

Freedom of Information request 1508/2012

Received 2 April 2012

Published 2012

Information request

- 1) What is / was the highest amount of housing benefit paid to any individual / family living in the Merseyside region for the years 2008/9 2009/10 2010/11?
- 2) What is / was the total amount of housing benefit paid out to individuals / families living in the Merseyside region for the period 2008/9 2009/10 2010/11?

DWP response

The information requested in part one is been withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. This exemption covers personal information about a third party. Disclosure of this information would breach the right to privacy contrary to the Data Protection Act.

For information, I attach (Annex A) a table showing Housing Benefit recipients by Average Weekly Award in Merseyside at December 2008, December 2009, December 2010 and December 2011. The table shows that at December 2011, there were 20 Housing Benefit recipients with an average weekly award of between £300 and £599.

The Government is reforming Housing Benefit to control Housing Benefit expenditure. Limits to the amount of Housing Benefit that people in the private and social rented sectors are entitled to, based on their household size, will encourage people to make sensible decisions about what they can reasonably afford, and encourage work incentives.

From April 2011 a number of changes have been made to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). LHA rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for most households renting in the private rented sector. In particular, LHA rates are now capped. The maximum weekly amount based on household size and bedroom entitlement is capped at:

- £250 per week for a one bedroom property,
- £290 per week for a two bedroom property,
- £340 per week for a three bedroom property,
- £400 per week for a four bedroom property.

The changes applied to new Housing Benefit-LHA claimants from April 2011. Existing Housing Benefit-LHA claimants have been given up to 9 months transitional protection from the review date of their claim so will be moved across gradually from January 2012.

These reforms are also intended to exert a downward pressure on rents in the private rented sector.

In response to part two of your request: Section 21 of the Act allows us to direct you to information which is already reasonably accessible to you.

You can access official statistics on Housing Benefit expenditure by Local Authority at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd4/index.php?page=expenditure> .

You may also be interested to be aware that the Department publishes a range of Housing Benefit National Statistics on its website at:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/index.php?page=hbctb_arc . The latest available information is at January 2012.

In addition, the Department has published Ad Hoc analysis on 6th December 2011 which provides further information on Housing Benefit recipients and average weekly award amounts by Local Authority and tenure type at:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis_2011_q4 .