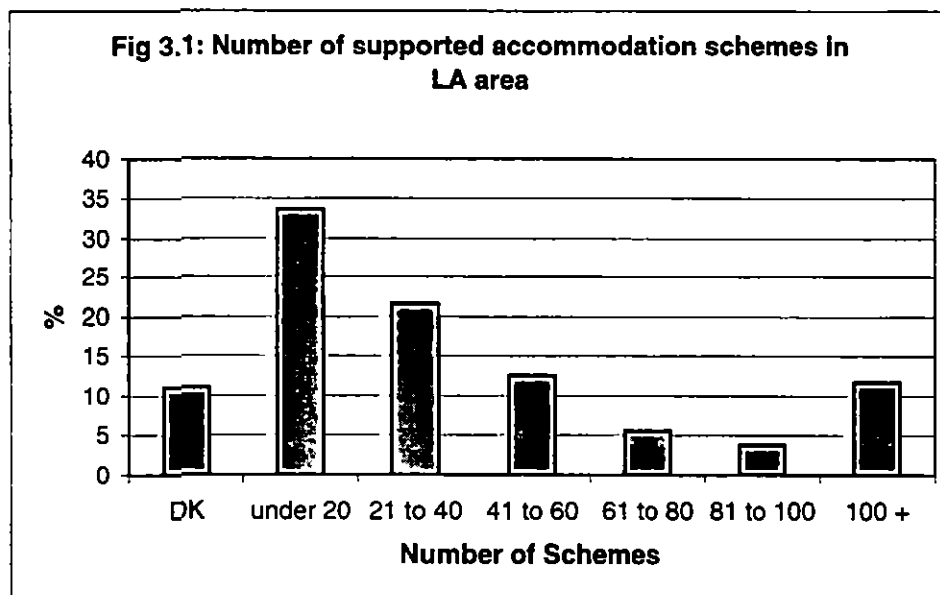
The analysis suggests that the majority of outstanding reviews will be completed by the end of 2000/01, but note that almost a quarter of LAs did not know when they would be completed.

Chapter Three: Schemes

3.1 Another key function of the THBS is to identify service providers in an authority's area and ask them for a breakdown of support charges to enable the claim to be reviewed. Supported accommodation schemes can be provided in a number of settings and take the form of a range of services such as counselling and rehabilitation.

LAs were asked how many supported accommodation schemes they had in their area. A minority (11 per cent) of authorities did not know how many schemes were in their area (see fig 3.1). Just over a third of LAs (34 per cent) had less than 20 schemes in their area and 22 per cent of authorities had between 21 and 40 schemes. A significant minority (12 per cent) of LAs had over 100 schemes in their area¹.

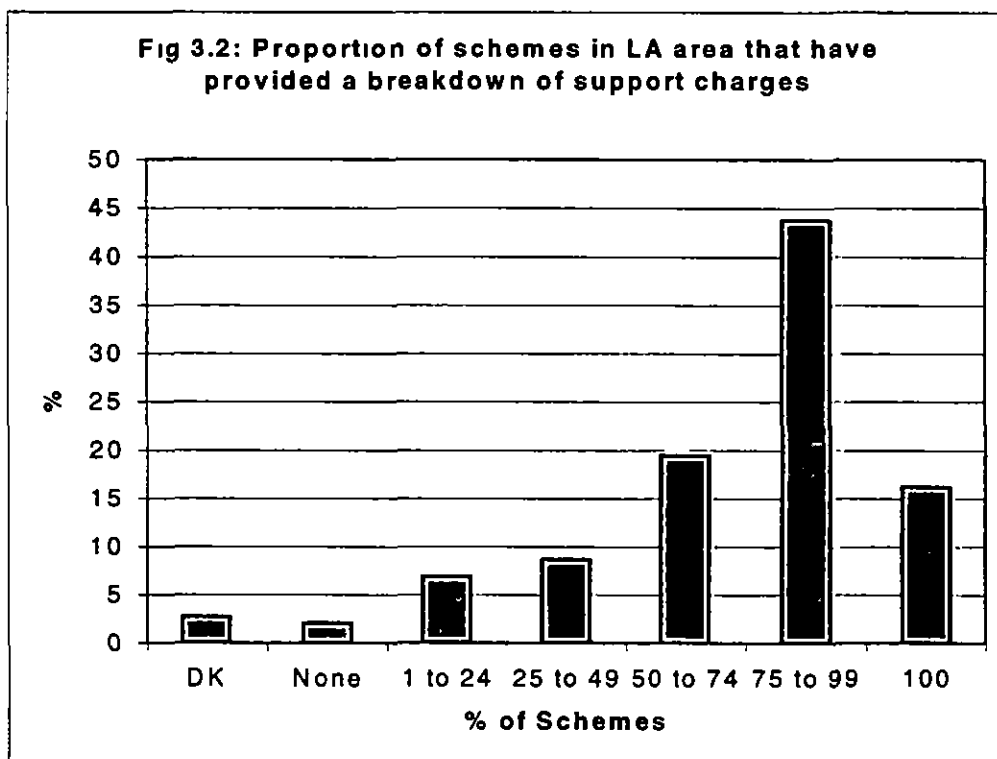
Taking into account non-response and 'don't knows', a rough GB estimate for the number of supported accommodation schemes is 26,000.



Base 398

3.2 Authorities were asked what proportion of schemes in their area had provided a breakdown of support charges to enable the relevant claims to be reviewed (see fig 3.2)

¹ It appears a very small proportion of these LAs have interpreted this question as asking about the number of tenants, rather than the number of schemes in their area

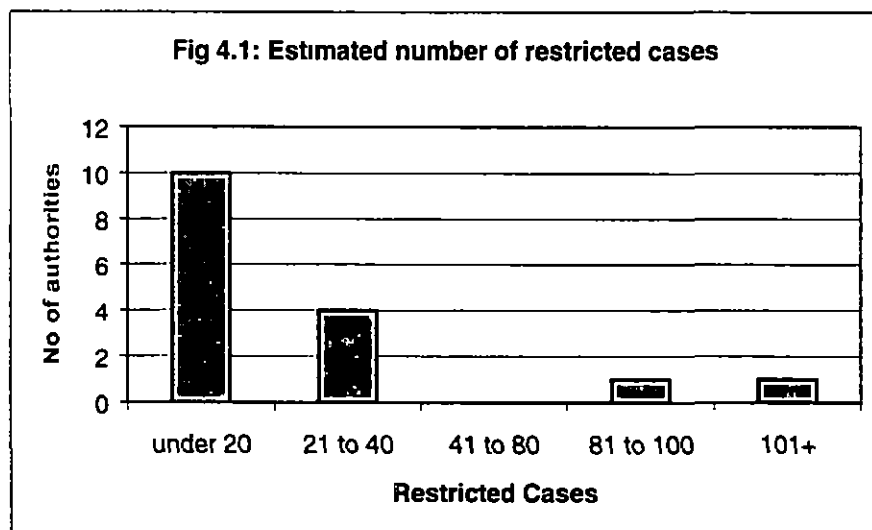


Base 390

Sixteen per cent of authorities said 100 per cent of the schemes had provided a breakdown, and almost half (44 per cent) said that between 75 per cent and 99 per cent of schemes had. However, nine per cent of LAs stated that only between 25 per cent and 49 per cent of schemes had provided a breakdown, and two per cent said that none of the schemes had.

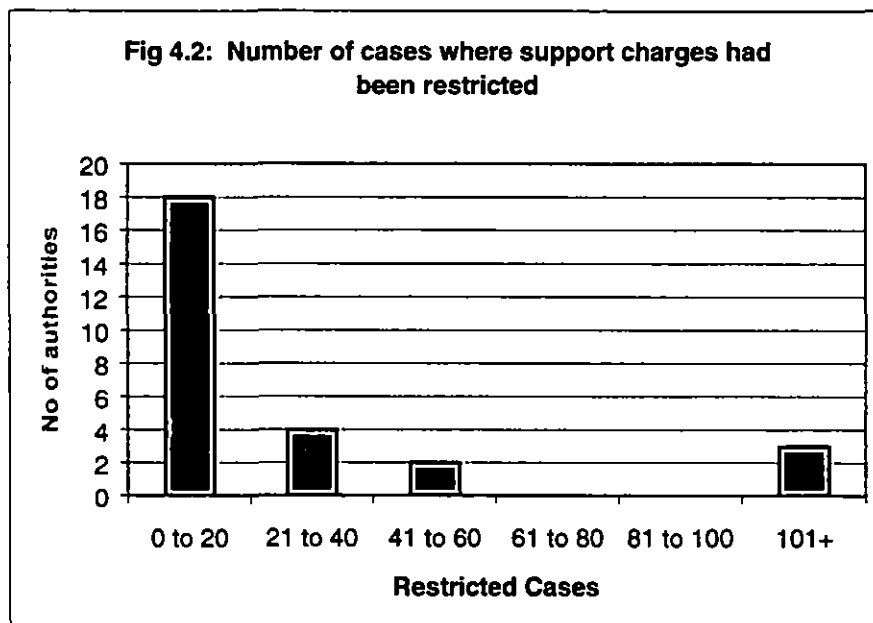
Chapter Four: Breakdown of Rent and Eligible Support Charges

4.1 LAs were also asked whether they had restricted rent (net of support charges), following a review, due to the increase being unreasonable. The majority of surveyed LAs (96 per cent) had not. Of the 16 authorities that had restricted rent, ten had restricted rent for under 20 cases, and four had restricted rent for between 21 and 40 cases (see fig 4.1)



Base 16

4.2 LAs were asked whether they had restricted *support* charges because they were deemed excessive, following a case review. The majority of LAs (93 per cent) had not restricted support charges. Of the 27 LAs that had restricted support charges, over half (18) had restricted support charges for under 20 cases, four authorities had restricted charges for 21 to 40 cases and three had restricted charges for over 101 cases (see fig 4.2)



Base 27

4.3 LAs were asked whether their housing department pooled support costs across the housing revenue account (HRA). About one in six (17 per cent) respondents did not know whether their authority 'pooled' support costs. Thirty three per cent did not pool support costs and approximately half (50 per cent) did.

4.4 The 50 per cent of authorities that said they 'pooled' support costs across the HRA were asked whether they did this in whole (where all the support costs are pooled across the HRA instead of charging the individual tenant) or part (where some of the support costs are pooled across the HRA). Just over half (54 per cent) said they pooled support charges in whole and 46 per cent said they did this in part.

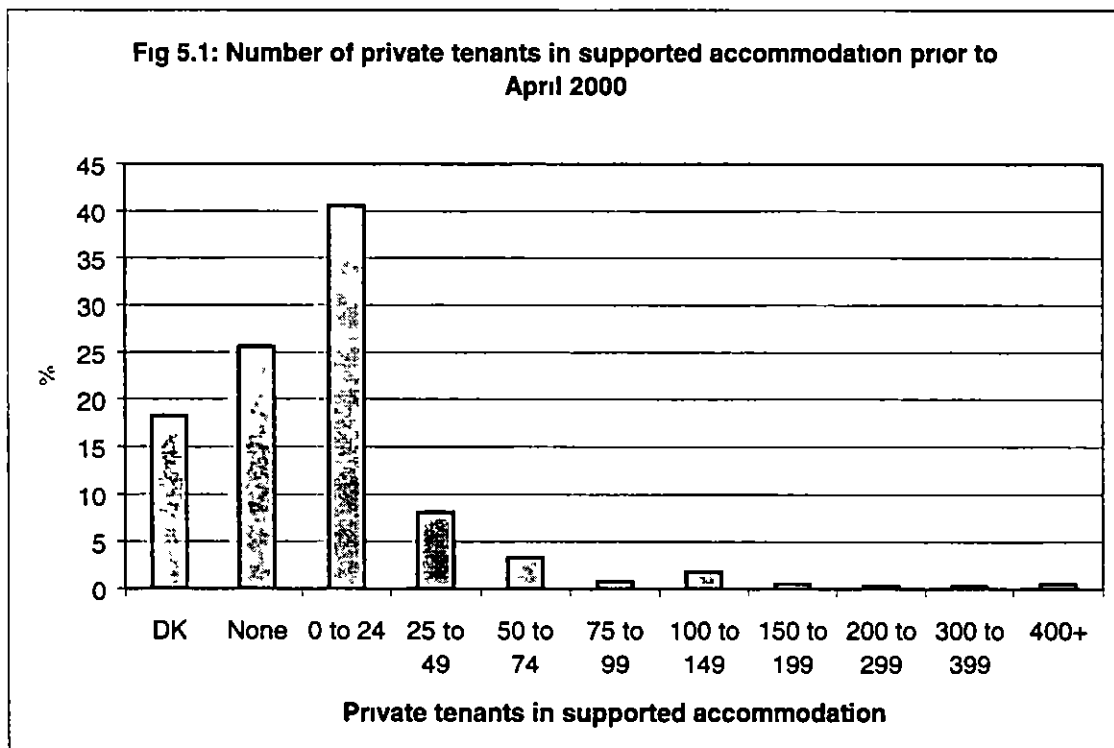
4.5 So, to summarise 26 per cent of all surveyed authorities pooled support costs in whole and 24 per cent pooled in part. Thirty three per cent of all authorities did not pool support costs, and 17 per cent did not know whether they pooled support costs.

Chapter Five: Private Rented Sector Tenants – Community Care Assessments (CCA)

5.1 As part of the THBS, LAs also need to identify those private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation. All private sector tenants in supported accommodation will need a Community Care Assessment (CCA) from Social Services to qualify for support charges under 'Supporting People'.

5.2 LAs were asked to estimate the total number of private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation prior to April 2000 (see fig 5.1). Almost two-fifths (18 per cent) of authorities were unable to provide an estimate. A quarter of authorities (26 per cent) stated that there were no private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation prior to April 2000, and 41 per cent of authorities estimated that there were up to 24 private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation.

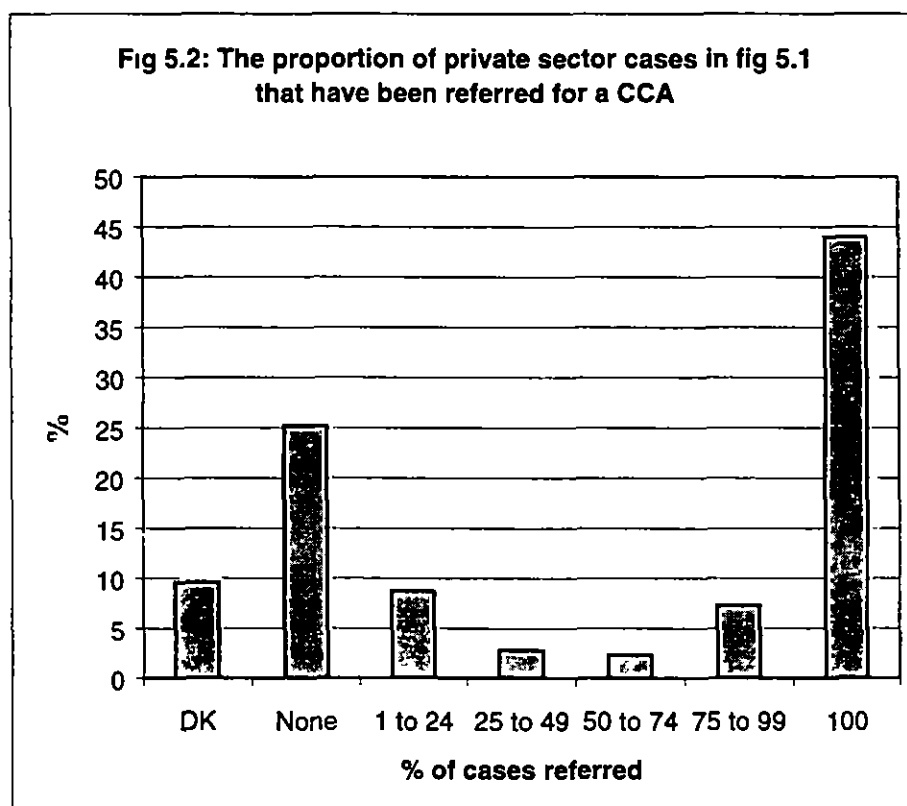
Taking into account non-response and 'don't knows' a rough GB estimate for the total number of private tenants in supported accommodation prior to April 2000 is 9,000².



Base 394

² This was calculated by taking the mid-point of each banding

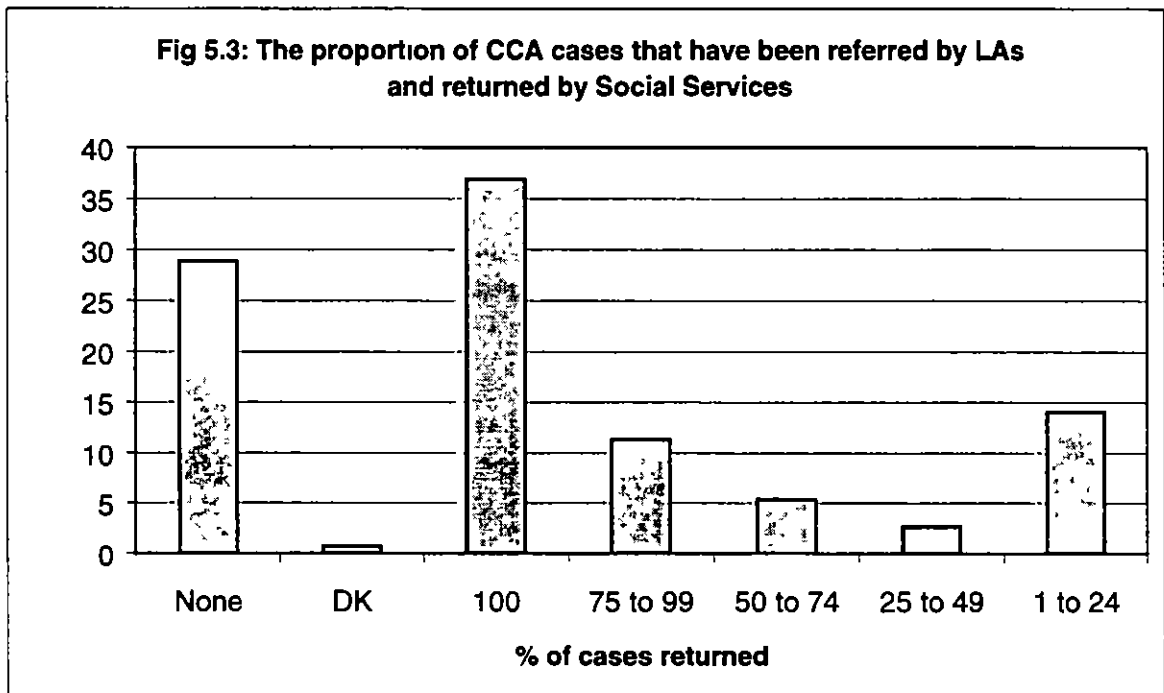
5.3 Next, LAs were asked what proportion of private sector cases had been referred to social services for a CCA. Just over half (58 per cent) knew they had a proportion of private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation prior to April 2000. Of these, almost half (44 per cent) had referred 100 per cent of cases for a CCA (see fig 5.2). However, a quarter (25 per cent) had not referred any of their private sector tenants for a CCA. One in ten respondents did not know how many private sector cases had been referred for a CCA.



Base 218³

5.4 Authorities were asked what proportion of those cases they had referred for a CCA had been returned by social services. Just over a third of LAs had referred at least some cases for a CCA (40 per cent). Of these over a third (36 per cent) had had 100 per cent of the referred cases returned (see fig 5.3). However, at the time of the survey over a quarter (27 per cent) had had none of the referred cases returned.

³ Note that figure 5.2 only covers those that could estimate how many private tenants they had. Those that didn't know how many they had were less likely to refer any cases for a CCA.



Base 149

5.5 To summarise, just over half (58 per cent) of all authorities knew they had at least some private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation prior to April 2000 and over two fifths (40 per cent) of all LAs had referred at least some cases for a CCA. The majority had some or all returned but over a quarter had received none. Figure 5.4 summarises this section.

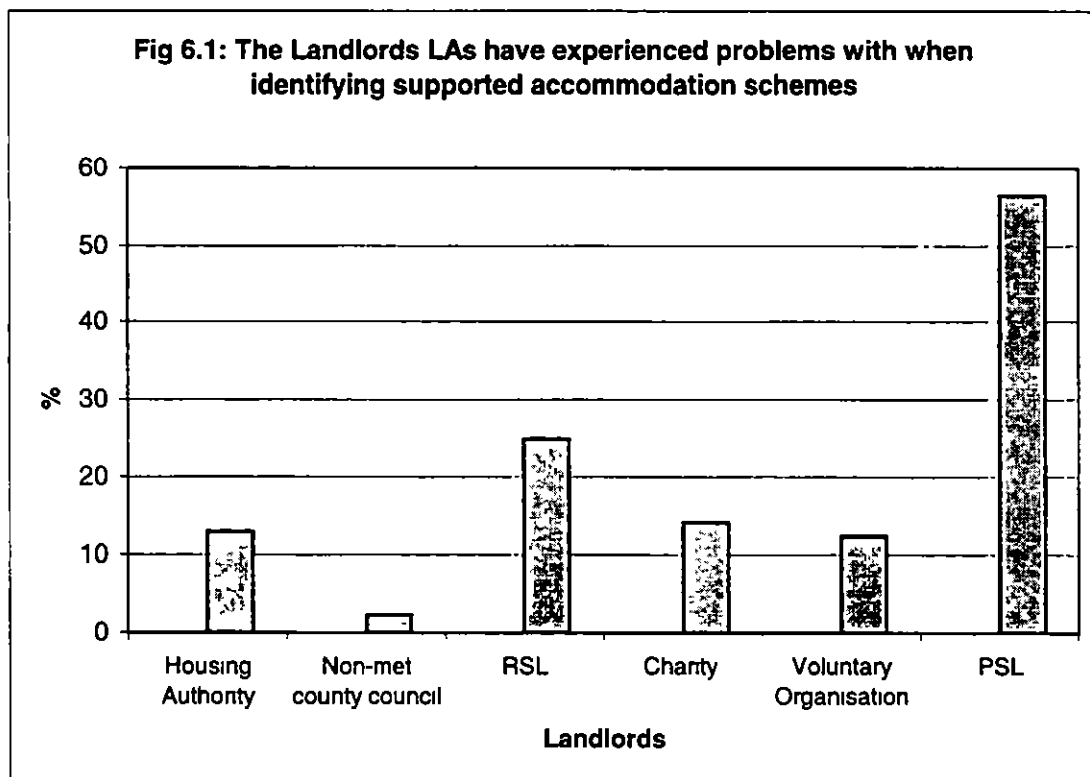
Fig 5.4: Community Care Assessments (CCA)

- 18 per cent of LAs did not know
 - 26 per cent had no private sector tenants in supported accommodation
 - 58 per cent knew they had private sector tenants in supported accommodation
- ↓
- Of these, 65 per cent had referred at least some for a CCA
- ↓
- Of these, 72 per cent had had at least some returned

Chapter Six: Identifying Providers and other Issues

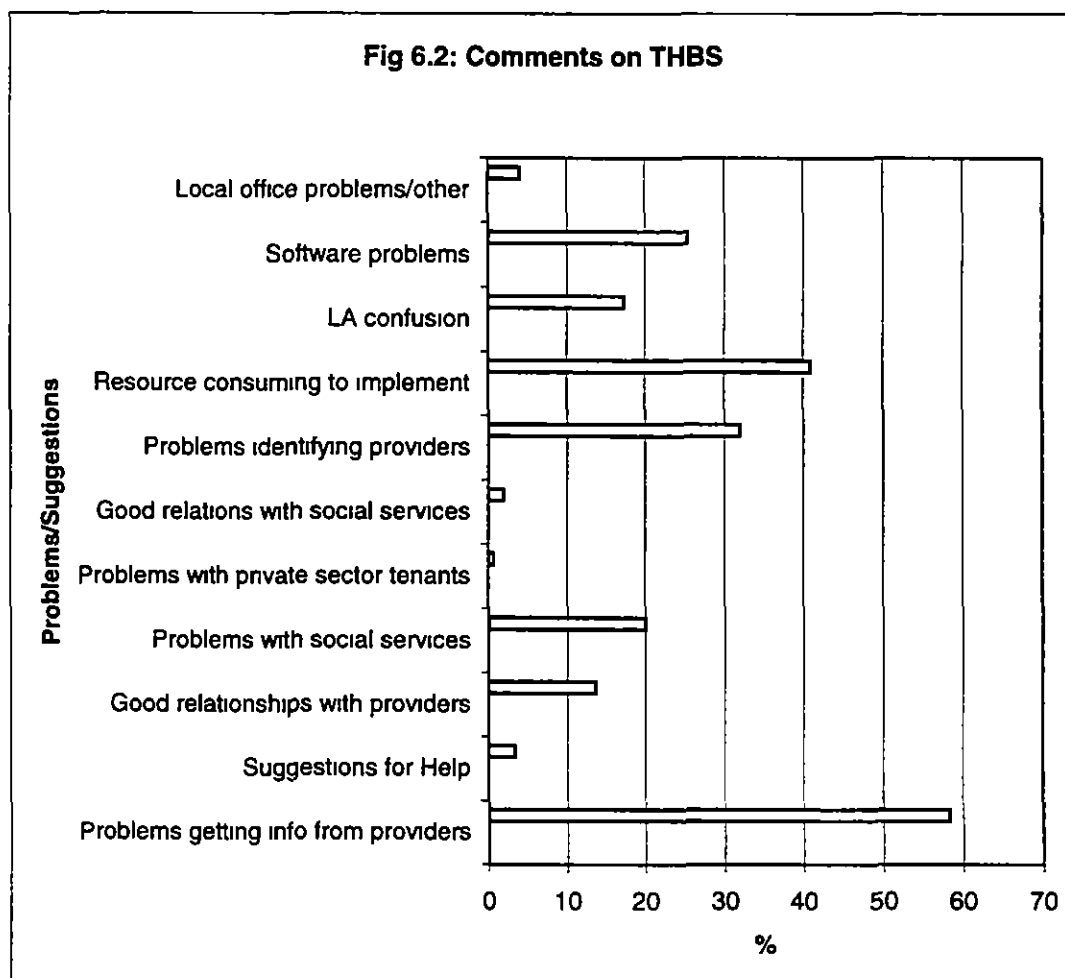
6.1 Finally, LAs were asked whether they had had any problems identifying supported accommodation schemes in their area. Just over half (56 per cent) had not had problems, and just under half (45 per cent) had. Welsh (59 per cent), outer London (56 per cent) and medium sized non-metropolitan (54 per cent) LAs were most likely to have reported problems identifying providers.

LAs were asked which types of landlords they had experienced problems with when identifying supported accommodation. Of the 45 per cent who had experienced problems over half (57 per cent) had experienced problems with private sector landlords (PSL) and a quarter (25 per cent) had experienced problems with registered social landlords (RSL) (see fig 6.1).



Base 177

6.2 Authorities were asked to explain any problems they had in identifying supported accommodation schemes and to provide any other comments they had on THBS. The majority of participating LAs (74 per cent) took this opportunity, and made a comment. The verbatim responses were coded into a number of categories. Figure 6.2 shows the proportion of each type of comment made.



Base 295

6.3 A large proportion of these authorities (58 per cent) stated that they had had problems getting information from providers. These comments focussed on difficulties providers had in providing breakdowns, and the effort it took LAs to secure them.

'Providers have found it extremely difficult to get to grips with the scheme and its implications. They have also found it a very difficult exercise to analyse their rents accurately.'

'Despite the considerable effort invested by both central and local Government in explaining the information requirements of the transitional scheme, our experience is that many of the smaller providers of supported accommodation are still exceptionally confused. Most providers approached by the authority have not been able to identify exactly what charges for services are covered in the rent charged to tenants as opposed to the amounts covered by external funding.'

Two fifths (40 per cent) of commenting authorities stated that implementing the THBS was consuming on resources

'No real problems but a lengthy, time-consuming and 'stop-start' process'

'The work needed to do this properly is out of all proportion to the benefit to be gained from the exercise'

Just under a third (32 per cent) of authorities that commented, stated that they had problems identifying providers

'Schemes run on behalf of RSLs by managing agents have been difficult to identify'

'Because our computer system didn't 'flag' up cases with support charges before April 2000, we had to write to landlords to advise them to contact the Benefits Unit if they thought the THBS affected any of their tenants. The process of identifying cases, which are affected, is ongoing'

A quarter (25 per cent) of commenting authorities stated that they had had software problems.

'Due to the late delivery of software, unable to review claims until June/July 2000'

'Software has been the main problem I am unable to answer the majority of this questionnaire as the software is not available until August 2000'.

A fifth (20 per cent) of commenting LAs also had problems with social services and just under a fifth (17 per cent) listed LA confusion as a difficulty

'It has been near-impossible for County Council to assist the identification of CCA cases'

'We were to a certain extent relying on social services and probation to identify any cases, but a lack of understanding and/or senior direction in those areas seem to have stalled and/or stopped that process'.

'Difficulty in assessing eligible and non eligible CCAs in particular'

'Complexity of the scheme limits the number of staff who can deal with it'

A small proportion of commenting authorities said positive things about relations with providers and social services (14 per cent and 2 per cent respectively) Three per cent of commenting authorities also provided suggestions for helping the implementation of the THBS

'In general providers have been helpful and co-operative...'

'The Government needs to provide more publicity to allow providers to make an informed choice on the treatment of costs as either part of the eligible rent or separate service charges'

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

The research suggests LAs are well on their way to reviewing their cases, especially considering the survey was carried out shortly after the THBS began

10 per cent of LAs had reviewed all their cases and 63 per cent gave a date when their reviews would be completed, of which the vast majority were before November 2000. However, over a quarter (27 per cent) of authorities did not know when their reviews would be completed.

Findings are also relatively positive in relation to the breakdown of support charges, and the restriction of rent and support charges. More than half of participating LAs stated that three-quarters or more of their schemes had provided a breakdown. Very few LAs had restricted rent (4 per cent) or support charges (7 per cent) following review because they were considered 'excessive'

In terms of CCAs the results are more mixed. Two-fifths of LAs had referred at least some private tenants for a CCA, and the majority of these had some or all of these returned. However, almost 30 per cent had had none returned.

The identification of providers has also been problematic for authorities. Just under half of the surveyed LAs had problems identifying providers, particularly those in the private sector. Other comments highlight the amount of work the scheme involves for LAs, and the difficulties faced by providers in accurately identifying support costs.

Appendix (Copy of the Questionnaire)

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING BENEFIT SCHEME

Transitional Housing Benefit (HB) Scheme questionnaire to be returned as soon as possible to DSS but by 21 July 2000.

Introduction

This postal survey will assist us in identifying any problems in implementing the transitional HB scheme. It will help us in gathering information to help you ensure that the scheme is working as intended, and information on HB expenditure on support charges in your area is being obtained to inform the long-term Supporting People funding arrangements, from April 2003.

This survey has been cleared with the Local Authority Associations.

LA details to be inserted

Please complete the following questions. When recording your answers please give the most accurate figure wherever possible but if you are truly unable to give an estimated number or percentage please tick "don't know" in the box provided.

Please give figures for all supported accommodation **including** sheltered accommodation.

Section 1. Reviews (see Note 1)

1.1 Did your Housing Benefit section “flag up” prior to April 2000 all those cases on HB where the rent included a charge for support (whether or not the support charge was being met by HB) (as advised in paragraph 5 of circular HB/CTB A15/99 – see Note 2)?

—→ YES what is the estimated number of “flagged” cases?

up to 99	<input type="checkbox"/>	750 – 999	<input type="checkbox"/>
100 –199	<input type="checkbox"/>	1000 – 1499	<input type="checkbox"/>
200 – 299	<input type="checkbox"/>	1500 – 1999	<input type="checkbox"/>
300 – 399	<input type="checkbox"/>	2000 - 2499	<input type="checkbox"/>
400 – 499	<input type="checkbox"/>	2500 – 2999	<input type="checkbox"/>
500 – 749	<input type="checkbox"/>	3000 and over	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

NO —→ if all cases were not “flagged” what is the estimated total number of claimants on HB prior to April 2000 where the rent included a charge for support?

up to 99	<input type="checkbox"/>	750 – 999	<input type="checkbox"/>
100 –199	<input type="checkbox"/>	1000 – 1499	<input type="checkbox"/>
200 – 299	<input type="checkbox"/>	1500 – 1999	<input type="checkbox"/>
300 – 399	<input type="checkbox"/>	2000 – 2499	<input type="checkbox"/>
400 – 499	<input type="checkbox"/>	2500 – 2999	<input type="checkbox"/>
500 – 749	<input type="checkbox"/>	3000 and over	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.2. What proportion of those cases in 1.1 above have been reviewed to date (see Note 3)?

All -100% of cases

75% to 99% of cases

50% to 74% of cases

25% to 49% of cases

1% to 24% of cases

None

Don't know

1.3 When do you expect to complete reviewing all your Housing Benefit claims where the rent includes a charge for support?

All known reviews completed

Reviews to be completed by (give date)

Don't know

1.4 How many supported accommodation schemes do you have in your area (see Note 4)?

Estimated total number

Don't Know

1 5 How many of the schemes in 1 4 above have provided a breakdown of support charges to enable the claim to be reviewed (*see Note 5*)?

All -100% of schemes

75% to 99% of schemes

50% to 74% of schemes

25% to 49% of schemes

1% to 24% of schemes

None

Don't know

Section 2. Breakdown of "Rent" and Eligible Support Charges

2 1 Has your LA, following a review, restricted the "rent" (net of any support charges) in any case because the increase in that "rent" was unreasonable (*as in paragraph 37 of circular HB/CTB A47/99 - see Note 6*)?

NO

YES → of all the cases reviewed please state the estimated total number of cases where the rent was restricted to date?

2 2 Has your LA, following a case review, restricted support charges in any cases because you considered these excessive (*as in paragraph 17 et seq of circular HB/CTB A47/99 - see Note 7*)?

NO

YES → of all the cases reviewed please state the estimated total number of cases where support charges were restricted to date?

23. Does your Housing Department "pool" support costs across the Housing Revenue Account?

NO – please go to next question

YES



YES - IN WHOLE (*Note this would be where all of the support costs are pooled across the HRA instead of charging the individual tenant, e.g. rent (without any support charges) = £50 00. Total cost of support is pooled across the HRA – tenant's rent remains at £50 00*)

YES - IN PART (*Note this would be where some of the support costs are pooled across the HRA e.g. rent without any support charges = £50 00. Of the total cost of support, £5 00 is charged to the individual tenant and the balance is pooled across the HRA – tenant's rent is £55 00*)

Don't Know

Section 3. Private Rented Sector Tenants – Community Care Assessments (CCA)

31 What is the estimated total number of private sector tenants on HB in supported accommodation prior to April 2000? (*i.e. those tenants who need a valid community care assessment as in paragraph 6(ii) of circular HB/CTB A47/99 – see Note 8*)

None	<input type="checkbox"/>	150 – 199	<input type="checkbox"/>
up to 24	<input type="checkbox"/>	200 – 299	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 – 49	<input type="checkbox"/>	300 – 399	<input type="checkbox"/>
50 – 74	<input type="checkbox"/>	400 or over	<input type="checkbox"/>
75 – 99	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
100 – 149	<input type="checkbox"/>		

3.2 What proportion of private sector cases in 3 1 above have been referred to Social Services for a CCA to date (*see Note 9*)?

All -100% of cases

75% to 99% of cases

50% to 74% of cases

25% to 49% of cases

1% to 24% of cases

None

Don't know

3.3 Of those cases in 3 2 above referred to Social Services, what proportion of CCAs have been returned by Social Services to date (*see Note 10*)?

All -100% of cases

75% to 99% of cases

50% to 74% of cases

25% to 49% of cases

1% to 24% of cases

None

Don't know

Section 4. Identifying Providers

4 1. Have you had any problems identifying supported accommodation schemes in your area

NO – please go to the next question



YES For which types of landlords have you experienced problems in identifying supported accommodation schemes?

Please tick

A housing authority (including Scottish Homes)

Non-metropolitan county council

Registered social landlord (including registered housing associations in Scotland)

Registered charity

Voluntary organisation (including non-registered housing association)

Private sector landlord

4 2

Please use the box below to tell us about any problems you may have had in identifying any supported accommodation schemes.

Comments

5.

Please use the box below to tell us if you have any comments on implementing the transitional Housing Benefit scheme?

Comments.

Signed

Position

Print Name

Contact details:

Tele:

Fax:

Email:

Dated

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please send this questionnaire, to reach DSS by **21 July 2000** at the latest, to:

Michelle Charles
Housing Benefit Policy
5th Floor
The Adelphi
1-11 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6HT

Alternatively you may fax your reply to me on: 020 7962 8873.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING BENEFIT SCHEME

Note: These notes are only intended as general guidance. Reference should be made to relevant circulars if necessary.

Notes on completion of questionnaire.

Note 1 - Reviews By review we mean cases where the claimant was on HB prior to 1/3 April 2000, as appropriate, and the claim needed to be reviewed to check whether support charges included in the rent (whether or not previously met by HB) were eligible for HB under the transitional scheme

Note 2 - Extract covering paragraph 5 of Circular HB/CTB A15/99

5. You should already have identified all those claims in which HB is meeting support charges (see paragraph 1 of Part II of Circular HB/CTB A37/97)

6 The transitional HB scheme will have a wider scope than the existing interim regulations, so that it will also include

- * "supported accommodation" which opened after 18 August 1997, and
- * certain supported accommodation in the private rented sector

7 All claims where payments are made under the interim regulations will need to be reviewed as the transitional HB scheme will specify *eligible* service charges for general counselling and support (GC&S) New and replacement supported accommodation provision coming on line after 18 August 1997 and certain private sector supported accommodation will also need to be reviewed. You are therefore advised to ensure that you have identified these cases prior to the introduction of the transitional scheme in April 2000

Note 3 - Number of cases reviewed to date - A case has been reviewed where you have checked whether any support charges included in the rent are eligible under the transitional HB scheme and, where the amount of HB changes, the determination has been revised from 1/3 April, as appropriate, to reflect the revised amount payable

Note 4 - Supported Accommodation Schemes

The reference to supported accommodation scheme is to distinguish between a scheme and a provider, e.g the provider may be a larger organisation that has a number of schemes Include here the estimated total number of **schemes** in your

area, irrespective of whether a provider has more than one scheme, and irrespective of whether the support charge across a number of schemes is the same or differs

Note 5 – Proportion of schemes who have provided a breakdown of support charges

Give the proportion of those supported accommodation schemes in question 1.4 where a provider has provided a breakdown of support charges and, based on that information, you have been able to review claims from the tenants in those schemes, as in note 3 above.

Note 6 – Extract covering paragraph 37 of circular HB/CTB A47/99

36 Those cases which, although subject to rent officer referral, are exempt from the January 1996 changes (for whatever reason) will remain exempt under the transitional scheme. However, in these cases you have continued to have the discretion to restrict the eligible rent where this has increased during the benefit period if you consider that the increase is unreasonably high or that it is unreasonable because this is the second increase within 12 months (see paragraph 4.125 et seq of the HB Guidance Manual). You can restrict the rent by whatever amount you consider unreasonable, up to the full amount of the increase.

37 From 1/3 April 2000, as appropriate, you will be required to restrict the rent in these cases where you consider the increase is unreasonable. However, any restriction will only apply to increases in the "rent" net of support charges eligible under the transitional scheme. Any increases in support charges will continue to be eligible for HB to the extent that you consider the increase to be reasonable (see also paragraph 17 et seq above). This is because only reasonable service charges are eligible for HB. (Where rent is not subject to rent officer referral, you can continue to consider restricting the rent under HB regulation 10(6B) where you consider any increase to be unreasonably high (see paragraph 65 et seq of circular HB/CTB A3/98).

Note 7 - Extract covering paragraph 17 of circular HB/CTB A47/99

17 Where you consider the amount of an eligible service charge to be excessive, having regard to the cost of comparable services, you should deduct the excess amount as this will be ineligible for HB in the same way as now.

18 You are reminded that the main purpose of the transitional scheme is to identify those support charges which, from April 2003, may be transferred into the Supporting People fund. Providers may therefore reasonably be expected to re-examine their costs in the light of this, and re-present the breakdown of their rents. Any judgement about the reasonableness of support charges should therefore be based on the criteria in paragraph 19 below.

19 In deciding whether a charge is excessive, you should take several factors into account.

- * **the needs of the tenant** the charge for the support service should be reasonable with regard to the tenant's needs. As the need for support will vary, the charge for different types of support will also vary accordingly.

For example, the cost of providing support to enable long-term rough sleepers to live successfully in their accommodation may be higher than the cost of similar services for another group of homeless tenants.

- * **high charges may not be excessive** the fact that a charge for a support service is high does not mean that it is excessive.

For example, charges for support services to tenants in women's refuges, particularly in respect of maintaining the security of the dwelling, may be higher than charges for support services typically provided by a warden to elderly tenants in sheltered housing.

- * **comparable charges** many providers are only partially dependent on charges for rent and support and may also receive funding from other statutory or charitable sources. It is therefore not sufficient to compare one charge with another, instead you should consider whether the overall cost of that service in that particular scheme is excessive when compared with the overall cost of similar services in similar schemes. You should also remember that the unit cost of providing support services may be higher in small scale schemes than in those with a large number of supported accommodation units.

Example 1

2 supported accommodation providers, both voluntary organisations, both providing tenants with similar needs with the same level of GC&S at a gross weekly cost of £60.

The first provider is able to meet some of this cost from alternative sources of income and so charges each tenant £15 a week towards this as part of the rent.

The second provider is unable to obtain alternative funding for this particular service and therefore charges the full amount.

As the overall cost is not excessive both charges are reasonable.

Example 2

2 supported accommodation providers, both voluntary organisations, both providing tenants with similar needs with the same levels of support.

The first provider provides GC&S to 100 tenants, and charges £30 per week to each tenant for the service provided.

The second provider provides the same GC&S to 10 tenants, and charges £40 per week to each tenant for the service provided.

Both charges are reasonable if the overall cost is not excessive and the difference in charge is attributable to the different numbers of tenants in each scheme

Note 8 – Extract covering paragraph 6(ii) of circular HB/CTB A47/99

(A claimant must be living in “supported accommodation” to be eligible for help with support charges under the transitional HB scheme)

6 Accommodation is **supported accommodation** for the purposes of the transitional scheme -

6(1)

6(11) where it is occupied by a private sector tenant who holds a valid community care assessment (cca) ⁽²⁾

[Note⁽²⁾ A person who is aged 18 or over holds a valid cca where social services have confirmed that.

- * under the community care provisions (ie, under section 47 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 or section 12A of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968) the tenant has a need for any of the support services eligible under Schedule 1B (see paragraph 11 et seq below), and
- the landlord (or someone acting on his behalf) is capable of providing that support to the tenant See paragraph 39 et seq for more information.]

Note 9 – Proportion of private sector cases referred to Social Services

Give the proportion of private sector tenants in question 3 1 who have been referred to Social Services for a CCA Include here those cases where you have written to the claimant advising them to contact Social Services to request an assessment (see the draft letter at Appendix 3 of circular HB/CTB A8/2000 or A8/2000 (Scotland))

Note 10 – Proportion of CCAs carried out by Social Services

Give the proportion of those private sector cases referred to Social Services as in note 9 above where Social Services have carried out a CCA. Include here those cases where you have received a proforma completed by Social Services as in Appendix 1 of circular HB/CTB A8/2000 or A8/2000 (Scotland).

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This report presents the results of research to identify local authorities' progress in implementing the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme (THBS). The main aims were to find out how local authorities were progressing in identifying customers in supported accommodation, contacting providers, and reviewing claims. The research was based on a self-completion postal questionnaire that was sent to and returned by almost 400 authorities in summer 2000. This survey was conducted in-house by the DSS's Social Research Branch.

The Department of Social Security Social Research Branch is responsible for commissioning and managing the Department's research programme. The research programme serves the information needs of Ministers, the Department and its Agencies. Research contributes to the development and implementation of new policies, and the monitoring and evaluation of existing policies. It also plays an important role in providing customer feedback on the Department's services.

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