



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Social Fund Cold Weather Payments for Great Britain

1 November 2014 to 16 January 2015

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Social Fund Cold Weather Payments for Great Britain from 1 November 2014 to 16 January 2015

Summary

This report provides figures on payments under the Cold Weather Payments scheme for the period starting Saturday 10 January 2015 and ending Friday 16 January 2015, as well as the total number of payments made during the 2014/15 season to date.

- For the 2014/15 season, we have estimated that there are 3.8 million eligible recipients of Cold Weather Payments. Of these, 2.1 million, or 55%, are in receipt of Pension Credit.
- There have been an estimated 15,400 Cold Weather Payments with an estimated expenditure of £385,000 in Great Britain between 10 January and 16 January 2015.
- Overall, there have been an estimated 26,600 payments to 15,700 recipients in the 2014/15 winter season to date, with an estimated expenditure of £665,000. Of these, it is estimated that 17,500 payments have been made to recipients of Pension Credit, with an estimated expenditure of £437,500.

Background

The Social Fund Cold Weather Payments scheme provides help to individuals on benefits who are the most vulnerable to the cold: older people in receipt of Pension Credit, disabled adults and children, and families with children under 5 who are in receipt of an income related benefit (Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support or Universal Credit). Full details on eligibility are available at <https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment/eligibility>.

The scheme runs from 1 November to 31 March each year. This is referred to as the Cold Weather Payments season.

The daily average temperatures are measured by the Met Office at a network of 93 weather stations across Great Britain. Each postcode area in the country is linked to one of these weather stations, based on the weather station that is in the location that best reflects that area's climate. The coverage areas for each weather station are determined by the Met Office using long-term climate information and are

reviewed each year. Full details of the weather stations included in the 2014/15 scheme, and their coverage areas of each weather station are available in the scheme regulations at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2014/2687>.

A payment of £25 is automatically made to those eligible in the coverage area of each weather station when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0 degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days. This is referred to as a trigger. Once there has been a trigger at a weather station, there will be no further payments in that area until a separate seven consecutive days of below freezing weather has been recorded or forecast at that station.

Performance Overview

Table 1 gives the estimated number of payments and expenditure made in the 2014/15 season up to 16 January 2015.

Table 1: Summary of 2014/15 Cold Weather Payments to 16 January 2015

| Estimated 2014/15 Cold Weather Payment figures up to 16 January 2015 | Great Britain | England | Scotland | Wales |
|--|---------------|-----------|----------|---------|
| Eligible Recipients | 3,807,400 | 3,197,000 | 380,000 | 230,000 |
| Eligible Recipients in receipt of Pension Credit | 2,109,600 | 1,776,000 | 205,000 | 128,000 |
| Triggers* | 12 | 1 | 12 | 0 |
| Total payments to all recipients | 26,600 | 800 | 25,800 | 0 |
| Total payments to those in receipt of Pension Credit | 17,500 | 500 | 17,000 | 0 |
| Total expenditure to all recipients | £665,000 | £20,000 | £645,000 | £0 |
| Expenditure to those in receipt of Pension Credit | £437,500 | £12,500 | £425,000 | £0 |
| Total recipients | 15,700 | 800 | 14,900 | 0 |
| Pension Credit recipients | 10,300 | 500 | 9,800 | 0 |

* The number of triggers in each country does not sum to the total as the coverage areas of some triggers cross National borders and are counted in two countries.

The table in Annex 1 shows where the triggers and expenditure have occurred in the 2014/15 season up to 16 January 2015.

Caveats

When using the Cold Weather Payment figures given in this report, the following points should be noted.

- The payment, recipient and expenditure figures used to report Cold Weather Payment statistics throughout the winter are estimates as information on the exact number of payments is not readily available. These figures are produced by determining the volume of eligible recipients in each weather station area at the start of the season and using these figures throughout the winter to estimate payments and expenditure based on the actual triggers recorded. Further details about this are given in the Methodology section below.
- The number of eligible recipients is not necessarily the total number of individuals benefitting from a Cold Weather Payment. Any individuals making a joint claim for one of the qualifying benefits, such as a couple living together, will receive one payment between them rather than one payment each.
- Universal Credit is a qualifying benefit for Cold Weather Payments. These Cold Weather Payments are currently paid clerically. Cold Weather Payments to Universal Credit recipients are not currently included in estimates in this release, due to the small volumes of payments to these claimants expected during 2014/15.

Methodology

- A scan of the benefit systems is run at the end of October to determine those who are eligible to receive payments in each weather station area at that point.
- Eligibility will change over the winter as potential recipients flow on and off benefits. Adjustments are made to the figures to reflect these flows. Historical differences between the figures estimated at the start of the season and actual payments made at the end of the season are used to adjust the figures from the scan to take this into account. These adjustment figures have been calculated using the 2010/11 season results; this year is the latest for which the actual end-of-season figures is available.
- The figures produced for each weather station are rounded to the nearest 100. The relatively high rounding is used to allow for the likelihood that the number eligible in each weather station area will vary over the winter.

- The overall figures for Great Britain are produced by summing the estimated figures for each weather station.
- As the figures are only available by weather station area, we cannot split the Great Britain figures down by country directly. Some weather station areas cross the England/Scotland or England/Wales borders and we do not know the exact country of residence of Cold Weather Payment recipients in these areas. We have produced the England, Scotland and Wales figures by estimating the proportion of recipients in each country based on the country of residence of the general benefit population in these weather station areas. As a result of the added uncertainty in this methodology, the national eligible recipient figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

These figures are used throughout the winter to estimate payment volumes and expenditure based on reported triggers in each weather station area.

Next Publication

The next update will be on 28 January 2015 and will cover Cold Weather Payments recorded up to and including 23 January 2015.

Contact Details

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Annex 1: 2014/15 Location of Triggers to 16 January 2015

| Weather station | Number of triggers |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Aboyne | 2 |
| Aviemore | 2 |
| Braemar | 2 |
| Cassley | 1 |
| Eskdalemuir | 1 |
| Loch Glascarnoch | 2 |
| Tulloch Bridge | 2 |
| Total | 12 |