



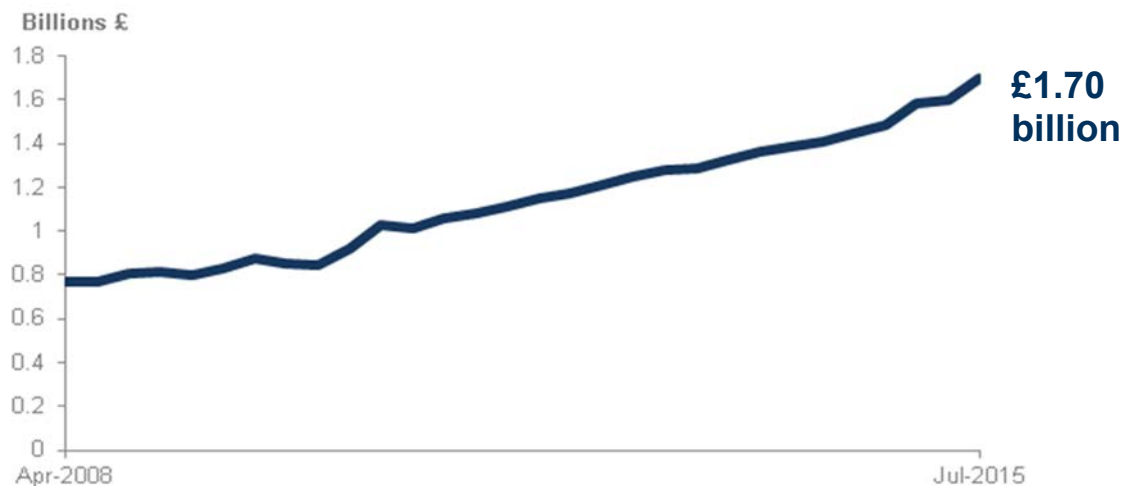
Housing Benefit is an income related benefit that is intended to help meet housing costs for rented accommodation. The statistics in this release are used to measure levels of fraud activity and to capture information on the amounts of benefit that are overpaid to claimants.

Main stories

During the first two quarters of 2015/16:

- £562 million Housing Benefit overpayments identified
- £315 million Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
- £40 million Housing Benefit overpayments written off

£1.70 billion Housing Benefit overpayments outstanding at July 2015



The total value of outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments continues to follow an increasing trend.

At July 2015 (the beginning of quarter 2, 2015/16) the total value of overpayments was around £1.70 billion.

This represents an increase of £253 million (18%) on this point the previous year.

At a glance

Page

HB overpayments outstanding

3

HB overpayments identified

4

HB overpayments recovered

5

HB overpayments written off

6

What you need to know

The latest National Statistics on Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) data produced by the Department for Work and Pensions were released on 23rd March 2016 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This release contains statistics relating to Housing Benefit fraud volumes and amounts of incorrectly overpaid benefit. It is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each Local Authority, but published bi-annually each March and September.

These statistics provide the Department with an overview of overpayment and fraud data relating to all benefits for which it is responsible for - not just for those benefits administered by DWP. They are used to measure levels of fraud activity and to capture information on the amounts of benefit that are overpaid to claimants.

These statistics are released on a six-monthly cycle. The publication in September covers finalised data for all four quarters of 2015/16. **Note, due to the phased roll out of the *Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)*, this publication includes only partial fraud data (See [Known Issues, Changes and Revisions](#) for further information).**

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Some Authorities do not send forms every quarter, or cannot answer all the questions on the form. This produces missing data in the returns which, in turn, affects the reported Great Britain totals. Statisticians can fill the gap created by missing data though imputing or estimating what the missing value might have been. Our methodology for this can be found [here](#).

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Thoughts? We welcome feedback

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Housing Benefit Overpayments Outstanding at the Start of the Quarter

The chart below show the cumulative amount of outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments (based on current prices) in Great Britain since April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments outstanding in Great Britain is steadily increasing

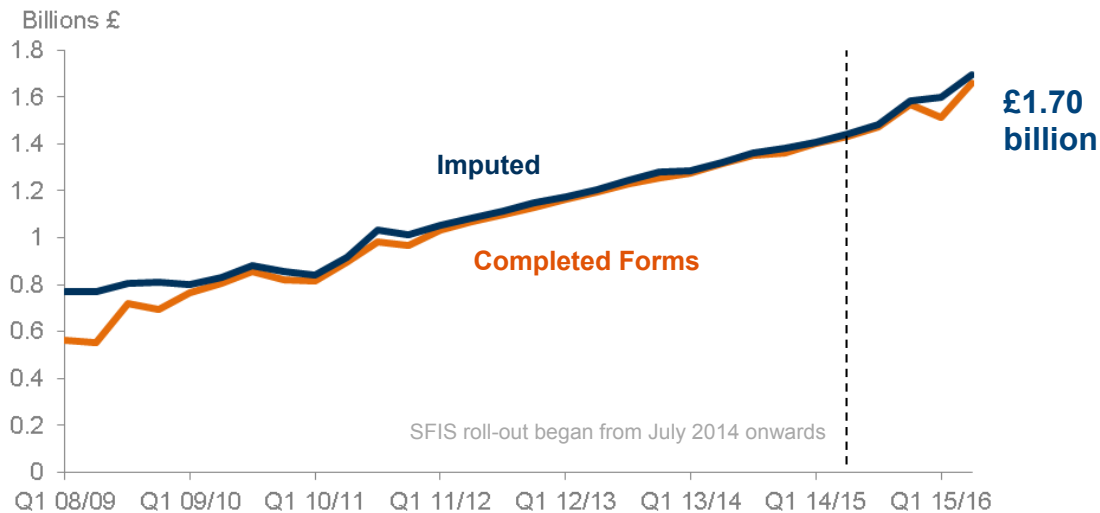
Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments outstanding at the start of the quarter

		£		
Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2014/15	Q1	1,403,016,000	1,407,680,000	0%
	Q2	1,433,239,000	1,442,870,000	1%
	Q3	1,473,271,000	1,481,323,000	1%
	Q4	1,566,572,000	1,585,430,000	1%
2015/16	Q1	1,514,839,000	1,596,824,000	5%
	Q2	1,661,555,000	1,695,614,000	2%

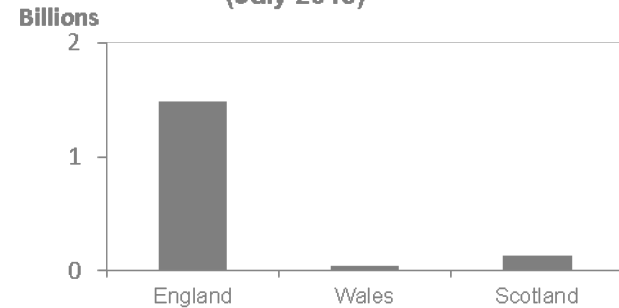
The total value of outstanding overpayments continues to follow an increasing trend.

The total GB value of HB overpayments outstanding at the beginning of July 2015 (quarter 2 of 2015/16) was around £1.70 billion; an increase of £253 million (18%) on this point the previous year.

Please see [Additional Information](#)



HB overpayments outstanding by country (July 2015)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been less aligned in the latest two quarters – indicating that there has been more missing data within recent [LA returns](#).



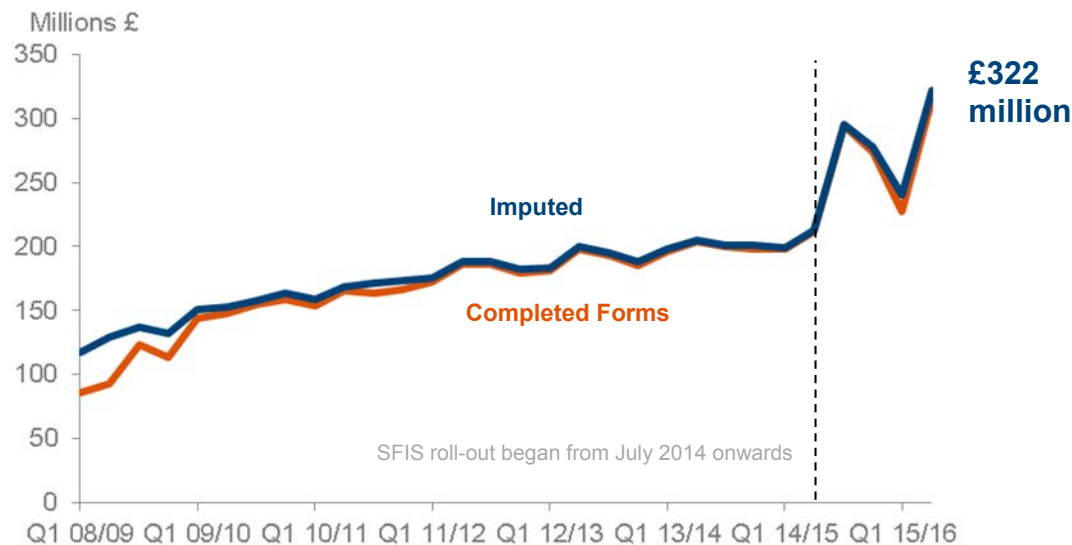
Housing Benefit Overpayments Identified During the Quarter

The chart below shows the value of Housing Benefit overpayments identified in each quarter going back to April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments identified in GB has risen sharply since June 2014

Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments identified during the quarter

				£
Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2014/15	Q1	197,663,000	198,564,000	0%
	Q2	211,212,000	212,631,000	1%
	Q3	293,862,000	295,468,000	1%
	Q4	273,833,000	277,129,000	1%
2015/16	Q1	227,610,000	239,928,000	5%
	Q2	315,153,000	321,613,000	2%



Generally, an upward trend is seen in the total value of overpayments identified with more overpayments being identified in the middle of each year. For 2014/15 the greatest value of overpayments (58%) were identified in the second half of the year.

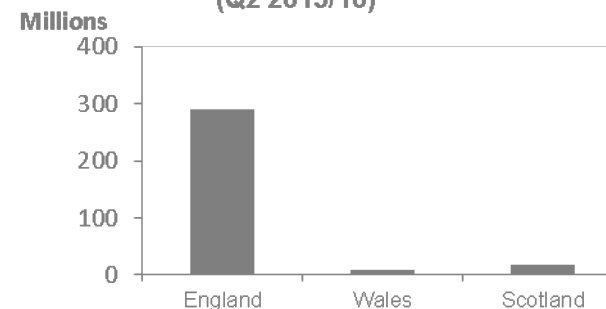
During the first 2 quarters of 2015/16 the total value of HB overpayments identified was £562 million; an increase of £150 million (37%) compared with the same period the previous year.

The total value of overpayments identified decreased from £277 million at March 2015 (Q4 of 2014/15) to £240 million at June 2015 (Q1 of 2015/16). This trend was observed over a large number of Local Authorities (LAs): the values decreased for around 65% of LAs, with 6 LAs seeing decreases of over £1million.

The total value of overpayments identified increased sharply in the latest quarter from £240 million at June 2015 (Q1) to £322 million at September 2015 (Q2). Again, the trend was observed over a large number of LAs: the values increased for around 72% of LAs, with 17 of them seeing increases of over £1 million.

Please see [Additional Information](#)

HB overpayments identified by country (Q2 2015/16)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been less aligned in the latest two quarters – indicating that there has been more missing data within recent [LA returns](#).



Housing Benefit Overpayments Recovered During the Quarter

The chart below shows the total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered each quarter since April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments recovered in GB is rising

Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered during the quarter

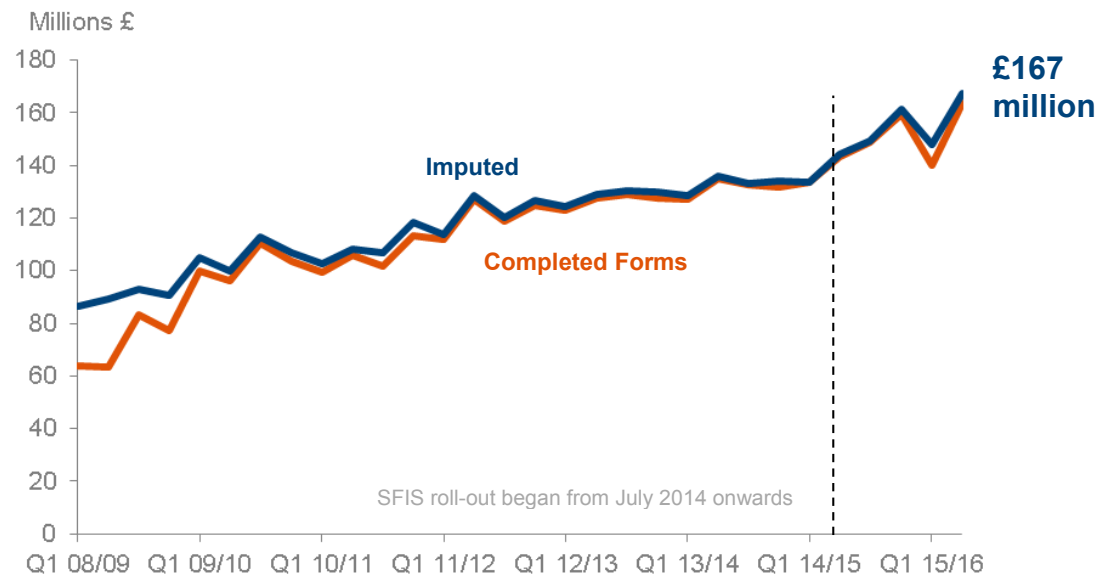
		£		
Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2014/15	Q1	133,353,000	133,796,000	0%
	Q2	143,445,000	144,409,000	1%
	Q3	148,658,000	149,471,000	1%
	Q4	159,300,000	161,217,000	1%
2015/16	Q1	140,157,000	147,743,000	5%
	Q2	163,741,000	167,097,000	2%

Historically, the total value of overpayments recovered has tended to vary seasonally between quarters, however overall it follows an upward trend.

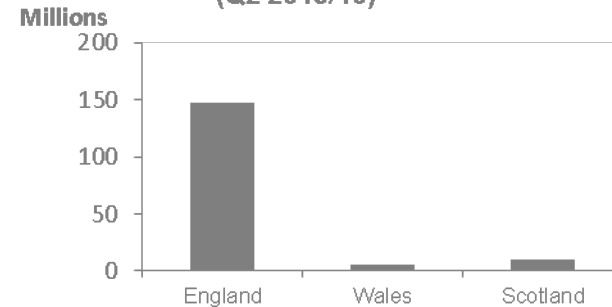
During the first 2 quarters of 2015/16 the total GB value of HB overpayments recovered was £315 million; an increase of £37 million (13%) compared with the same period the previous year.

The total value of overpayments recovered decreased from £161 million at March 2015 (Q4 of 2014/15) to £148 million at June 2015 (Q1 of 2015/16). This trend was observed over a large number of Local Authorities (LAs): the values decreased for approximately 63% of LAs, with 37 of them seeing decreases of over £100 thousand.

Please see [Additional Information](#)



HB overpayments recovered by country (Q2 2015/16)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been less aligned in the latest two quarters – indicating that there has been more missing data within recent [LA returns](#).

HB Overpayments Written Off During the Quarter



The chart below shows the total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered each quarter since April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments written off in GB continues to fluctuate

Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered during the quarter

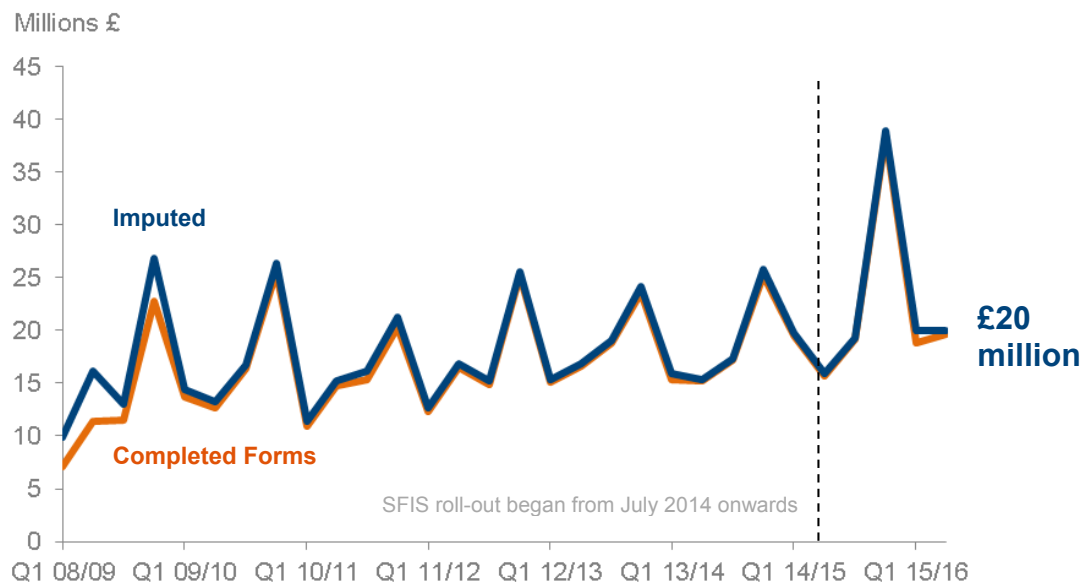
		£		
Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2014/15	Q1	19,482,000	19,802,000	2%
	Q2	15,728,000	15,923,000	1%
	Q3	19,170,000	19,275,000	1%
	Q4	38,486,000	38,950,000	1%
2015/16	Q1	18,852,000	19,976,000	6%
	Q2	19,613,000	20,015,000	2%

The total GB value of HB overpayments written off during the first 2 quarters of 2015/16 was £40 million; an increase of £4 million (12%) compared with the same period the previous year.

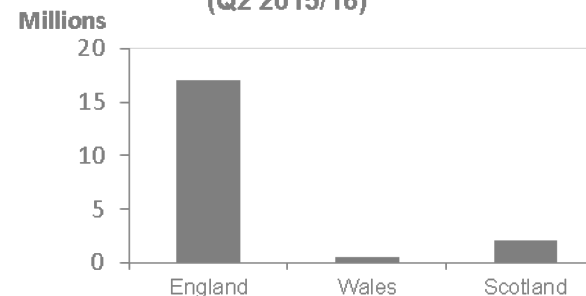
Historically, the total value of overpayments written off constantly changes throughout the year. It increased sharply at March 2014 (Q4 of 2014/15) when five LAs had overpayment amounts written off exceeding £1 million.

The total value of overpayments written off is generally highest in the fourth quarter (March) of each collection year. In line with this, March 2014 at almost £39 million is the highest recorded so far.

Please see [Additional Information](#)



HB overpayments written off by country (Q2 2015/16)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been less aligned in the latest two quarters – indicating that there has been more missing data within recent [LA returns](#).

HBRF Data – Collection Processes and Accuracy

Data Collection

The table below details the list of questions asked as part of the data collection process.

Field	Overpayment Questions
1	Total value of HB overpayments outstanding at the start of the quarter
2	Total value of HB overpayments identified during the quarter
3	Total value of HB overpayments recovered during the quarter
4	Total value of HB overpayments written off during the quarter

Average HBRF Data Return Rates

Collection Period	Average LA Return Rate (across all quarters)
2008 – 2009	89.7%
2009 – 2010	99.2%
2010 – 2011	99.5%
2011 – 2012	99.6%
2012 – 2013	99.8%
2013 – 2014	99.7%
2014 – 2015	99.3%
2015 – 2016	96.8% (First 2 quarters only)

Some Authorities cannot complete certain questions. Hence, the question level completion rate is often lower than the values quoted here. Therefore we publish additional estimates, allowing for imputation (at a Great Britain level only) to account for Authorities which could not provide data. These additional figures give a sense of scale of this impact.

The latest two quarters have seen the lowest average LA Return Rate since 2008/09.

Impact of Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)

Statistics at lower geographical levels are available via a set of separate [statistical tables](#). Due to the phased implementation of SFIS, the fraud statistics within this release will become less well populated – Great Britain summary information has been removed from this publication. Further information on this change can be found [here](#).

Additional Information

Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud is aggregate level data received from each Local Authority, and as such, is subject to a significant degree of variation both in and between different Local Authorities. In addition to fraud data, from 2014 we have observed a significant amount of variation in the overpayment data. This could be due to a wide range of factors such as: variations and issues with different authorities' software suppliers; reduced LA return rates; additional side affects due to the phased implementation of SFIS and factors unique to each LA (e.g. increases/decreases in resources, bulk clearing of historical overpayments).

About these statistics

Known Issues, Changes and Revisions

Our **Methodology** and **HBRF Background Information Note** provides further information on DWP National and HBRF statistics, including some of the processes involved in developing and releasing these statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-recoveries-and-fraud-data-methodology-and-definitions>

Further presentational changes have been made to the release. The introduction of a new Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS), which has now gone live in over 357 areas, has had a major impact on fraud statistics within this release. As a result of data collection and reporting timescales, **only partial Fraud statistics are available**. DWP is considering how best to approach the delivery of future fraud statistics (currently provided in separate summary tables). We will inform users of any changes accordingly in line with UKSA guidelines.

Other National and Official Statistics

Details of other National and Official Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions can be found on the DWP website via the following link:

- A schedule of statistical releases over the next 12 months and a list of the most recent releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>
- Detailed background notes and methodology relating to this First Release can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-recoveries-and-fraud-data-methodology-and-definitions>

Feedback

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at stats-consultation@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

An on-going questionnaire, enabling DWP to target future consultations at interested users; shaping the future direction of statistics development to address user needs; and helping ensure value for money, whilst giving users a structured way of expressing their views is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/205190/statistical_summary_questionnaire.doc

Completed questionnaires can be returned by e-mail to stats-consultation@dpw.gsi.gov.uk or by post to the following address:

Dissemination Team, Data and Analytics
Department for Work and Pensions
Room BP5201
Benton Park Road
Longbenton
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE98 1YX

Specific HBRF statistics feedback can also be submitted via our [HBRF user questionnaire](#)

Users can also join the “Welfare and Benefit Statistics” community at: <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk> DWP announces items of interest to users via this forum, as well as replying to users’ questions.

About these statistics

Supplementary Statistics

Tables containing the data that underlies the charts and figures featured in this statistical summary are [available](#).

These include information by local authority on outstanding overpayments at the beginning of each quarter and identified, recovered and written-off overpayments at the end of each quarter.

A range of fraud specific measures, including the number of full time fraud investigators, the number of fraud cases referred/closed, number of cautions offered and accepted, number of administrative penalties offered and accepted, number of cases accepted for prosecution (including guilty outcomes) are available for a small number of LAs. Breakdowns into cases with a DWP interest are also featured.

Uses and Users

Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each Local Authority (LA). This data is used to produce established statistics on measures of activity to detect fraud and to capture information on the amounts of benefit that are overpaid to claimants. They also provide a means of comparing and contrasting information between Local Authorities.

The data will also be used to feed into a range of briefings for Ministers and other senior officials and will be used to answer Parliamentary Questions. It will also be used for other policy functions including monitoring and informing changes to related policies.

Future Releases

The next release will be in September 2016. This will contain overpayments for the period October 2015 to March 2016 (quarters 3 and 4) and will be the third release following presentational changes.