Research report

Local Authority Omnibus Survey – Wave 21

by Claire Durrant, Elaine Winter and Darren Yaxley

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Department for Work and Pensions

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The Authors

Claire Durrant has been jointly responsible for managing the LA Omnibus Survey with her colleague Elaine Winter since Wave 6 in 2001. She joined GfK NOP in 1996, having previously worked for MORI, where she worked for seven years in the Social Research Unit, and before that, the Gallup Organisation. At GfK NOP she has worked on a wide variety of studies for central government, as well as local authorities and academics. This includes the British Household Panel Study and the Home On-Line Study, both run by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), based at the University of Essex, as well as other studies for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), including the Maternity Rights and Benefits Survey among employers and parents. She has also co-managed projects for Jobcentre Plus in recent years.

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Elaine and Claire were assisted with the management of the LA Omnibus Survey by their colleague, Darren Yaxley.

Darren Yaxley (Research Manager) joined GfK NOP in 2004 from the National Centre for Social Research having graduated from the University of Birmingham with a BA (with honours) in Political Science in July 2003. Since joining GfK NOP's Social Research team Darren has worked extensively for various public sector organisations, including both central and local government clients, using a variety of data collection methods. Darren has worked on 12 waves of the Local Authority Omnibus since joining. Darren is a full member the Market Research Society (MRS) and a member of the Social Research Association (SRA).

1 Information

1.1 Introduction and summary

Questions about the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) and its predecessors, the Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) and Housing Benefit Strategy Division – Information and Analysis Division (HBSD-IAD) scans, have been asked since Wave 14 of the local authority (LA) Omnibus Survey in order to find out how much time per month they usually take to run. At Waves 14-17 and also Waves 19 and 21 we asked LAs to split the length of time it takes to run the scan by the time it takes to carry out the actual run and the time taken for follow-up queries. However, for Wave 18 we asked LAs to combine the two. For this reason, it is not possible to compare the findings at Wave 18 with previous waves or with Waves 19 and 21.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

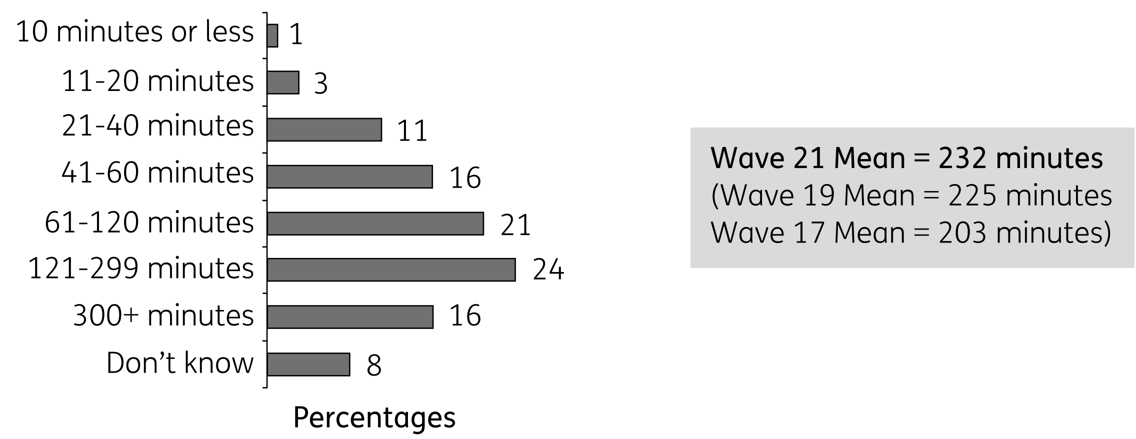
At Wave 21 although four per cent of LAs said that it took them 20 minutes or less to extract the data, 27 per cent said it took between 21 minutes and an hour, 21 per cent said between one and two hours, 24 per cent said between two and five hours and 16 per cent said longer than five hours.

Although one in four LAs (25 per cent) said that follow-up queries took less than 20 minutes, overall it took slightly longer than data extraction. Thirteen per cent said that it took between 21 minutes and an hour, 11 per cent said between one and two hours, 14 per cent between two and five hours, while a quarter (25 per cent) said that it took longer than five hours. Overall, it took LAs on average 403 minutes, which is significantly higher than the figure recorded for the equivalent run at Wave 17 (287 minutes).

1.2 Main findings

This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 1.1 On average, how many hours and minutes per month would you say it usually takes to extract the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) data scan from your system? (a) time taken to actually extract the data from your system



Base: All LAs (228).

At Wave 21, although four per cent of LAs said that it took them 20 minutes or less to extract the data, 27 per cent said it took between 21 minutes and an hour, 21 per cent said between one and two hours, 24 per cent said between two and five hours and 16 per cent said longer than five hours.

High caseload authorities spent significantly more time on the extraction of data for the SHBE than those with low and medium caseloads. The average number of minutes spent extracting data for high caseload authorities was 418 minutes compared with 103 minutes for those with a low and 124 minutes for those with a medium caseload. Analysis by LA type showed that London Boroughs spent the longest time on the extraction run with an average of 698 minutes. English Metropolitan authorities also recorded a significantly higher average run time at 491 minutes.

The figures recorded at Wave 21 are suitable for comparison with those recorded a year previously, when Wave 19 fieldwork was carried out, and also with Wave 17, which was conducted two years previously. In terms of the average amount of time taken across all LAs, there were no significant differences between Waves 17, 19 and 21.

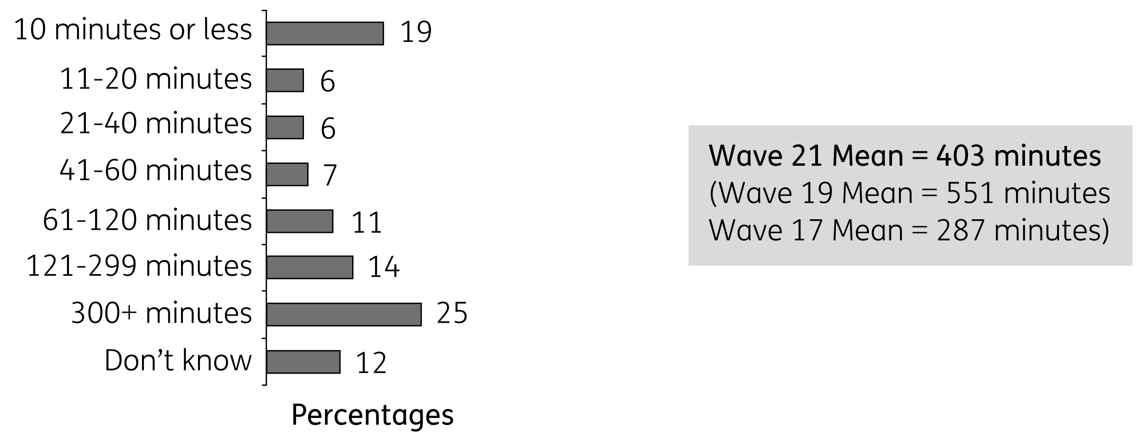
As Table 1.1 indicates, across all three waves of the LA Omnibus Survey, findings differed by size of caseload. At Wave 21, authorities with a high caseload recorded an average run time of 418 minutes, which is significantly higher than the findings for low and medium caseload LAs. There was a similar trend at Waves 17 and 19, suggesting that high caseload is a factor continuing to affect the length of the scan run.

Table 1.1 Average amount of time spent in minutes

	Wave 17	Wave 19	Wave 21
Bases	(226)	(221)	(228)
Total	203	225	232
Caseload			
Low	75	76	104
Medium	119	161	124
High	435*	387*	418 *

* Significantly higher than low and medium caseload LAs.

Figure 1.2 On average, how many hours and minutes per month would you say it usually takes to extract the SHBE data scan from your system? (b) any additional time taken to deal with follow-up queries or issues and cleaning the data



Base: All LAs (228).

Although one in four LAs (25 per cent) said that follow-up queries took less than 20 minutes, overall it took slightly longer than data extraction. Thirteen per cent said that it took between 21 minutes and an hour, 11 per cent said between one and two hours, 14 per cent between two and five hours, while a quarter (25 per cent) said that it took longer than five hours.

Overall, it took LAs, on average, 403 minutes at Wave 21, which is significantly higher than at Wave 17 (287 minutes).

Caseload appears to be one of the factors affecting the length of time taken to deal with queries. For instance those authorities with a high caseload took, on average, 668 minutes to deal with follow-up queries, which is significantly higher than those with a medium caseload (246 minutes on average), and those with a low caseload (227 minutes on average). Once again, there was a similar trend at Waves 17 and 19.

Authority types that appear to spend the longest times dealing with follow-up queries were English Metropolitan authorities (764 minutes), London Boroughs (741 minutes), Scottish authorities (741 minutes) and English Unitary authorities (605 minutes).

2 Efficiency Work Programme

2.1 Introduction and summary

This chapter reports on the findings of questions about the initiatives that local authorities (LAs) have included in their plans, or will include in the future, for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Housing Benefit (HB)/Council Tax Benefit (CTB) services. It also includes findings on LAs' awareness of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) resources available to support them plus LAs' views of the impact on HB services of the economic downturn.

Questions asked previously at Waves 17, 18 and 19 were repeated at Wave 21 to help DWP monitor and improve its support programme for LAs trying to achieve their own efficiencies over the remainder of the spending review period 2008-11 and beyond.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Most likely to be included in LAs' plans was On-line claim forms, which was mentioned by 77 per cent of LAs – a significantly higher percentage than mentioned it at Wave 19 (68 per cent). Around two in three mentioned Benchmarking (68 per cent), Organisational restructure (63 per cent), Improving IT (63 per cent), Homeworking (63 per cent) and Joint working/shared services (62 per cent). The percentage of LAs mentioning Organisational restructure has gone up since Wave 19 when just 55 per cent of LAs said it was included in their initiatives.

At Wave 21 we asked about the savings that each initiative **had** made rather than the savings that LAs **expected** to make. There would appear to be a substantial gap between what was expected at Wave 19 (and other previous waves) and achieved savings recorded at Wave 21. Around a half of LAs including Organisational restructure in their initiatives achieved a net saving (52 per cent) compared to three-quarters (73 per cent) that expected a net saving at Wave 19. Two in five (41 per cent) achieved net savings from Homeworking compared to the 63 per cent expected at Wave 19. Two in five also said they had achieved net savings from Accommodation changes (39 per cent) but this is much lower than the 70 per cent that expected such savings at Wave 19. One of the biggest gaps between expected savings and achieved savings was recorded for On-line claim forms: two-thirds (66 per cent) expected net savings at Wave 19 but only 27 per cent said they had achieved savings through this initiative at Wave 21.

At Wave 21 the initiatives that were recorded as having achieved net savings at a high level were Outsourcing (40 per cent), Organisational restructure (36 per cent), Accommodation changes (30 per cent) and Joint working/shared services (22 per cent). At Wave 19 savings at a high level were most likely to be expected from the same types of initiatives.

When LAs were asked about the barriers that they have had to overcome in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness, once again the current financial situation was seen as the greatest barrier (69 per cent). Staffing and resource constraints were once again mentioned by 68 per cent as a barrier (this has increased significantly over time from Wave 17 when it was mentioned by just 41 per cent). Budgetary control was raised as an issue by 58 per cent at Wave 21 which is largely in line with the findings from previous waves.

LAs were asked which resources they had used in the last year to support their plans to improve efficiency. The proportion of LAs that had used the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) at Wave 21 is similar to Wave 19 (68 per cent) while a significantly higher percentage had used the revised HB/CTB Good Practice Guide, previously known as the HB/CTB Performance and Good Practice Guide. The other key resource mentioned was Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), used by 56 per cent of LAs.

Generally, LAs described the resources used as useful, in particular the Performance Development Team Consultancy and CIPFA and to a lesser extent the IRRV and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships. The percentage of LAs that described the Performance Development Team Consultancy as very useful has increased significantly to its highest level so far at 56 per cent. In addition, two in five LAs (43 per cent) found CIPFA very useful, 31 per cent said that the IRRV was very useful and slightly fewer (27 per cent) described the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships as very useful. Each of these findings was in line with Wave 19.

All the interviewed authorities were asked to list the resources that they planned to use in the future for improving efficiency. The proportion planning to use the revised HB/CTB Good Practice Guide in the future was fairly high at three in five (60 per cent), with slightly fewer (54 per cent) planning to use the IRRV and 45 per cent planning to use CIPFA. These findings were broadly in line with the findings from Wave 19.

At Wave 19 we asked a couple of additional questions for the first time about the effect the economic downturn has had on HB/CTB services. These were repeated at Wave 21.

Almost all LAs said that they had experienced an increase in claim form and information requests and customer enquiries as a result of the economic downturn (97 per cent and 93 per cent), although both are down on Wave 19. Around three-quarters (72 per cent) had experienced an increase in debt management and a similar percentage (71 per cent) had noticed an increase in overpayment activity (which represents a significant increase from the 60 per cent recorded at Wave 19). In addition, 58 per cent of LAs had experienced an increase in take-up activity, which was a decrease on the Wave 19 level of 67 per cent.

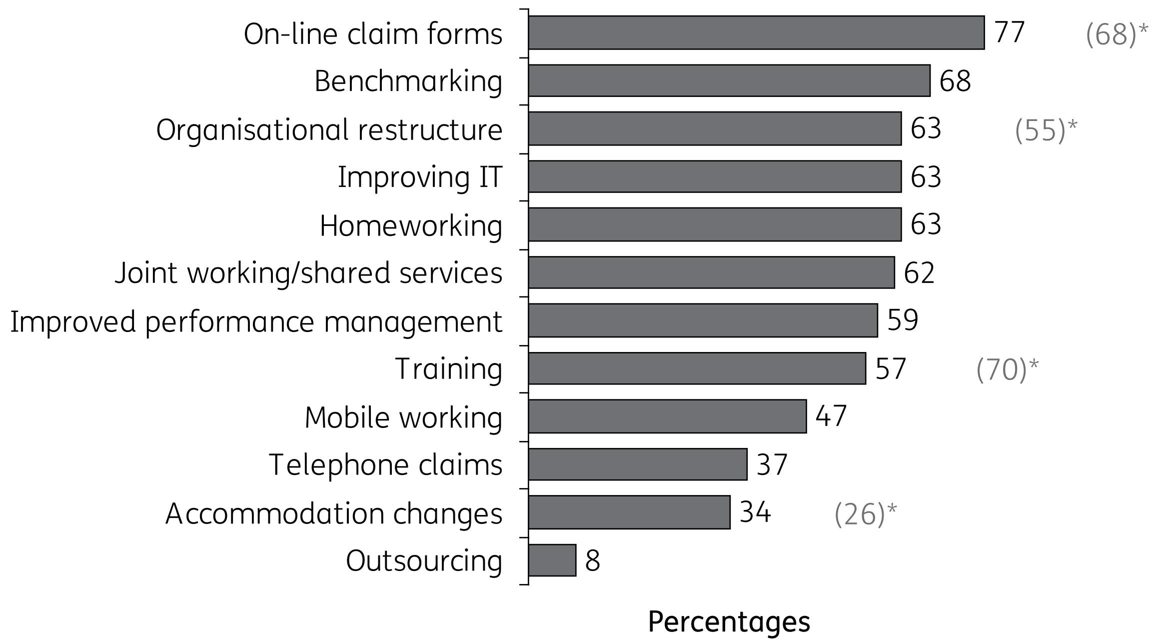
Four in five LAs (80 per cent) had implemented overtime to cope with the increase in caseload at Wave 19, however, at Wave 21 this had decreased significantly to 71 per cent. On the other hand, the percentage of LAs implementing Business Process Engineering has increased significantly as a means to cope with a higher caseload, from 41 per cent at Wave 19 to 52 per cent at Wave 21. At Wave 19, 65 per cent had employed additional staff but significantly fewer LAs (47 per cent) were doing this at Wave 21. In addition, fewer than half had reallocated existing resources (46 per cent) or employed agency staff (38 per cent, down from 45 per cent at Wave 19).

A new question was asked at Wave 21 about whether or not the impact of the economic downturn had lessened so far in 2010 compared with 2009. Two-thirds (66 per cent) said it had not lessened and 29 per cent said that it had.

2.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 2.1 Which of the following initiatives are included in your LA's overall plans to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your HB/CTB services?



Base: All LAs (228).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

The first question asked: 'Which of the following initiatives are included in any of your LA's overall plans to **improve the efficiency and effectiveness** of your HB/CTB services?'

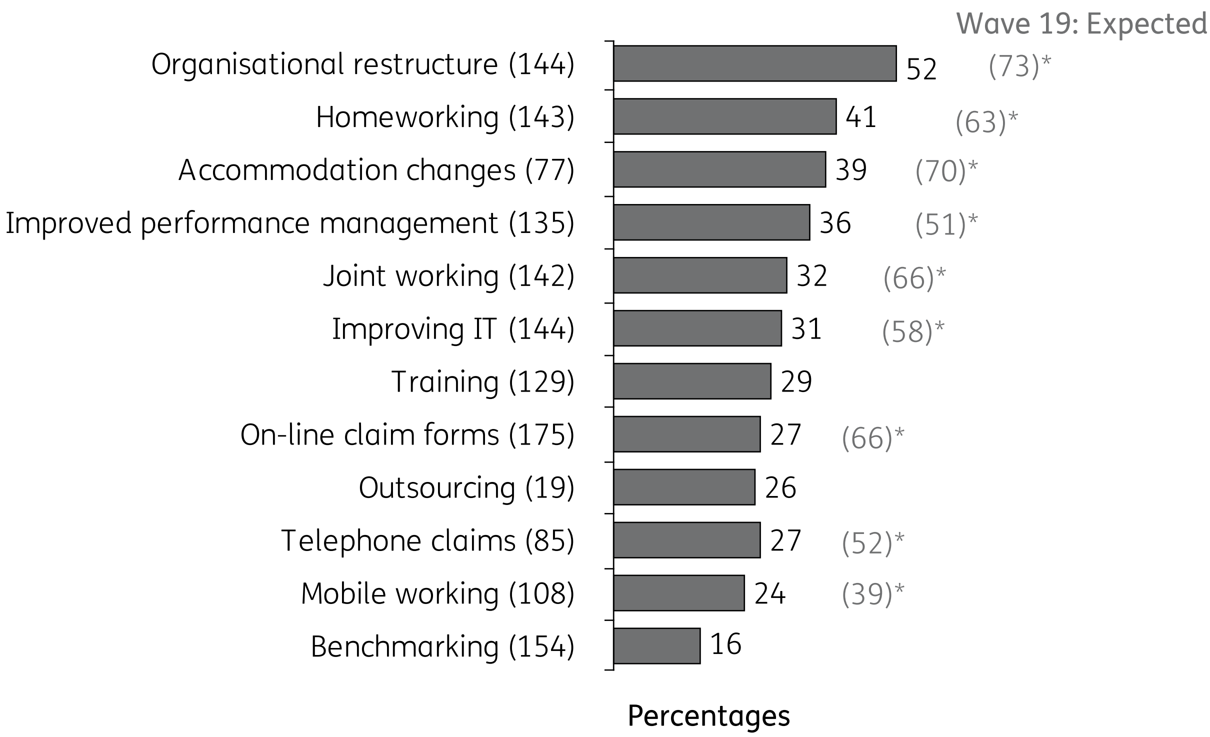
Most likely to be included in LA's plans was On-line claim forms, which was mentioned by 77 per cent of LAs and was significantly higher than the percentage of LAs mentioning it at Wave 19 (68 per cent). Around two in three mentioned Benchmarking (68 per cent), Organisational restructure (63 per cent), Improving IT (63 per cent), Home-working (63 per cent) and Joint working/shared services (62 per cent). The percentage of LAs mentioning Organisational restructure has gone up since Wave 19 when just 55 per cent of LAs said it was included in their initiatives.

In addition, almost three in five LAs cited Improved performance management and Training (59 per cent and 57 per cent respectively). The percentage mentioning Training was down from 70 per cent at Wave 19.

Fewer (47 per cent) mentioned Mobile working (47 per cent) and Telephone claims (37 per cent). Accommodation changes were mentioned by a third (34 per cent) and this was up from around a quarter (26 per cent) at Wave 19. Just eight per cent mentioned Outsourcing and not shown on the chart was Lean systems (three per cent) and Voice Risk Analysis (two per cent).

There were only a few significant differences in the findings by LA type. English Districts were significantly more likely to have included Joint working/shared services in their plans than other LA types (77 per cent), while English Metropolitan Districts were particularly likely to have included Improving IT in their plans (93 per cent).

Figure 2.2 Which of the initiatives included in your LA's plans have achieved a net saving?



Base: All LAs using initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HB/CTB services (base sizes shown on chart).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

At this wave of the LA Omnibus Survey the question about savings was asked differently. At Wave 21 the question asked about savings that **have been** made rather than the savings that LAs **expected** to make.

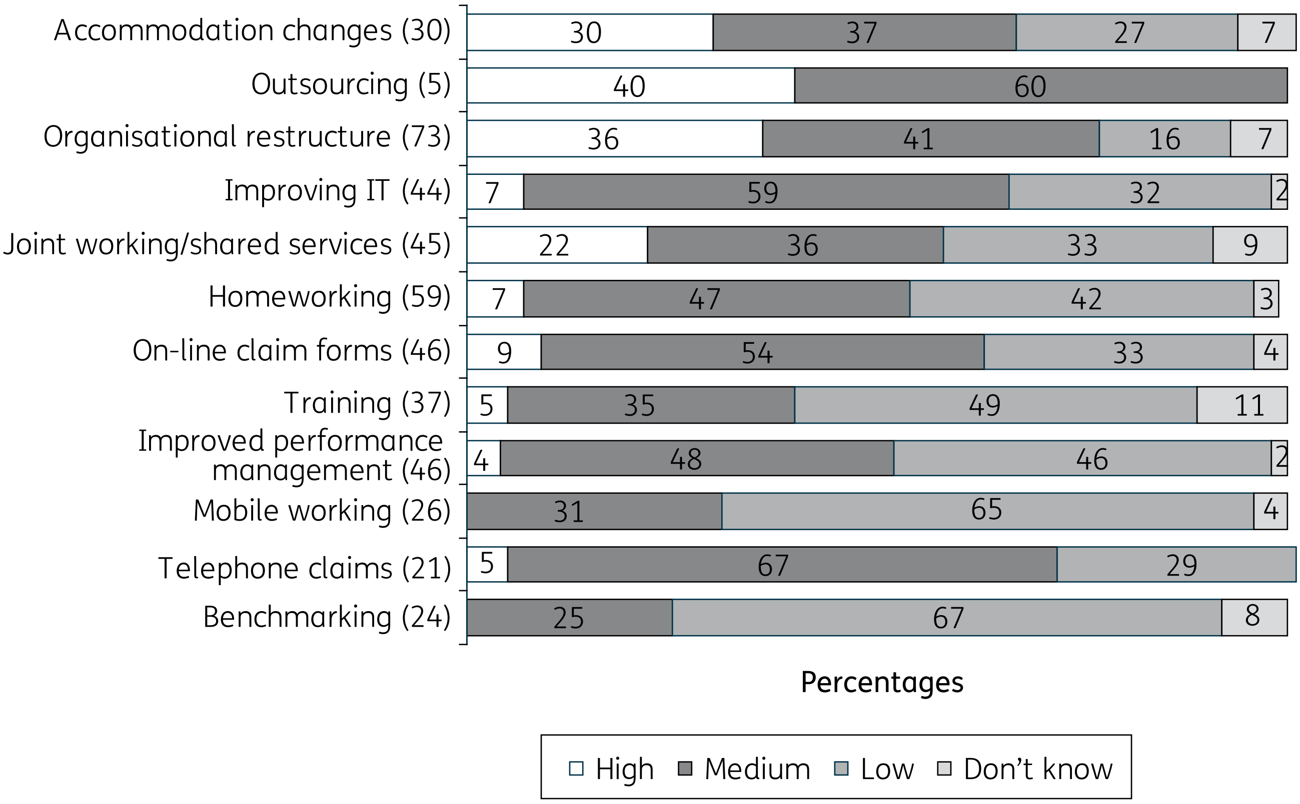
As the (highlighted) significant changes in Figure 2.2 show, there appears to be a substantial gap between what was expected at Wave 19 (and other previous waves) and achieved savings recorded at Wave 21.

Around half of LAs including Organisational restructure in their initiatives achieved a net saving (52 per cent) compared to three-quarters (73 per cent) that expected a net saving at Wave 19. Two in five (41 per cent) achieved net savings from Homeworking compared to the 63 per cent expected at Wave 19. Two in five also said they had achieved net savings from Accommodation changes (39 per cent) but this is much lower than the 70 per cent that expected such savings at Wave 19.

Around a third said that Improved performance management (36 per cent), Joint working (32 per cent) and Improving IT (31 per cent) achieved net savings and again, there is a significant gap between these figures and savings expected at Wave 19 (51 per cent, 66 per cent and 58 per cent respectively).

One of the biggest gaps between expected savings and achieved savings was recorded for On-line claim forms: two-thirds (66 per cent) expected net savings at Wave 19 but only 27 per cent said they had achieved savings through this initiative at Wave 21. Telephone claims were also less effective than expected: 52 per cent expected net savings at Wave 19 but just 27 per cent had achieved them at Wave 21. In addition, 39 per cent expected to achieve net savings from Mobile working at Wave 19 but at Wave 21 only 24 per cent had actually done so. This group of one in four LAs was significantly less likely to have comprised high caseload authorities; just 13 per cent said that Mobile working had achieved a net saving at Wave 21 compared with 33 per cent of low caseload and 31 per cent of medium caseload LAs.

Figure 2.3 Would you say that this net saving is high, medium or low?

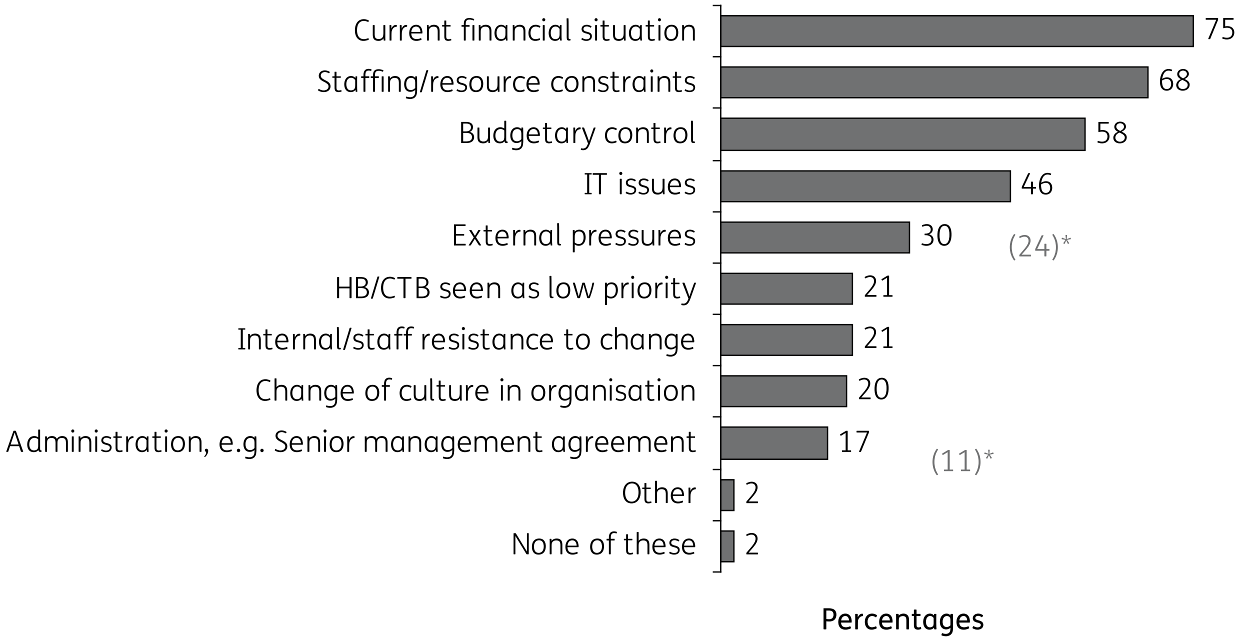


Base: All LAs that expect planned net savings to be achieved (base sizes shown on chart).

At Wave 21 the initiatives that were recorded as having achieved net savings at a high level were Outsourcing (40 per cent), Organisational restructure (36 per cent), Accommodation changes (30 per cent) and Joint working/shared services (22 per cent). At Wave 19 savings at a high level were most likely to be expected from the same types of initiatives.

Interestingly, slightly higher percentages of LAs achieved higher levels of savings than they expected a year ago. However, only Organisational restructure has gone up significantly, from 16 per cent at Wave 19 to 36 per cent at Wave 21. (It should also be noted, however, that for this initiative savings at a **low** level had also increased significantly from three per cent at Wave 19 to 16 per cent at Wave 21.)

Figure 2.4 Which, if any, of the following barriers do you feel your LA will need to overcome in trying to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your service?



Base: All LAs (228).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

LAs were asked about the barriers that they have had to overcome in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness. At Wave 18 a new category was seen to be the greatest barrier: the current financial situation, mentioned by more than two-thirds (69 per cent). This has remained the case over recent waves: at both Waves 19 and 21 three-quarters (74 per cent and 75 per cent respectively) said this was the greatest barrier.

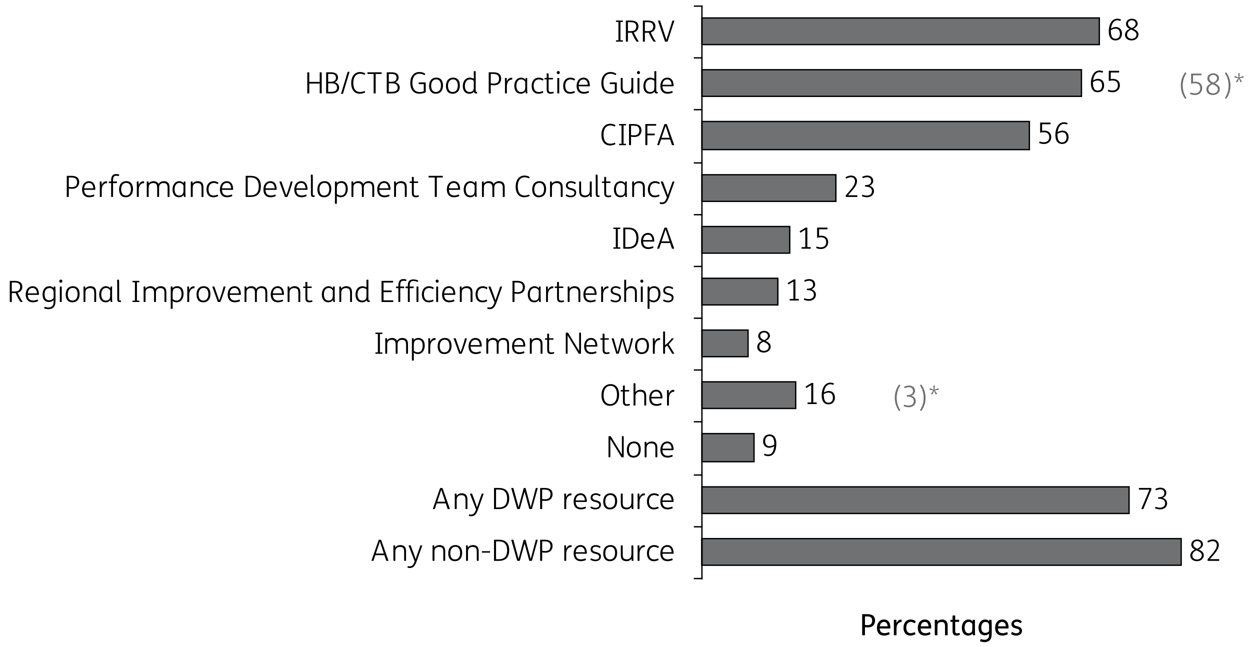
There were two significant changes in the findings between Wave 19 and Wave 21. The percentage mentioning external pressures has gone up significantly from a quarter (24 per cent) at Wave 19 to 30 per cent at Wave 21 and Administration has gone up significantly from 11 per cent at Wave 19 to 17 per cent at Wave 21.

Staffing and resource constraints were once again mentioned by 68 per cent as a barrier (this has increased significantly over time from Wave 17 when it was mentioned by just 41 per cent). Budgetary control was raised as an issue by 58 per cent at Wave 21 which is largely in line with the findings from previous waves.

Interestingly, when comparing the findings for Internal/staff resistance to change with previous waves of the survey, a significantly higher proportion mentioned it at Wave 17 than at both Waves 19 and 21 (32 per cent at Wave 17 compared to 22 per cent at Wave 19 and 21 per cent at Wave 21).

There are a few significant differences between sub-groups that are worth mentioning: Firstly, high caseload authorities were significantly more likely than low and medium caseload authorities to have mentioned Internal management/staff resistance to change (30 per cent compared to 13 per cent and 18 per cent respectively) and Administration, e.g. Senior management agreement (24 per cent compared to 13 per cent and 11 per cent respectively). Secondly, Scottish LAs were particularly likely to have cited ‘HB/CTB seen as a low priority’ (48 per cent).

Figure 2.5 Which, if any, of the following resources that can support your LA's plans to deliver your HB/CTB service more efficiently and effectively have you used in the last year?



Base: All LAs (228).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

LAs were asked which resources they had used in the last year to support their plans to improve efficiency. This question had been asked in previous waves using a slightly different list of DWP resources. The list changed from LA Efficiency section of the DWP resource website, Revised Performance and Good Practice Guide and Performance Development Team Consultancy at previous waves of the survey to HB/CTB Good Practice Guide and Performance Development Team Consultancy at Wave 21.

The findings for Wave 21 were very similar to those at Wave 19 and while broadly similar to those for Waves 18 and 17 there are some differences that are worth mentioning. The proportion of LAs using the IRRV has fallen back slightly since Wave 18 (to 68 per cent for Wave 21) but it is still significantly higher than those using it at Wave 17 (60 per cent).

The proportion of LAs that used the revised HB/CTB Good Practice Guide, previously known as the HB/CTB Performance and Good Practice Guide, has increased to 65 per cent at Wave 21 which is in line with Wave 17 and 18 (65 per cent and 68 per cent respectively) having dropped to 58 per cent at Wave 19.

The other key resource was CIPFA which was used by a very similar percentage of LAs as at Wave 19.

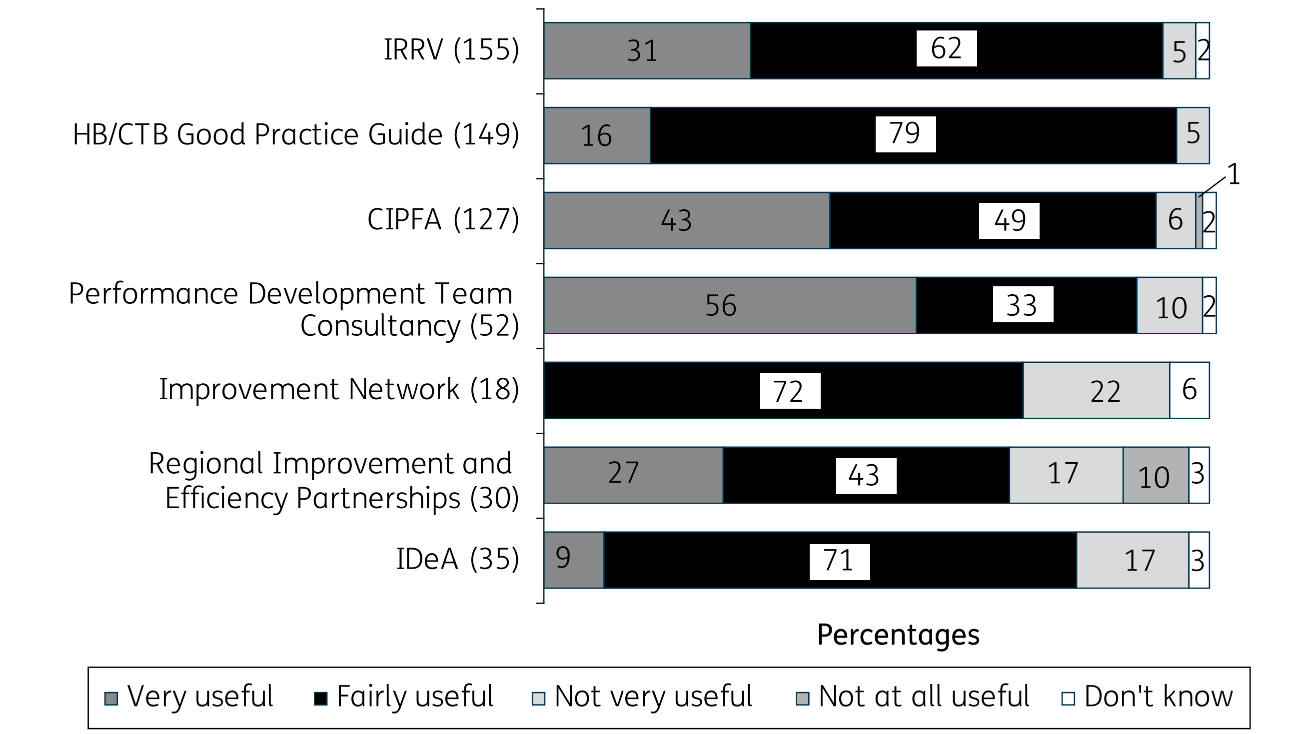
The percentage saying that they used Other resources has gone up from three per cent at Wave 19 to 16 per cent at Wave 21. A list of these verbatim answers is shown in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 Resources LAs had used in the last year to support their plans to improve efficiency (verbatim answers)

Other answer	Number of LAs
HB Info	5
Audit Commission (reports or inspection)	4
ACS consultancy services	3
External consultancy/support	3
Greater Manchester Group	2
Meritec	2
Vanguard	2
Lean consultants	1
LA Directories	1
Benefits Directory	1
Local Benchmarking and sharing of ideas	1
LA Improving Service Delivery Group	1
Business improvement course via City College, Plymouth.	1
Capita and Civica software companies	1
Benchmarking	1
Housing Associations verifying claims	1
PSIF, NPMF	1
User group	1
Shark Training Package and hb.info.org	1
Locta/Experian	1
LA Continuous Improvement Officers	1
Other LAs	1

There were very few significant differences by sub-group but the one that stands out is about LAs that used CIPFA. High and medium caseload LAs were significantly more likely to have used CIPFA than low caseload LAs (63 per cent, 59 per cent and 40 per cent respectively).

Figure 2.6 How useful have you found this/these resource(s) to date?



Base: All LAs that have used ... in the last year (base sizes shown on chart).

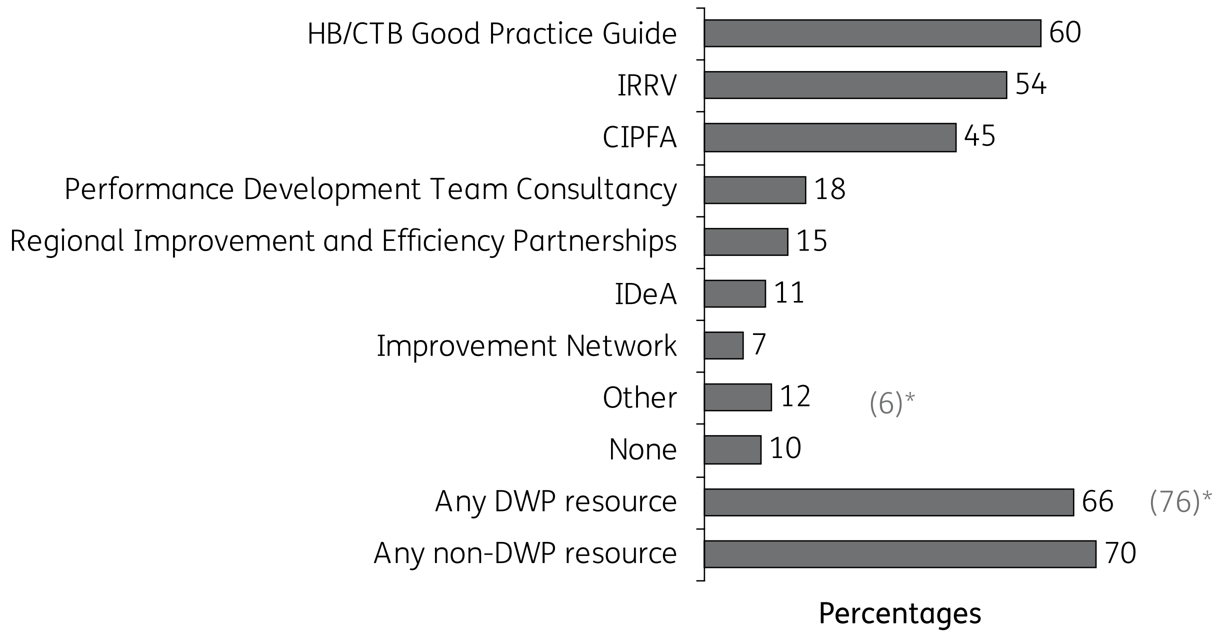
LAs that used resources to support their plans were asked how useful each of them had been. Generally LAs described the resources as useful, in particular the Performance Development Team Consultancy and CIPFA and to a lesser extent the IRRV and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships.

The percentage of LAs that had used the Performance Development Team Consultancy and described it as very useful decreased at Wave 19 from 45 per cent at Wave 18 to just 30 per cent (it was 37 per cent at Wave 17). However, at Wave 21 this increased significantly to its highest level so far of 56 per cent.

Two in five LAs (43 per cent) found CIPFA very useful, which was very much in line with the Wave 19 finding (45 per cent). Also in line with the Wave 19 finding was the percentage finding the IRRV useful (31 per cent compared with 37 per cent at Wave 19).

However, not one LA out of the 18 asked said that the Improvement Network was very useful. This was also the case at Wave 18, compared with 20 per cent at Wave 19.

Figure 2.7 Which, if any, of these resources, does your LA plan to use as part of your plans to deliver your HB/CTB service more efficiently and effectively in the future?



Base: All LAs (228).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

All the interviewed authorities were asked to list the resources that they planned to use in the future for improving efficiency.

Looking firstly at DWP resources overall and the findings from previous waves. At Wave 19, significantly fewer LAs than at Wave 18 said that they planned to use DWP resources (76 per cent compared to 83 per cent). This trend appears to have continued at Wave 21, with just two-thirds (66 per cent) saying that they planned to use any DWP resource. While this difference may be due to the fact that the LA Efficiency Section of the DWP website was no longer included on the list of resources, it is nonetheless worth noting this trend.

The proportion planning to use the HB/CTB Good Practice Guide was fairly high at three in five (60 per cent), with slightly fewer (54 per cent) planning to use the IRRV and 45 per cent planning to use CIPFA. These findings, and those for the remaining resources, were also broadly in line with the findings from Wave 19.

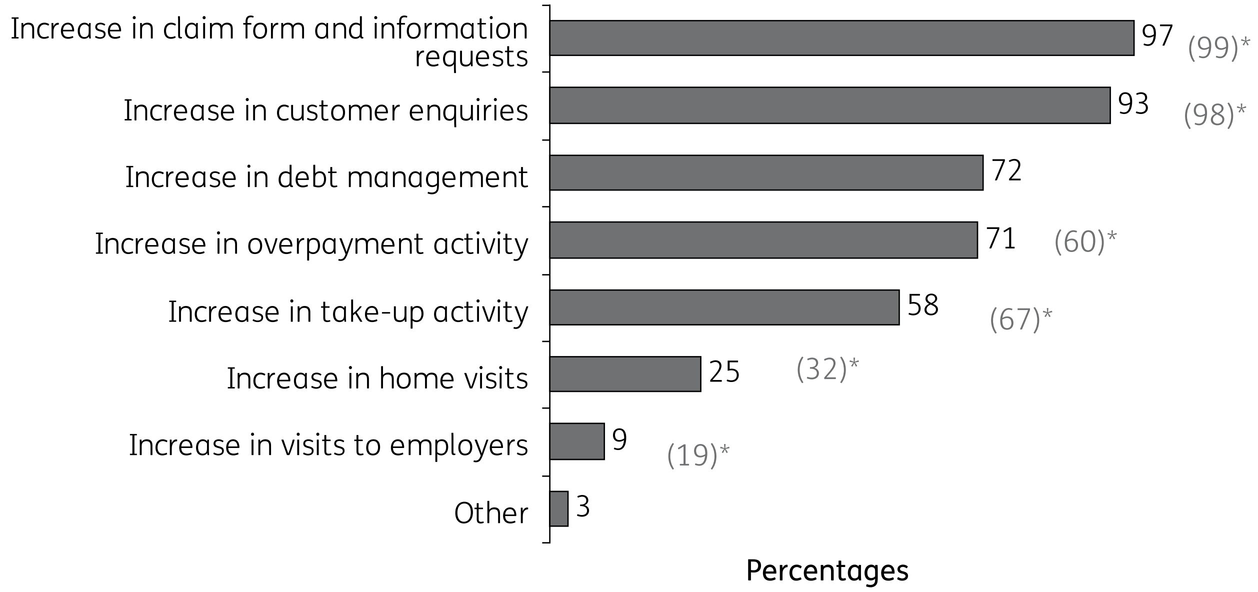
It is interesting to note that the numbers planning to use Other resources in the future has gone up from six per cent at Wave 19 to 12 per cent at Wave 21. This is a significant difference. A list of these verbatim answers is shown in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2 Resources LAs planned to use in the future to improve efficiency (verbatim answers)

'Other' answer	Number of LAs
HB information	4
ACS consultancy services	3
Benchmarking	2
Capita	2
Civica software companies	1
Consultancy review	1
Vanguard	1
External consultancy	1
Greater Manchester Group	1
ISD Group	1
Joint working partnerships	1
LA Continuous Improvement Officers	1
Lead Service Reviews	1
Locta/Experian	1
Our own forward thinking management	1
PSIF, NPMF	1
Risk Based Verification	1
Shared services	1
User group	1
Whole System Thinking Review	1
Working with other LA	1
Shark Training Package	1

Interestingly, high and medium caseload LAs were significantly more likely than low caseload authorities to have said that they were planning to use non-DWP resources (71 per cent, 78 per cent and 58 per cent respectively). In addition, high caseload LAs were significantly more likely than medium caseload LAs to be planning to use DWP resources (72 per cent compared to 57 per cent).

Figure 2.8 For your HB/CTB services in 2009 and so far in 2010, which of the following impacts, if any, have you experienced as a result of the economic downturn?



Base: All LAs (228).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

At Wave 19 we asked a couple of additional questions for the first time about the effect the economic downturn has had on HB/CTB services. These were repeated at Wave 21.

Almost all LAs said that they had experienced an increase in claim form and information requests and customer enquiries (97 per cent and 93 per cent), although both are down on Wave 19.

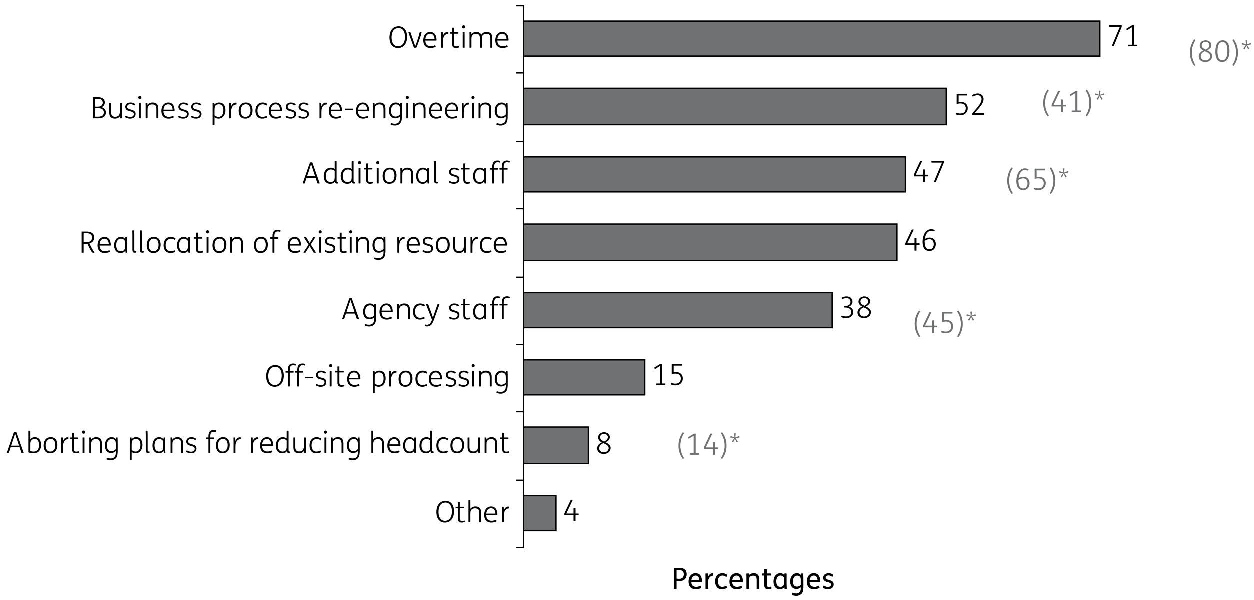
Approximately three-quarters (72 per cent) had experienced an increase in debt management and a similar percentage (71 per cent) had noticed an increase in overpayment activity (which represents a significant increase from the 60 per cent recorded at Wave 19).

In addition, 58 per cent of LAs had experienced an increase in take-up activity, which was a decrease on the Wave 19 level of 67 per cent.

Just a quarter (25 per cent) said that they were doing more home visits at Wave 21 and is again down significantly from the third (32 per cent) that said they were doing this at Wave 19.

One in 11 (nine per cent) had been making more visits to employers and this has dropped significantly from 19 per cent at Wave 19.

Figure 2.9 Which of the following, if any, have you implemented in order to cope with any increase in your caseload/workload and/or other activities (as a result of the economic downturn)



Base: All LAs (228).
* Denotes a significant difference to the Wave 19 finding.

Four in five LAs (80 per cent) had implemented overtime to cope with the increase in caseload at Wave 19, however, at Wave 21 this had decreased significantly to 71 per cent.

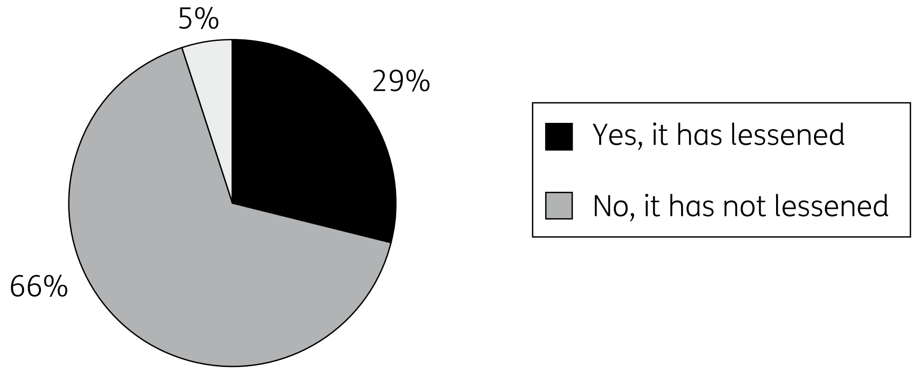
On the other hand, the percentage of LAs implementing Business Process Engineering has increased significantly as a means to cope with a higher caseload, from 41 per cent at Wave 19 to 52 per cent at Wave 21.

At Wave 19, 65 per cent had employed additional staff but significantly fewer LAs (47 per cent) were doing this at Wave 21.

Fewer than half had reallocated existing resources (46 per cent) or employed agency staff (38 per cent, down from 45 per cent at Wave 19) and 15 per cent have implemented Off-site processing. Just eight per cent had aborted plans for reducing the headcount (down from 14 per cent at Wave 19).

There were just a few significant differences by sub-group: Firstly, a significantly higher proportion of London Boroughs said that they had employed agency staff (62 per cent) and secondly, high caseload authorities were significantly more likely than low and medium caseload LAs to have reallocated existing resources (59 per cent, 37 per cent and 39 per cent respectively). In addition, high and medium caseload LAs were significantly more likely than low caseload authorities to have aborted any plans for reducing the headcount (eight per cent, 13 per cent and two per cent respectively) and to have implemented overtime (74 per cent, 78 per cent and 60 per cent respectively).

Figure 2.10 Would you say that the impact of the economic downturn on HB/CTB services has lessened so far in 2010 compared with 2009, or not?



Base: All LAs (228).

A new question was asked at Wave 21 about whether or not the impact of the economic downturn had lessened so far in 2010 compared with 2009. Two-thirds (66 per cent) said it had not lessened, compared with 29 per cent that said it had. A further five per cent said 'don't know'.

High and medium caseload LAs were significantly more likely than low caseload authorities to have said that the impact had not lessened (73 per cent, 68 per cent and 53 per cent respectively). In addition, LAs in Scotland were significantly more likely to have said that the impact had not lessened when compared with LAs in the East and West Midlands, the South East and South West and Wales (86 per cent, 50 per cent, 53 per cent, 62 per cent, 57 per cent and 50 per cent respectively).

3 Carers

3.1 Introduction and summary

As part of the Housing Benefit (HB) consultation document *Supporting people into work: the next stage of HB reform* (Cm 7769), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) asked whether HB should be extended to provide an extra room for a non-resident carer. This was explored further in the Wave 21 questionnaire with the aim of finding out the scale of the issue and how the cost is currently being met, if at all.

The key findings based on all local authorities (LAs) answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Three in five LAs (62 per cent) did not know how many private sector claims they had received **in the last month** where the accommodation had a sleepover/additional room(s), over and above what might normally be allowed, which were required to accommodate carers who did not live with the claimant. One in six (16 per cent) said that they had not received any of these types of claims, however, fewer than one in five (18 per cent) said they had between one and four of these types of claims in the last month, two per cent said between five and eight claims and a further two per cent said between nine and 12 claims in the last month.

In terms of how the shortfall is met by LAs that had these kinds of claims, four in five (81 per cent) said they used Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) – one in ten always met the shortfall this way and 71 per cent sometimes did.

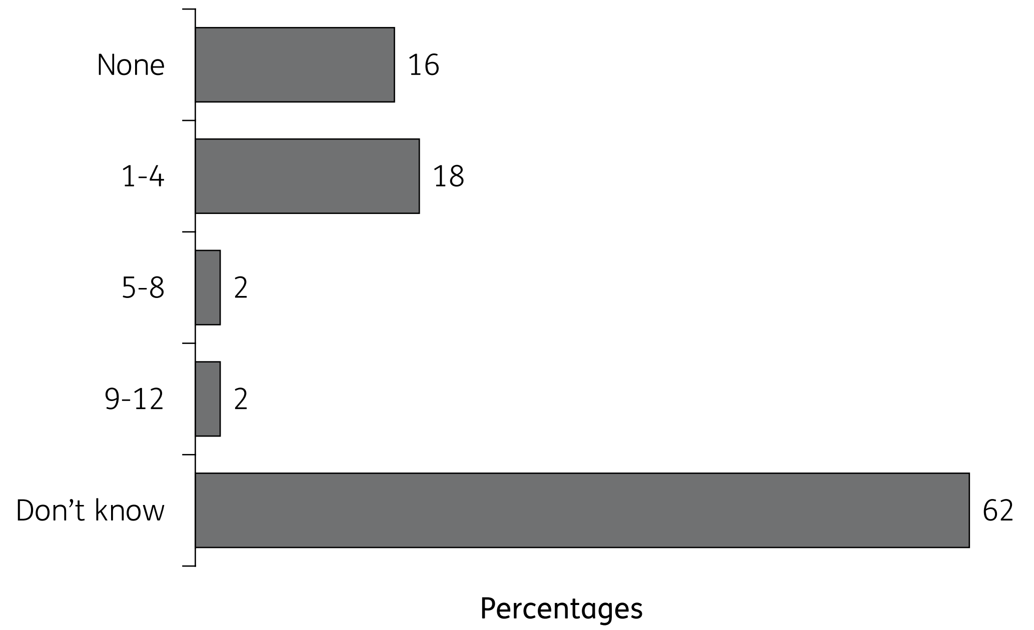
Just one LA out of 46 that did not always meet the shortfall with a DHP said that they had another funding stream available.

The main other circumstances where LAs were most likely to consider an additional room in the accommodation necessary included: for large medical equipment (61 per cent), where a couple or siblings needed separate rooms for medical reasons (56 per cent and 55 per cent respectively) and, if care was shared between parents, a room was needed for non-resident children (41 per cent).

3.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 3.1 Please can you estimate the number of private sector claims your LA has received in the last month where the accommodation has a sleepover/additional room(s), over and above what might normally be allowed, which is/are required to accommodate carers who don't live with the claimant?



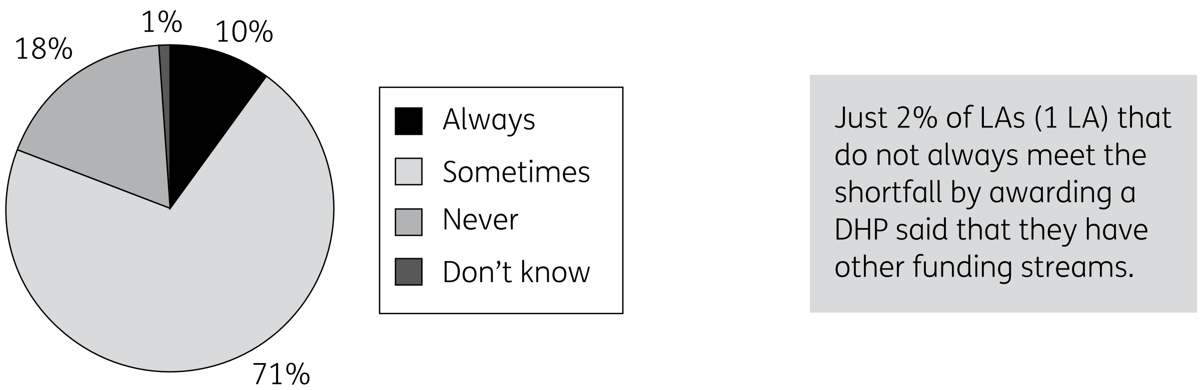
Base: All LAs (228).

We initially asked LAs to estimate the number of private sector claims they had received in the last month where the accommodation had a sleepover/additional room(s), over and above what might normally be allowed, which were required to accommodate carers who do not live with the claimant.

Three in five (62 per cent) could not give a number and 16 per cent said 'none'. The percentage of LAs in London that said 'Don't know' was particularly high (90 per cent).

Fewer than one in five (18 per cent) said they had received between one and four of these types of claims in the last month, two per cent said between five and eight claims and a further two per cent said between nine and 12 claims in the last month.

Figure 3.2 In these cases, how often does your LA meet the shortfall by awarding a DHP? Does your LA have any other funding streams available to meet the shortfall in these cases?

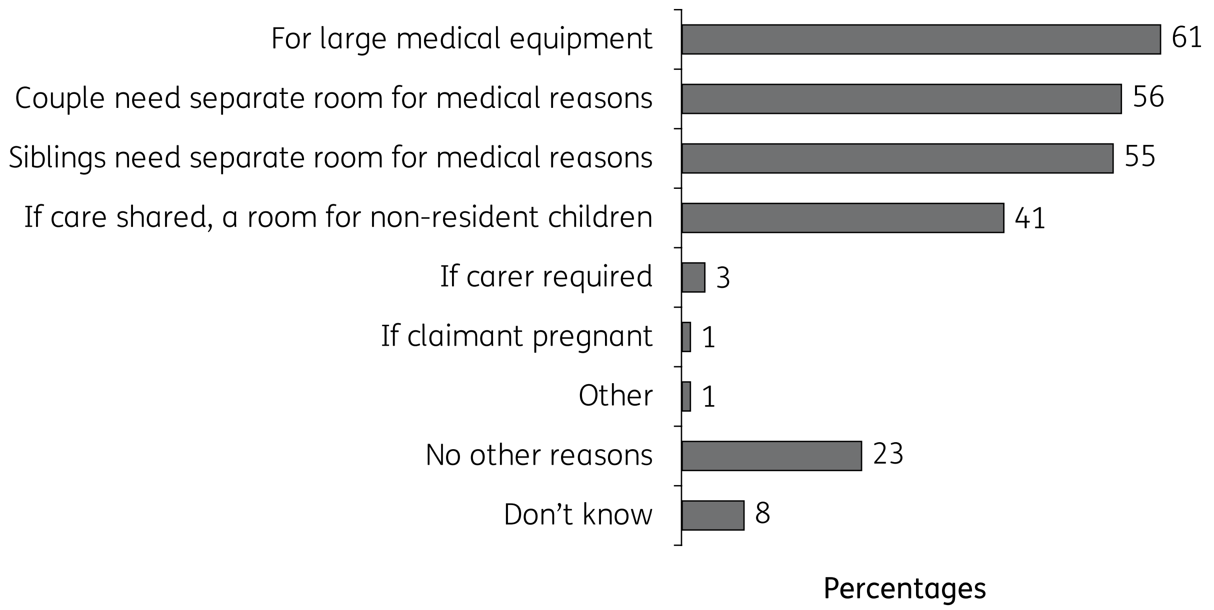


Base: All LAs with one or more private sector claims (51).

In terms of how the shortfall is met by LAs that had these kinds of claims, four in five (81 per cent) said they used DHPs. One in ten always met the shortfall this way and 71 per cent sometimes did.

LAs that did not always meet the shortfall with a DHP were asked if they had any other funding streams available. Just one LA out of 46 said that they had another funding stream available (an English District).

Figure 3.3 Are there any other circumstances where your LA might consider an additional room in the accommodation necessary?



Base: All LAs (229).

The main other circumstances where LAs were most likely to consider an additional room in the accommodation necessary included: for large medical equipment (61 per cent), where a couple or siblings needed separate rooms for medical reasons (56 per cent and 55 per cent respectively) and, if care was shared between parents, a room was needed for non-resident children (41 per cent).

Approximately a quarter (23 per cent) said there were no other reasons where they might consider an additional room necessary. This went down to nine per cent in Scotland and just five per cent in London.

4 Temporary accommodation

4.1 Introduction and summary

In April 2010 a new Housing Benefit (HB) subsidy scheme for customers living in temporary accommodation (Private Sector Leased (PSL), Licensed and Bed and Breakfast accommodation[1]) was introduced. In order to support the Department's understanding of temporary accommodation usage by LAs, a series of questions, asked previously at Wave 19, was asked again at Wave 21. These questions were designed to assist with a wider programme of monitoring and evaluating the impact of the new subsidy scheme.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

This section includes the findings for several questions which asked LAs to provide statistics about people in temporary accommodation. It is important to bear in mind that, although LAs were asked to pass this section of the questionnaire to their Homelessness Team, there was still a relatively high proportion of LAs that were unable to provide answers and therefore these findings should be treated with caution. In addition, because of the low number of LAs able to provide answers to many of the questions, there has been limited opportunity to make meaningful comparisons with the answers from Wave 19.

Among the LAs that responded at Wave 21, a significantly lower percentage than at Wave 19 held PSL and Housing Association Leasing (HAL) properties: 43 per cent held PSL properties at Wave 21 compared with 50 per cent at Wave 19 and 30 per cent held HAL properties compared with 38 per cent at Wave 19. There has been no change in the proportion of LAs holding Licensed properties (41 per cent). Twenty-nine per cent of LAs had none of these types of property.

The LAs that held PSL and Licensed temporary accommodation were asked about the number of **self-contained** properties held. Around one in five LAs (21 per cent) were unable to tell us how many self-contained temporary accommodation properties they held an interest in. However, nine per cent said that 'none' of their PSL and Licensed properties were self-contained, two in five (41 per cent) had 40 or less self-contained properties, 14 per cent had between 41 and 100 and 11 per cent had 101 or more.

Almost one in four LAs (23 per cent) said that 'none' of the households living in PSL and Licensed temporary accommodation households were in employment, which is significantly higher than at Wave 19 when just seven per cent gave this response. This means that a significantly higher percentage of households than at the same time last year did not have anyone in employment. Thirty-two per cent of LAs said that between one and ten per cent of households had someone in employment, while just six per cent thought more than 60 per cent of households contained someone in employment.

Looking at LA's temporary accommodation by property size, one in six LAs (17 per cent) said they did not have any studios, while around one in four (26 per cent) did not have any properties that had five or more bedrooms and one in eight (13 per cent) did not have any four beds. Overall, LAs were most likely to hold properties with two bedrooms, followed by three beds and one beds (averages across all LAs of 65, 45 and 36 respectively).

1 This refers to accommodation owned by a private landlord that is used by local authorities (LAs) as part of a homelessness function (where the rent liability is to the LA).

There were once again high levels of ‘don’t know’ answers for the question about the size of the property in relation to the size of the household. However, LAs seemed most able to estimate what proportion were about the right size (just 18 per cent did not know), with more than half (55 per cent) saying that between 81 and 100 per cent of properties were about the right size.

Looking now at the number of **non**-self contained PSL and Licensed temporary accommodation properties that LAs held an interest in. Although a quarter of LAs (25 per cent) said that they did not know how many of their PSL and Licensed properties were non-self-contained, 43 per cent said ‘none’, 25 per cent said between one and 20, two per cent said between 21 and 40, one per cent between 41 and 60, and just five per cent had any more than this.

Those LAs that had said in a previous question that they had HAL scheme units (60 LAs or 28 per cent of all LAs responding) were asked how many units they held an interest in. A third of these (20 LAs) were unable to give us an answer, while most (28 LAs) had fewer than 40 units and just one in six (10 LAs) had more than 100.

Three in five LAs that held HAL properties (60 per cent) did not know whether or not these households contained someone in employment. One in ten LAs (ten per cent) said that they did not have any households with someone in employment, which is significantly lower than in PSL and Licensed self-contained temporary accommodation. Eight per cent of LAs said that between one and ten per cent of HAL households contained someone in employment while just two per cent thought more than 60 per cent of households contained someone in employment

Around three in five LAs were unable to provide us with details of how many studios and larger properties they had and around half of LAs said that they did not know how many one, two and three bedroom properties they had. A quarter of LAs (25 per cent) said they did not have any studios, while similar percentages did not use properties that had five or more bedrooms. Overall, LAs were most likely to have HAL properties with two or three bedrooms (averages across all LAs of 31 and 35).

There were even higher levels of ‘don’t know’ answers for the question about the size of HAL properties in relation to the size of the household. However, once again LAs seemed most able to estimate what proportion were about the right size, although still 45 per cent did not know. However, four in ten LAs (40 per cent) said that between 81 and 100 per cent of properties were about the right size and 12 per cent said between 41 and 80 per cent.

4.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 4.1 Which of the following types of property does your LA hold for use as temporary accommodation?

- 43 per cent of LAs hold PSL properties
- 41 per cent hold Licensed properties
- 30 per cent use HAL properties

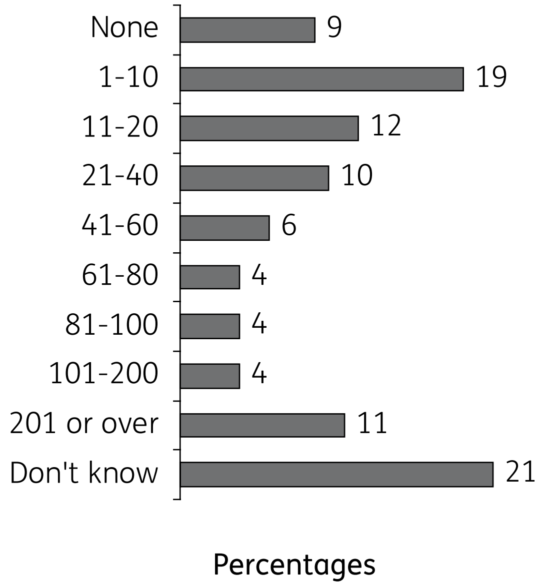
Base: All LAs work (211).

Looking firstly at the types of properties held as temporary accommodation. Two in five LAs held PSL properties and/or Licensed properties (43 per cent and 41 per cent respectively) and 30 per cent used HAL properties. However, 29 per cent of LAs had none of these types of property, rising to 58 per cent of those in the East Midlands. Interestingly, no LAs in London and Wales said that they did not have any homeless provision.

A majority of London Boroughs held each accommodation type: 94 per cent held PSL properties, 81 per cent held Licensed properties and 69 per cent used HAL properties. However, it is worth noting that just one English Metropolitan District out of 28 (four per cent) used HAL properties.

A significantly lower percentage of LAs that responded at Wave 21 held PSL and HAL properties compared with Wave 19 (PSL Wave 19 50 per cent, Wave 21 43 per cent; HAL Wave 19 38 per cent, Wave 21 30 per cent). There is, however, no way of finding out from the data whether this difference is because of a downward trend in homelessness or a change in provision.

Figure 4.2 How many self-contained temporary accommodation units (PSL and Licensed only)[1] does your local authority currently hold an interest in? (Accommodation is self-contained if the household has exclusive use of one or more of: (a) a kitchen (b) a toilet (c) a bathroom)



Averages	
Welsh	82
Scottish	109
English:	
Unitary	30
Metropolitan	59
District	20
London Borough	810
Low caseload	20
Medium caseload	41
High caseload	258

Base: All LAs with PSL or Licensed properties (124).

The LAs that held PSL and Licensed temporary accommodation (124, or 59 per cent of all LAs) were asked about the number of **self-contained** properties held.

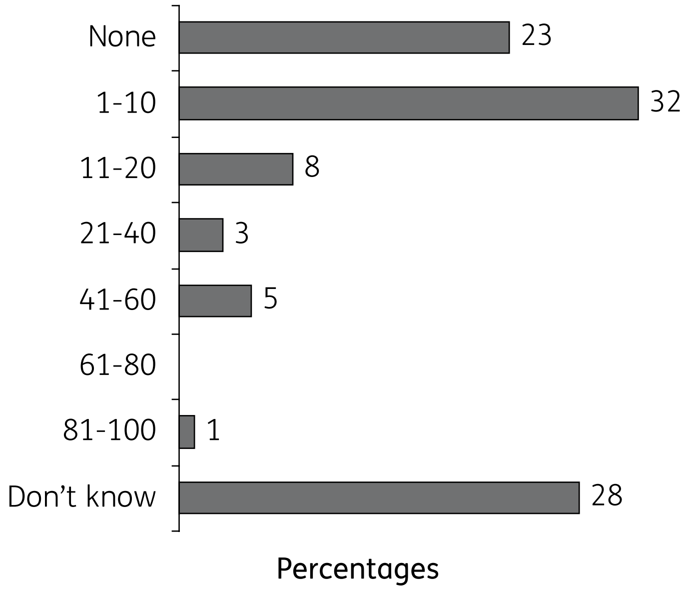
Around one in five LAs (21 per cent) were unable to tell us how many self-contained temporary accommodation properties they held an interest in. However, compared with Wave 19, LAs were significantly more likely to not have any self-contained PSL and Licensed properties: nine per cent said ‘none’ at Wave 21 compared with zero at Wave 19.

As the chart shows, two in five (41 per cent) had 40 or less self-contained properties, 14 per cent had between 41 and 100 and 11 per cent had 101 or more.

Clearly the findings differed dramatically according to the LA type – from an average of 20 properties in English Districts to 810 in London Boroughs. In addition, high caseload authorities had a significantly higher average number of properties than low and medium caseload authorities (258, 20 and 41 respectively).

Looking at the findings by region shows that London had a significantly higher average number of properties than any other region. Scotland, with an average of 109 properties, had a significantly higher number than the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, the North West, East Midlands, the East, South East and South West. Wales, on the other hand, with an average of 82 properties, had a significantly higher number than Yorkshire and Humberside, the North West, East Midlands, the East and the South East. There were no other significantly different findings by region.

Figure 4.3 Approximately what percentage of households living in self-contained (PSL and Licensed) temporary accommodation contain at least one member of the household in full- or part-time employment?



Base: All LAs that hold PSL or Licensed self-contained temporary accommodation (87).

When asked what proportion of households in PSL and Licensed self-contained temporary accommodation contained someone in employment (full- or part-time), around three in ten LAs (28 per cent) that hold this type of accommodation, did not know. This increases to 55 per cent among London Boroughs.

Almost one in four LAs (23 per cent) said that 'none' of these types of households were in employment which is significantly higher than at Wave 19 when just seven per cent gave this response. This means that a significantly higher percentage of households than at the same time last year did not have anyone in employment.

One in three LAs (32 per cent) said that between one and ten per cent of households had someone in employment, while eight per cent said between 11 per cent and 20 per cent, three per cent said between 21 and 40 per cent, five per cent between 41 and 60 per cent and one per cent between 81 and 100 per cent.

Table 4.1 Please provide an approximate breakdown of your self-contained temporary accommodation portfolio (PSL and Licensed only), by property size

	Studios %	One bed %	Two beds %	Three beds %	Four beds %	Five beds %	More than five beds %
None	17	2	5	6	13	24	26
1-20	20	49	45	45	31	10	7
21-40	5	6	18	17	1	2	–
41-60	1	3	2	1	1	–	–
61-100	–	5	2	5	–	–	–
101-200	2	3	3	2	3	–	–
201+	–	3	8	5	–	–	–
Don’t know	55	28	16	20	51	63	67

Base: All LAs that hold PSL or Licensed self-contained temporary accommodation (87).

Table 4.1 shows a breakdown of temporary accommodation by property size. There was a particularly high number of LAs that were unable to provide us with details of how many studios and larger properties (four or more bedrooms) they had. Fewer had problems telling us how many one, two and three bedroom properties they had, although this was still between one in four and six.

One in six LAs (17 per cent) said they did not have any studios, while around one in four (26 per cent) did not have any properties that had five or more bedrooms and one in eight (13 per cent) did not have any four beds. However, the number of ‘don’t know’ answers is extremely high and therefore, as mentioned in Section 4.1, findings must be treated with caution.

Overall, LAs were most likely to hold properties with two bedrooms, followed by three beds and one beds (averages across all LAs of 65, 45 and 36 respectively).

Looking at the findings by LA type, caseload and region indicates, unsurprisingly, that high caseload LAs and London Boroughs had the highest number of one, two and three bedroom properties. Scottish LAs also seemed to have a disproportionately high number of two bed properties.

Given the relatively small sample sizes there are no significant differences between Waves 21 and 19.

Table 4.2 Approximately what proportion of households in those self-contained (PSL and Licensed) units live in properties that could be considered too small, about right or too large for the size of the household?

	Too small for the size of household %	About right for the size of household %	Too large for the size of household %
None	9	–	13
1-10	21	–	16
11-20	5	–	3
21-40	7	3	6
41-60	3	9	3
61-80	1	14	–
81-100	1	55	–
Don't know	53	18	59

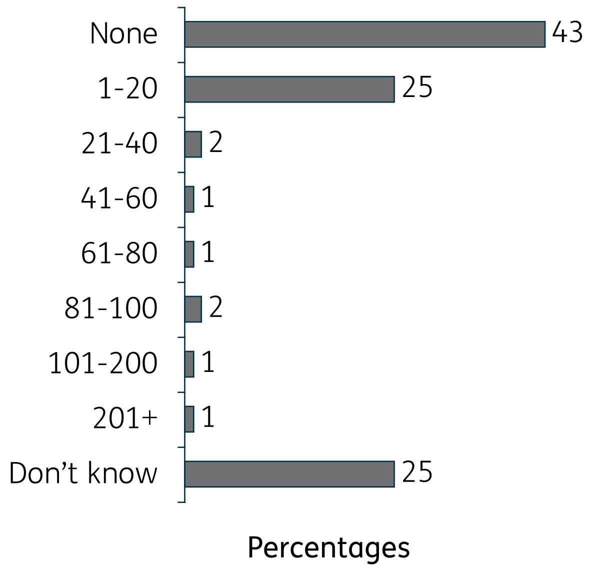
Base: All LAs that hold PSL or Licensed self-contained temporary accommodation (87).

Once again there were high levels of 'don't know' answers for this question about the size of the property in relation to the size of the household, in particular in terms of LAs giving a percentage of properties that were too large or too small for the size of household and this is for the main, in line with the Wave 19 findings.

However, LAs seemed more able to estimate what proportion were about the right size (just 18 per cent did not know), with more than half (55 per cent) saying that between 81 and 100 per cent of properties are about the right size.

There were no significant differences between Waves 21 and 19.

Figure 4.4 How many non-self-contained temporary accommodation units (PSL and Licensed only) does your local authority currently hold an interest in?



Averages	
Welsh	31
Scottish	11
English:	
Unitary	5
Metropolitan	4
District	6
London Borough	36
Low caseload	9
Medium caseload	6
High caseload	15

Base: All LAs with PSL or Licensed properties (124).

Looking now at the number of non-self-contained PSL and Licensed temporary accommodation properties that LAs held an interest in. A quarter of LAs (25 per cent) said that they did not know, compared with a figure of 38 per cent that were unable to give an answer at Wave 19. This is a significant difference.

However, 43 per cent said that none of their PSL and Licensed properties were not self-contained, 25 per cent said between one and 20, two per cent said between 21 and 40, one per cent between 41 and 60, and just five per cent had any more than this.

Averages differ according to LA Type and range from four among English Metropolitans to 36 among London Boroughs and 31 among Welsh authorities. However, due to the very small base sizes, the average of 36 for London Boroughs is actually only significantly higher than the average for English Districts. Similarly, the average for Welsh LAs of 31 is only significantly higher than English Unitary authorities, English Metropolitan Districts and English Districts. Interestingly, when looking at the findings by caseload there were no significant differences. This is also true for region, with the exception of Wales which had a significantly higher average than Yorkshire and Humberside, East Midlands and the East.

There were no significant differences between Waves 21 and 19.

Figure 4.5 How many HAL scheme units does your local authority currently hold an interest in?

Base: All LAs that hold HAL scheme units (60).

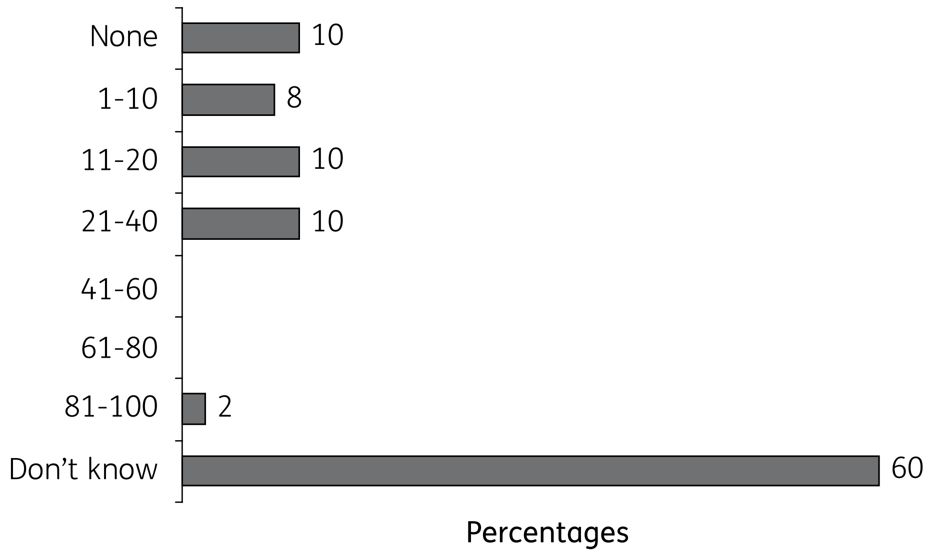
Looking now at HAL scheme units. Those LAs that had said in a previous question that they had this type of accommodation (60 LAs, or 28 per cent) were asked how many units they held an interest in.

A third of LAs (33 per cent) were unable to give an answer, however, 28 per cent said between one and ten, 18 per cent said between 11 and 40 and three per cent said between 41 and 60.
In addition, seven per cent said between 101 and 200 and ten per cent said 200 or more.

The average number of HAL properties varies considerably and goes as high as 528 among London Boroughs. Please note that the only English Metropolitan District that had HAL scheme units said 'don't know' which explains why the average is zero.

There were no significant differences between Waves 21 and 19.

Figure 4.6 Approximately, what percentage of households living in HAL scheme properties contain someone in employment?



Base: All LAs that hold HAL scheme properties (60).

Three in five LAs that held HAL properties (60 per cent) did not know whether or not these households contained someone in employment.

One in ten LAs (ten per cent) said that they did not have any households with someone in employment which is significantly lower than in PSL and Licensed self-contained temporary accommodation where 23 per cent of LAs said that there was no one in employment.

Eight per cent of LAs said that between one and ten per cent of HAL households contained someone in employment, ten per cent said between 11 and 20 and 21 and 40 and two per cent said between 81 and 100.

Once again, there were no significant differences between the findings at Wave 21 and Wave 19.

Table 4.3 Please provide an approximate breakdown of your HAL scheme portfolio by property size

	Studios %	One bed %	Two beds %	Three beds %	Four beds %	Five beds %	Six or more beds %
None	25	8	–	2	13	23	25
1-20	8	27	40	38	25	10	5
21-40	–	7	2	3	–	2	–
41-60	–	2	–	2	2	–	–
61-100	–	2	7	–	3	–	–
101-200	–	–	3	5	–	–	–
201+	–	–	2	2	–	–	–
Don't know	67	55	47	48	57	53	70

Base: All LAs that hold HAL scheme units (60).

Table 4.3 shows a breakdown of HAL scheme units by property size. As with PSL and Licensed properties, there was a particularly high number of LAs that were unable to provide us with details of how many studios and larger properties (four or more bedrooms) they had.

In addition, around half of LAs said that they did not know how many one, two and three bedroom properties they had. The number of 'don't know' answers is extremely high and therefore, as mentioned in Section 4.1, findings must be treated with caution.

A quarter of LAs (25 per cent) said they did not have any studios, while similar percentages did not hold properties that had five or more bedrooms (23 per cent for five beds, 25 per cent for six or more beds). These figures are higher than at Wave 19 but the differences are not significant.

Overall, LAs were most likely to have HAL properties with two or three bedrooms (averages across all LAs of 31 and 35).

Looking at the findings by LA type, caseload and region indicates that London had the highest number of two and three bedroom properties, but other than this there were no significant differences.

Table 4.5 Approximately, what proportion of households in HAL scheme properties live in properties that could be considered too small, about right or too large for the size of the household?

	Too small for the size of the household %	About right for the size of household %	Too large for the size of household %
None	8	–	10
1-10	8	–	12
11-20	3	2	–
21-40	3	2	–
41-60	7	8	–
61-80	2	3	–
81-100	5	40	–
Don't know	63	45	78

Base: All LAs that hold HAL scheme units (60).

Looking now at the suitability of property size for households; once again there were high levels of 'don't know' answers for this question, in particular in terms of LAs giving a percentage of properties that were too large (78 per cent) or too small (63 per cent) for the size of household. LAs seemed more able to estimate what proportion were about the right size, although still 45 per cent did not know.

Four in ten LAs (40 per cent) said that between 81 and 100 per cent of properties were about the right size, three per cent said between 61 and 80 per cent and eight per cent said between 41 and 60 per cent.

There is one significant difference in the findings between Waves 21 and 19. A significantly higher percentage of LAs said that 21 per cent or more of properties were too small compared with five per cent at Wave 19.

5 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit take-up

5.1 Introduction and summary

Take Up the Challenge – a report commissioned by the previous government to look at how the take-up of benefits and tax credits can be increased, was released in 2009. It stated that around 400,000 children live in poverty because their parents do not take up all the financial support they are entitled to. The report made a number of recommendations for national and local government on how they can improve take-up, with the aim of helping people claim what they are entitled to in order to help lift children out of poverty.

Following on from the release of *Take Up the Challenge* and the recommendations it included, this section of the survey was aimed at finding out what local authorities (LAs) are doing to increase the take-up of Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and identify what additional support LAs might need to help them increase take-up among their residents.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

LAs were asked whether or not they actively promoted HB and/or CTB to their residents and just five LAs said that they had not promoted either benefit. The main ways of promoting these benefits to residents was by messages in correspondence, e.g. bills (90 per cent and 94 per cent respectively), articles on the website (85 per cent and 84 per cent respectively) and advertisements in council-run and independent newspapers (both 71 per cent).

Among those LAs that actively promoted HB and CTB, almost all of them said that they had actively promoted them both in the last 12 months (98 per cent and 99 per cent respectively). Just six per cent of these LAs had noticed a **significant** difference in take-up as a result of the campaign, three in five (62 per cent) had noticed some increase and one in eight had not noticed any increase at all.

Around two in three LAs used customer data to target residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible for HB and CTB. Among those LAs using customer data in this way, the majority had noticed an increase in take-up (six per cent had noticed a significant increase and 68 per cent had noticed some increase). One in ten had not noticed any increase at all.

Among the third of LAs that did not use customer data to target residents/groups of residents, more than one in three did not because they could not obtain the data they needed (HB 37 per cent and CTB 38 per cent). Just under one in five said they had tried using it but that it was not cost effective (HB 19 per cent and CTB 18 per cent) and one in seven or slightly fewer said that they were not aware how to use this data, that the data sharing protocols were unclear or that it was currently being looked at/introduced.

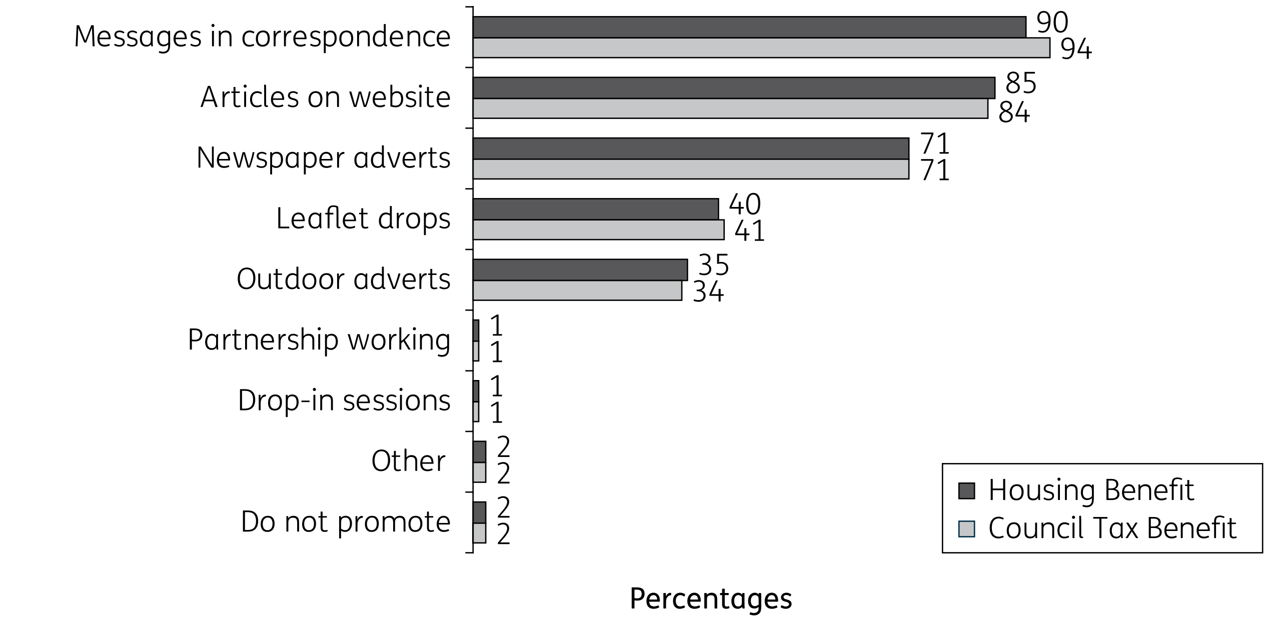
Half of LAs did not promote HB or CTB to their own employees. However, among those that did, staff magazines (both 25 per cent), intranet articles (both 25 per cent) and messages in payslips (both 17 per cent) were the most popular means with which to do so.

All LAs were asked which department was responsible for promoting HB and CTB with a view to increasing take-up. It was in most cases the responsibility of the Benefits Department (Benefits Section/Team 43 per cent, Revenues and Benefits Service 28 per cent, Housing Benefits 13 per cent and Council Tax Team five per cent).

5.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 5.1 Does your LA actively promote HB and/or CTB to your residents in any of these ways? Does it promote them in any other ways?



Base: All LAs (224).

LAs were asked whether or not they actively promoted HB and/or CTB to their residents.

Five LAs said that they had not promoted either benefit – one Welsh LA, one English Unitary and three English Districts.

As can be seen from Figure 5.1, the findings were very similar for both HB and CTB. The main ways of promoting these benefits to residents was by messages in correspondence, e.g. bills (90 per cent and 94 per cent respectively), articles on the website (85 per cent and 84 per cent respectively) and advertisements in council-run and independent newspapers (both 71 per cent).

Two in five had actively promoted HB and CTB via leaflet drops to resident's homes and a third had done so by outdoor advertisements, e.g. bus tops and billboards.

It is interesting that a significantly higher proportion of Welsh authorities (82 per cent) said that they promoted HB and CTB via leaflet drops to resident's homes and outdoor advertising.

Figure 5.2 Has your LA actively promoted HB and/or CTB to residents in any of these ways in the last 12 months?

Housing Benefit

- 98 per cent have promoted HB in the last 12 months
- Six per cent of these have noticed a significant increase in take-up, 62 per cent have noticed some increase and 13 per cent did not notice any increase at all

Council Tax Benefit

- 99 per cent actively promoted CTB in the last 12 months
- Six per cent of these have noticed a significant increase in take-up, 62 per cent have noticed some increase and 12 per cent did not notice any increase at all

Base: All LAs that actively promote HB (218)/CTB (219).

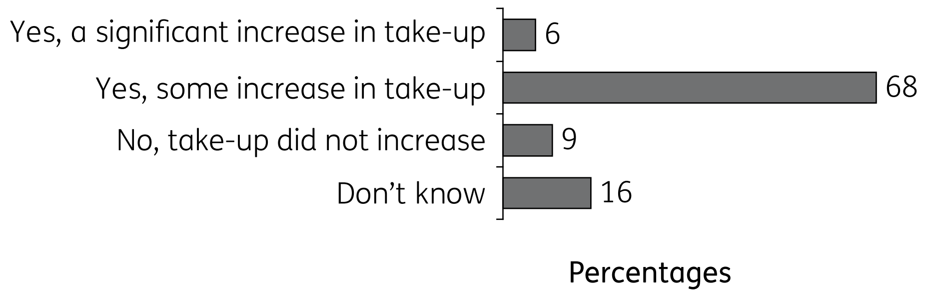
Among those LAs that actively promoted HB and CTB, almost all of them said that they had actively promoted them both in the last 12 months (98 per cent and 99 per cent respectively).

Just six per cent of those LAs that had actively promoted HB and CTB in the last year had noticed a significant difference in take-up as a result of the campaign. Three in five (62 per cent) had noticed some increase. However, one in eight had not noticed any increase at all and 20 per cent did not know (rising to 35 per cent of London Boroughs and 25 per cent of English Districts).

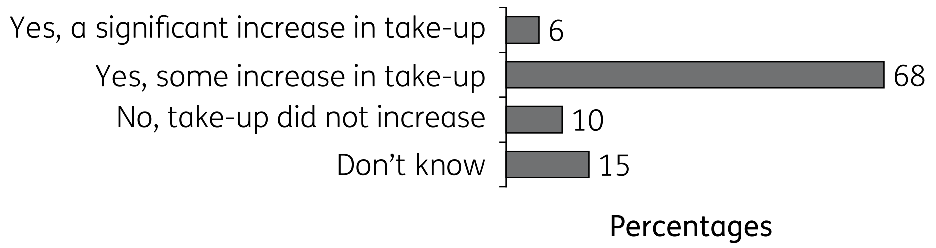
Welsh LAs were most positive about the effect of actively promoting HB and CTB. All Welsh LAs said that the campaign had increased take-up, with 30 per cent saying that they had seen a significant increase in the take-up of HB and 40 per cent saying that they had seen a significant increase in the take-up of CTB.

Figure 5.3 When promoting HB and/or CTB, does your LA use customer data to target those residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible? Did your LA notice an increase in take-up as a result of the campaign or not?

64% of LAs use customer data when promoting HB



65% of LAs use customer data when promoting CTB



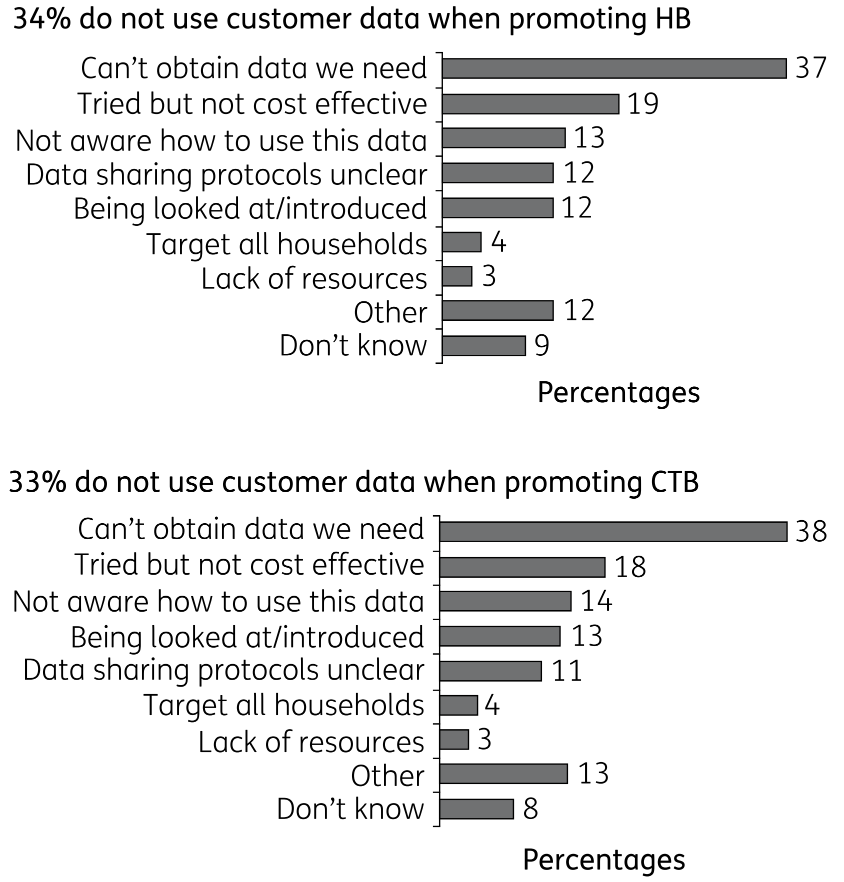
Base: All LAs that use customer data (HB 139; CTB 143).

Around two in three LAs used customer data to target residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible for HB and CTB (100 per cent of those in Wales and 85 per cent of London Boroughs). Interestingly though, two in five English Districts (42 per cent) said that they did not use customer data when promoting HB or CTB.

Among those LAs using customer data in this way, the majority had noticed an increase in take-up (six per cent had noticed a significant increase and 68 per cent had noticed some increase). Again, the Welsh were most positive, with all Welsh LAs saying that they have noticed an increase in take-up. In fact, 30 per cent of Welsh LAs said that they had noticed a significant increase in HB take-up and 40 per cent said that they had noticed a significant increase in CTB take-up.

One in six LAs were unable to say whether or not there had been an increase in take-up, with this rising once again to 29 per cent of London Boroughs.

Figure 5.4 Why does your LA not use data to target residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible for HB and CTB?



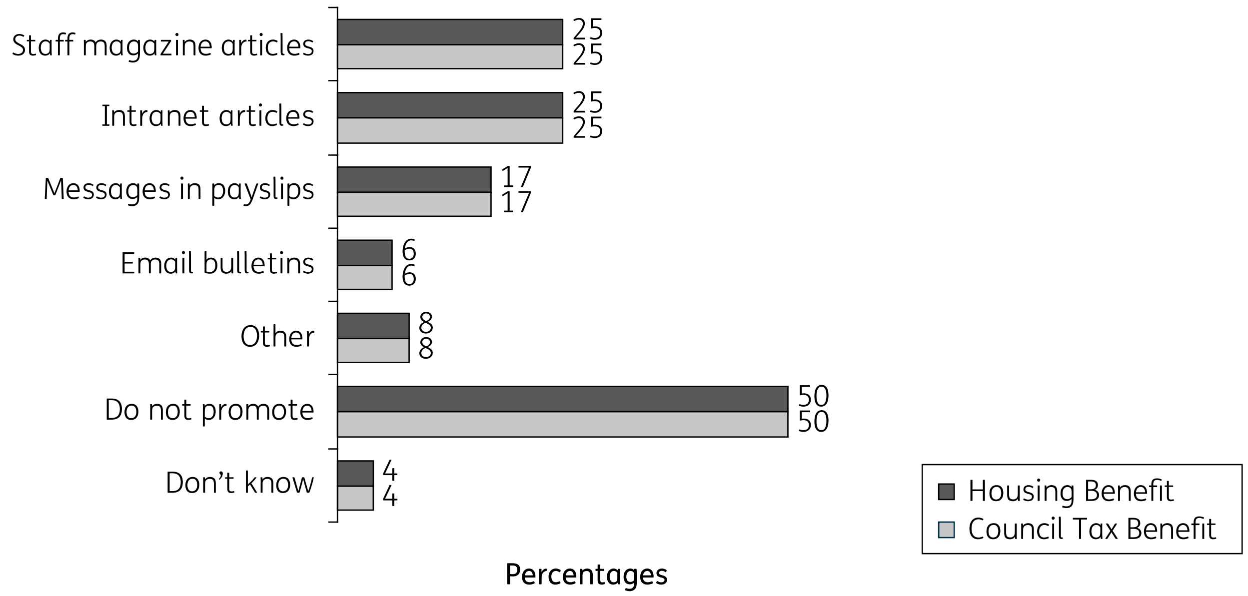
Base: All LAs that use customer data (HB 75; CTB 72).

Among the third of LAs that did not use customer data to target residents/groups of residents, more than one in three did not because they could not obtain the data they needed (HB 37 per cent and CTB 38 per cent). It is worth noting that 100 per cent of London Boroughs said that they could not obtain the data they needed to target HB/CTB.

Just under one in five said they had tried using it but that it was not cost effective (HB 19 per cent and CTB 18 per cent) and one in seven or slightly fewer said that they were not aware how to use this data, that the data sharing protocols were unclear or that it was currently being looked at/ introduced.

Fewer still said that they targeted all households as a matter of course or simply that there was a lack of resources.

Figure 5.5 Does your LA actively promote HB and/or CTB to your own employees in any of these ways? Does it promote them in any other ways?

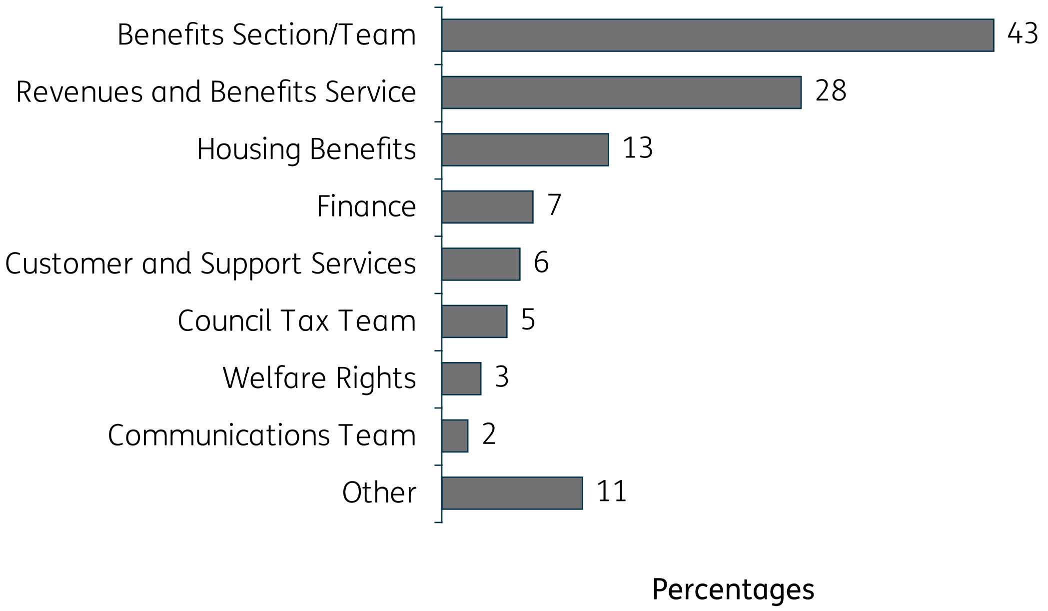


Base: All LAs (224).

Half of LAs did not promote HB or CTB to their own employees. In general, LAs with a high caseload were more likely to have promoted HB/CTB to their staff than low and medium caseload authorities (66 per cent of low and 55 per cent of medium caseload LAs said that they did not promote HB/CTB to their employees compared with just 34 per cent of high caseload LAs that gave this response).

However, those that did promote HB/CTB to their employees mostly promoted them via staff magazines (both 25 per cent), intranet articles (both 25 per cent) and messages in payslips.

Figure 5.6 Which department in your LA is/would be responsible for promoting HB/CTB with a view to increasing take-up



Base: All LAs (224).

All LAs were asked which department was responsible for promoting HB and CTB with a view to increasing take-up. This was an open-ended question where respondents were able to write in their own answers. As Figure 5.6 indicates, it was in most cases the responsibility of the Benefits Department (Benefits Section/Team 43 per cent, Revenues and Benefits Service 28 per cent, Housing Benefits 13 per cent and Council Tax Team five per cent).

Fewer than one in ten mentioned Finance (seven per cent), Customer and Support Service (six per cent), Welfare Rights (three per cent) and the Communications Team (two per cent). It should be pointed out that some LAs mentioned more than one department at a time.

There were no significant differences by any sub-groups.

6 Changing the name of Council Tax Benefit

6.1 Introduction and summary

The Welfare Reform Act 2009, which received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009, introduced an order making power to rename Council Tax Benefit (CTB) as Council Tax Rebate. The name change is aimed at increasing benefit take-up. Although the Act commits the Government to change the name it does not provide for a timeframe. The previous administration made it clear that timing would depend on further preparatory work on the practical impact for local authorities (LAs) and the costs involved (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would be helping with the costs of these changes), and the likely impact on benefit take-up.

This section aimed to give DWP a clearer estimate of the costs to LAs of making the name change: in terms of changes to computer systems and software, to customer notifications which refer to the benefit, and to necessary publicity to make it clear that the benefit name has changed for existing and new customers and to encourage take-up.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

If the name of CTB was changed, all LAs would change the name on letters (100 per cent), and almost all would change the name on bills/demands (99 per cent), leaflets (99 per cent), forms (99 per cent), the website (99 per cent) and the computer system (93 per cent). Fewer would change the name on stationery (67 per cent) and signage and estates (52 per cent).

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of LAs could not answer how much the total cost of changing the name of CTB would amount to. Amongst the limited numbers that gave an estimated cost, the range was relatively large, from four per cent who thought it would be less than £10,000 to three per cent who thought it would be somewhere between £50,000 and a £100,000.

When asked what month/year would be the best time to make the name change on the computer system to avoid additional costs, a third (33 per cent) said that they did not know. However, three in ten (30 per cent) said sometime between January and June 2011 and 22 per cent said sometime between January and June 2010. Six per cent said the best time would be during the remainder of 2010 and a further six per cent said between July and December 2011. Four per cent preferred sometime between July and December 2012.

Very few LAs were able to put a figure on how much it would cost to make the change on the computer system (11 per cent). Of those that gave an amount, one per cent said nothing, six per cent said less than £9,999 and three per cent said £10,000 or more.

For all types of paperwork, it would appear that there was a favoured approach of making the changes sooner rather than later. Approximately a third favoured making the changes during the remainder of 2010, and a further one in six or so favoured making those changes in the first half of 2011.

Very few LAs were able to put a figure on how much the combined cost of making the change to letters/bills/demand notices/reminders/summons/leaflets/forms/stationery would be (17 per cent). But for most of these (nine per cent), they stated the cost as less than £9,999.

When asked what month/year would be the best time to make the name change on the website to avoid additional costs, more than a third (37 per cent) said that they did not know. However, 31 per cent said between January and June 2011 and 25 per cent said sometime during the remainder of 2010.

When asked to estimate the cost of changing the website name only 19 per cent of LAs were able to put a figure on how much it would cost to make that change. Of that group, seven per cent said it would cost nothing and 13 per cent said it would cost less than £9,999.

When asked what month/year would be the best time to make the name change on signage and estates, more than half said that they did not know. However, 21 per cent said sometime during the remainder of 2010 and 14 per cent said between January and June 2011.

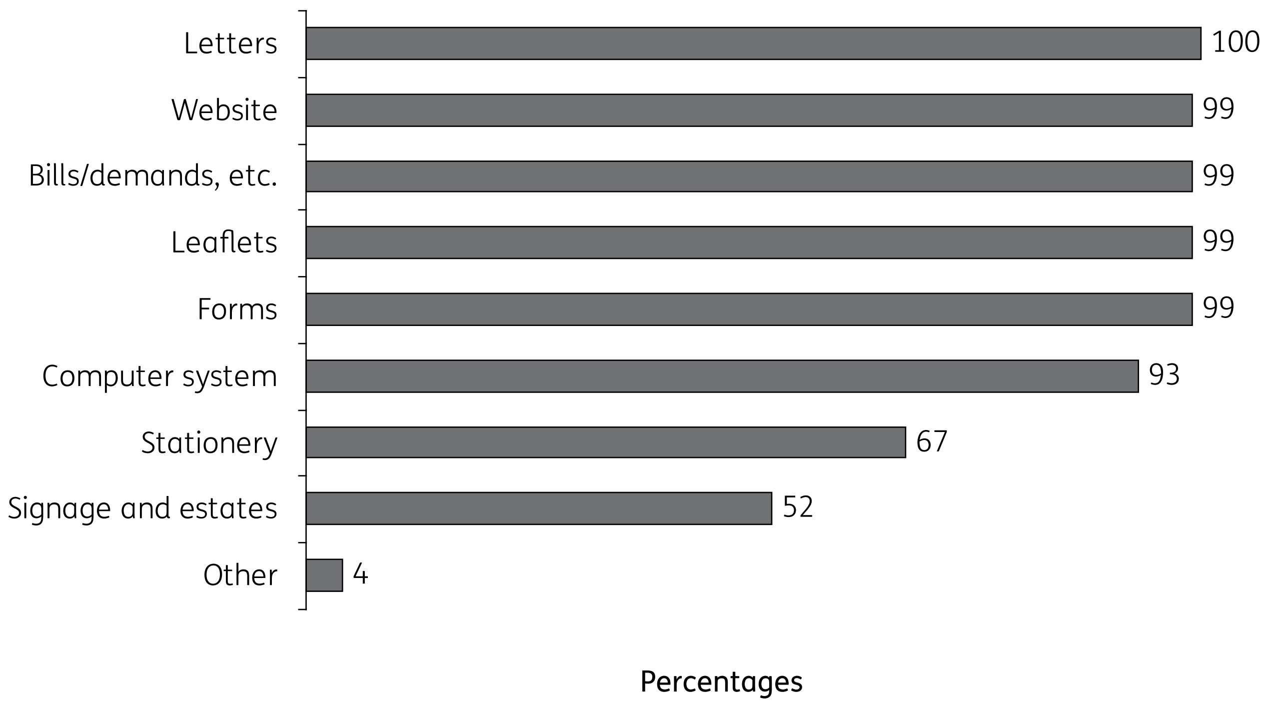
When asked to estimate the cost of changing the name on signage and estates, 12 per cent of LAs were able to put a figure on how much it would cost to make the change on signage and estates: 11 per cent said it would cost less than £9,999 and one per cent said it would cost between £10,000 and £19,999.

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of LAs were unable to give an estimate of how much they would have to spend on publicity if the name were changed. Three per cent said that they would not have to spend anything, 18 per cent said that it would cost them less than £9,999, three per cent between £10,000 and £19,999 and one per cent said £20,000 or more.

6.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 6.1 If DWP were to change the name of CTB to Council Tax Rebate, which of the following would your LA have to change? What else would it have to change?



Base: All LAs (224).

Figure 6.1 shows that all, or almost all, LAs would change the name on letters, bills/demands, leaflets, forms, the website and the computer system. Fewer would change the name on stationery (67 per cent) and signage and estates (52 per cent).

There were few significant differences by sub-group, with the exception of the findings relating to signage and estates. Four in five (79 per cent) English Metropolitan authorities said they would need to change signage and estates which is significantly higher than Scottish authorities (43 per cent), English Districts (45 per cent) and English Unitary authorities (56 per cent).

Table 6.1 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much your LA would spend IN TOTAL to make the change. This should include everything mentioned (e.g. computer system, letters/bills/notices/leaflets/forms/stationery, website, signage and estates) plus publicity

	Total (224)
	%
Nothing	–
Less than £9,999	4
£10,000-£19,999	8
£20,999-£29,999	7
£30,000-£39,999	1
£40,000-£49,999	–
£50,000+	3
Don’t know	76

Base: All LAs (224).

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of LAs could not answer this question with an amount. Authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region were particularly likely to have said that they did not know how much it would cost (92 per cent) compared to 60 per cent in London.

Amongst the limited number of LAs that gave an estimated cost the range was relatively large, from four per cent that thought it would be less than £10,000 to three per cent that thought it would be somewhere between £50,000 and £100,000.

Figure 6.2 In order to avoid additional costs associated with changing the name to council tax rebate on your computer system, what would be the best month/year for the change to be made? If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your local authority to make the changes to your computer system?

Estimated cost

89% did not know how much it would cost.

1% said 'Nothing'
6% said less than £9,999
1% said £10,000-£19,999
2% siad £20,000-29,999

Base: All LAs that would have to make changes to their computer system (209).

LAs were asked about each individual change that would have to be made if the name of CTB were changed, starting with the computer system.

When asked what month/year would be the best time to make the name change on the computer system to avoid additional costs, a third (33 per cent) said that they did not know. However, three in ten (30 per cent) said sometime between January and June 2011 and 22 per cent said sometime between January and June 2010. Six per cent said the best time would be during the remainder of 2010 and a further six per cent said between July and December 2011. Four per cent preferred sometime between July and December 2012.

Very few LAs were able to put a figure on how much it would cost to make the change on the computer system (11 per cent). Of those that gave an amount, one per cent said nothing, six per cent said less than £9,999 and three per cent said £10,000 or more.

Table 6.2 Please write in below the month and year by which your LA would need to have been informed of the name change to avoid additional costs to: (EACH OF THE PAPER BASED CHANGES MENTIONED)

	Letters (223) %	Bills/ demands (221) %	Leaflets (222) %	Forms (221) %	Stationery (149) %
Remainder of 2010	34	36	35	36	34
January-June 2011	17	17	17	16	16
July-December 2011	5	5	5	5	7
January-June 2012	5	5	6	5	5
July-December 2012	1	1	1	1	1
Don't know	38	37	37	37	37

LAs were asked when would be the best time to make changes to all types of paperwork associated with CTB. It would appear that there was a favoured approach of making the changes sooner rather than later.

Approximately a third favoured making the changes during the remainder of 2010, and a further one in six or so favoured making those changes in the first half of 2011.

It should be noted, however, that there were almost two in five that said 'don't know' for each of these types of paperwork.

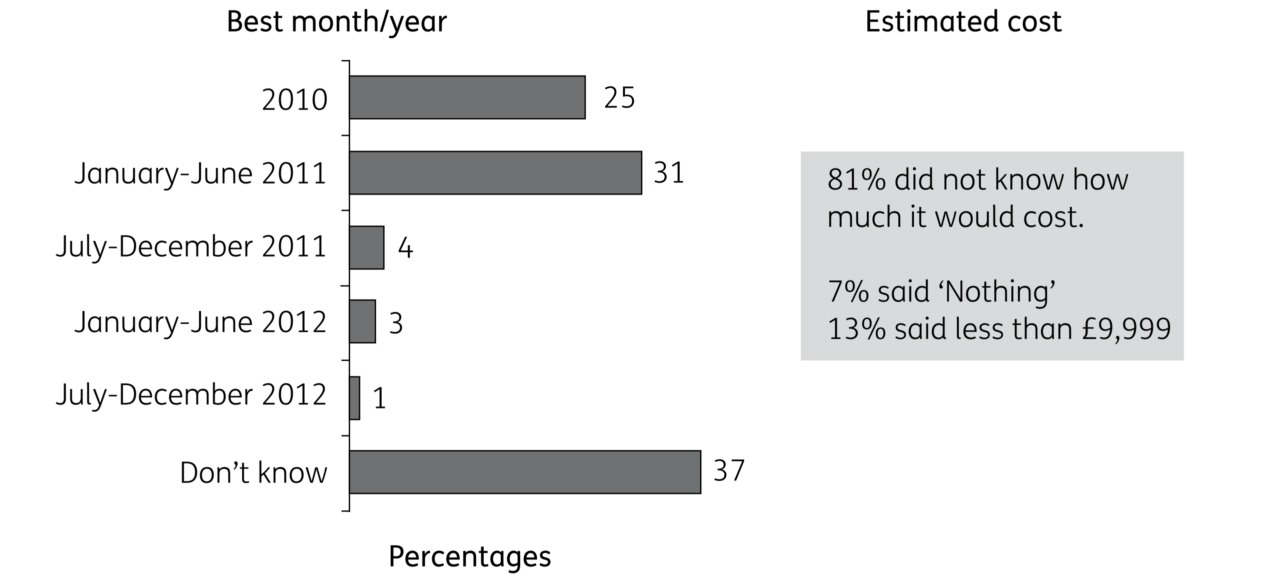
Table 6.3 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your LA to make the changes to all of the following combined: 'Letters', 'CTB bills/demand notices/reminders/summons', 'Leaflets', 'Forms' or 'Other stationery'

	Total (223) %
Nothing	–
Less than £9,999	9
£10,000-£19,999	4
£20,999-£29,999	2
£30,000-£39,999	*
£40,000-£49,999	–
£50,000+	1
Don't know	83

Base: All LAs that said they would have to change letters/bills/demand notices/reminders/summons/leaflets/forms/stationery (223).

Very few LAs were able to give a figure for how much the combined cost of making the change to letters/bills/demand notices/reminders/summons/leaflets/forms/stationery would be (17 per cent). But for most of these (nine per cent), they stated the cost as less than £9,999.

Figure 6.3 Please write in below the month and year by which your LA would need to have been informed of the name change to avoid the additional costs of changing the name on your website. If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your local authority to make changes to the website?

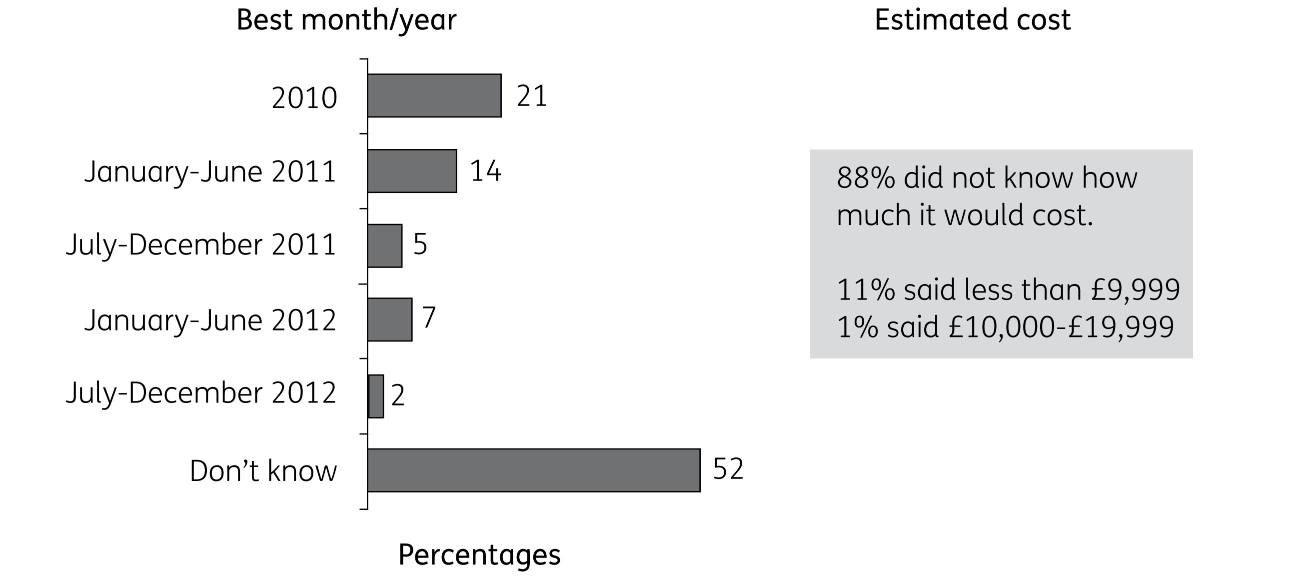


Base: All LAs that would have to make changes to their website (222).

When asked what month/year would be the best time to make the name change on the website to avoid additional costs, more than a third (37 per cent) said that they did not know. However, 31 per cent said between January and June 2011 and 25 per cent said sometime during the remainder of 2010.

When asked to estimate the cost of changing the website name, only 19 per cent of LAs were able to put a figure on how much it would cost to make that change. Of that group, seven per cent said it would cost nothing and 13 per cent said it would cost less than £9,999.

Figure 6.4 In order to avoid additional costs associated with changing the name to Council Tax Rebate on signage and estates, what would be the best month/year for the change to be made



Base: All LAs that would have to make changes to signage and estates (117).

When asked what month/year would be the best time to make the name change on signage and estates, more than half said that they did not know. However, 21 per cent said sometime during the remainder of 2010 and 14 per cent said between January and June 2011.

It is perhaps worth noting that the number of 'don't knows', although still high at 52 per cent, is lower than that recorded for the other items that were asked about.

When asked to estimate the cost of changing the name on signage and estates, 12 per cent of LAs were able to put a figure on how much it would cost to make the change on signage and estates: 11 per cent said it would cost less than £9,999 and one per cent said it would cost between £10,000 and £19,999.

Table 6.4 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much your LA would spend on publicity to ensure that people knew about the name change and understood what it meant?

	Total (224) %
Nothing	3
Less than £9,999	18
£10,000-£19,999	3
£20,999-£29,999	1
£30,000-£39,999	–
£40,000-£49,999	–
£50,000+	–
Don't know	76

Base: All LAs (224).

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of LAs were unable to give an estimate of how much they would have to spend on publicity if the name were changed. Three per cent said that they would not have to spend anything, 18 per cent said that it would cost them less than £9,999, three per cent between £10,000 and £19,999 and one per cent said £20,000 or more.

7 Employment and Support Allowance and Local Authority Claim Information

7.1 Introduction and summary

Since the end of October 2009 local authorities (LAs) have received their Housing Benefit (HB)/ Council Tax Benefit (CTB) claims, when associated with the Jobcentre Plus Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefit, via LA Claim Information (LACI) documents. These documents are sent to the LAs once all the data has been gathered for both the ESA claim and the HB and/or CTB claim, and when all the relevant ESA claim information has been verified. After some initial teething problems Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has issued further communications to Jobcentre Plus staff and implemented further IT changes at the end of May 2010 to improve the quality and quantity of data received by LAs on the LACl document.

The aim of this section was to establish views on how the communications to Jobcentre Plus staff and the IT changes in May 2010 have affected the accuracy and completeness of the LACI.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Three in five (60 per cent) rated the completeness of the ESA LACI as very or fairly complete, whereas 77 per cent said it was very or fairly accurate. One in three (29 per cent) of LAs said that they received the ESA LACI too early/before all of the information was on it, however, two in three (66 per cent) think that they received it at about the right time.

More than eight in ten (84 per cent) of LAs said that they had to request missing information in order for them to be able to assess a claim to benefit. When asked to specify the types of missing information, there were particularly high numbers mentioning missing tenancy agreements/rent information (89 per cent).

Approximately four in five (81 per cent) of LAs said that they found the ESA LACI either very or fairly clear in terms of how easy it is to read and understand.

Those LAs that said the ESA LACI was either fairly clear, not very or not at all clear were asked about what areas it could be made clearer. The format and the order the information was in appeared to be the main areas where improvements in clarity could be made (48 per cent and 45 per cent respectively).

Just over half of LAs (53 per cent) said that they were able to ascertain the verification activity that had been carried out. Among these, most (88 per cent) accepted that Jobcentre Plus had undertaken appropriate verification.

More than a third (37 per cent) said they had not been able to work out what verification activity had been done. The reasons for this seemed to be because the information on verification was not given (71 per cent) and when it was given, it was not clear (60 per cent). Five per cent said it did not match their records.

In terms of how LAs use the data on ESA LACI, by far the most LAs (93 per cent) entered the data on to the back-end processing system and contacted the customer for missing information.

One in five (20 per cent) entered data on the back-end processing system only and one in ten (ten per cent) entered data on back-end processing and then sent a claim form. Just one per cent simply sent a claim form.

Just over half of LAs (52 per cent) have used the ESA Operational Guidance. Among the 115 LAs that had used this guidance, most found it useful (79 per cent fairly and ten per cent very useful).

Among the 38 per cent of LAs that had not used the ESA Operational Guidance, 45 per cent had not heard of it and 44 per cent said they had not needed to use it.

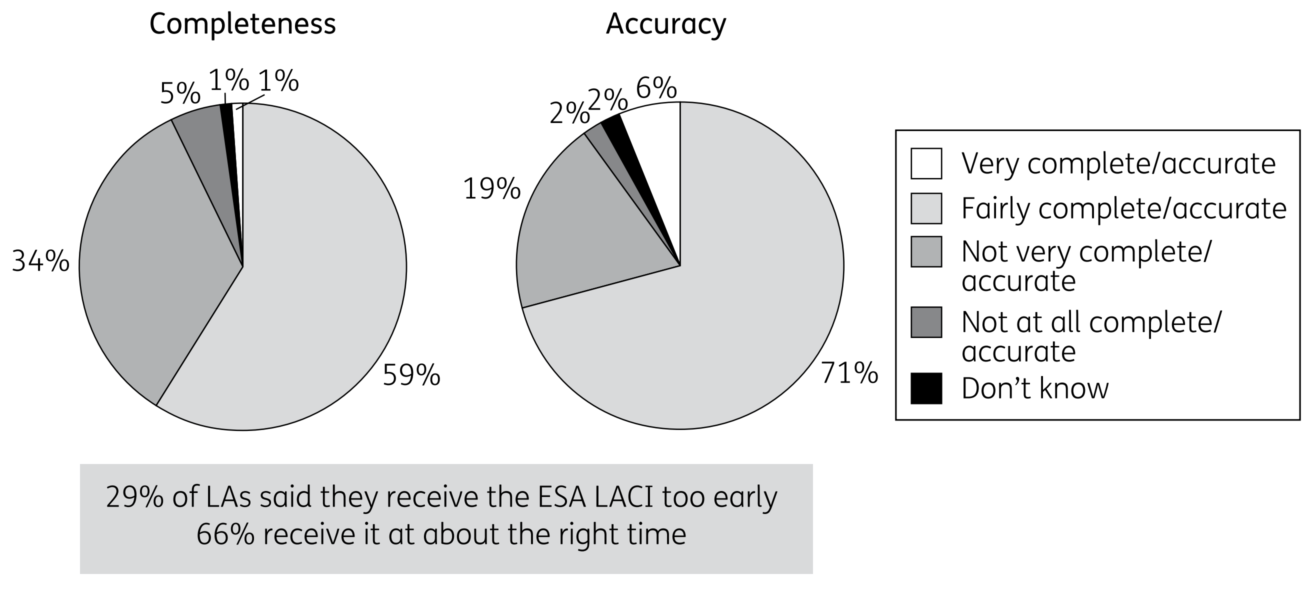
Slightly fewer than half of all LAs (47 per cent) had used the LACI Operational Guidance on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) HB website. A very high percentage of those that used this guidance (90 per cent) found it useful
(81 per cent fairly and ten per cent very useful). Amongst the 43 per cent of LAs that had not used the LACI Operational Guidance, 45 per cent had not heard of it and 40 per cent had not needed to use it, one per cent had not been able to locate it on the website and two per cent said it did not replace missing information.

Three-quarters (74 per cent) of LAs had a contact at Jobcentre Plus they could get in touch with. Amongst the 51 LAs that did not have a contact in Jobcentre Plus for ESA LACI queries, the main reason for not having one appears to be that a contact had not been designated or was not available (37 per cent).

7.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

**Figure 7.1 In general, how would you describe the completeness/accuracy of the data on a ESA LACI?
In general, would you say that your LA receives the ESA LACI too early (i.e. before all the information is on it) or at about the right time?**



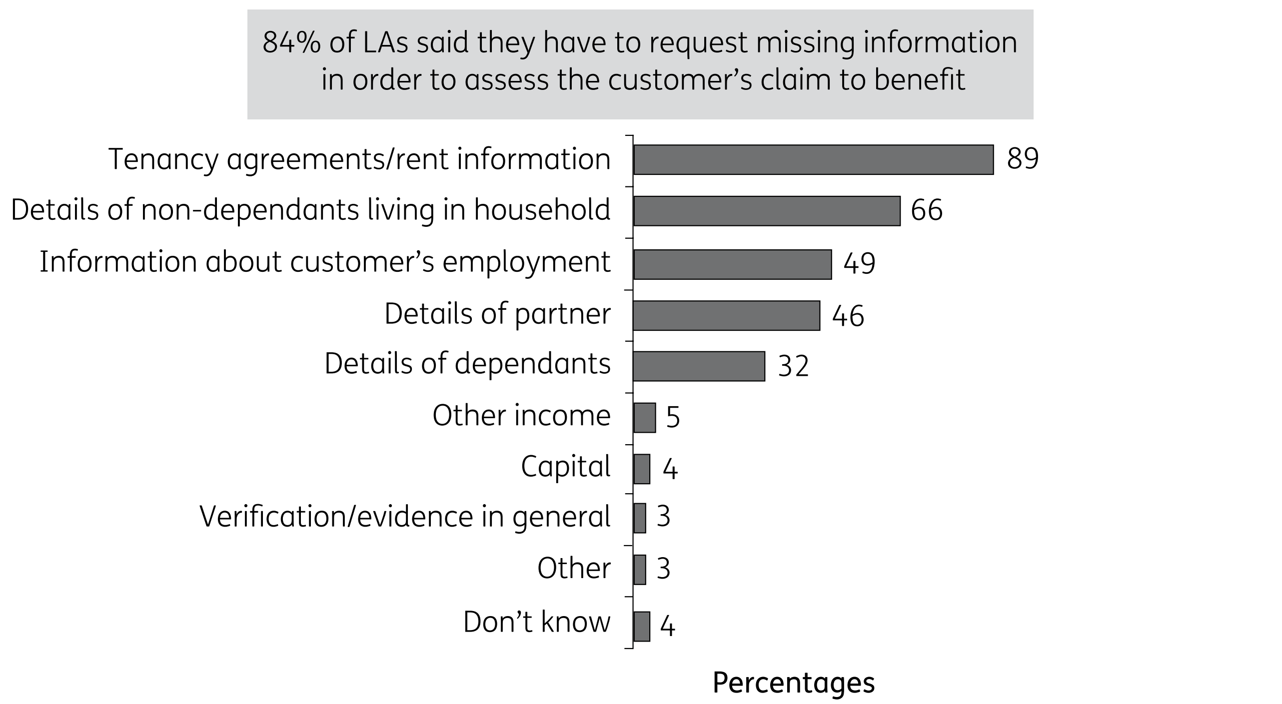
Base: All LAs (221).

Three in five LAs (60 per cent) rated the completeness of the ESA LACI as very or fairly complete, whereas 77 per cent said it was very or fairly accurate.

It is interesting to note that Scottish authorities were significantly more likely to have said that the ESA LACI was very or fairly complete (81 per cent) than were English Unitary authorities (52 per cent), English Metropolitan Districts (57 per cent), and English Districts (57 per cent). In terms of accuracy, Welsh authorities were more likely to have described the ESA LACI as accurate (100 per cent) compared to English Unitary authorities (76 per cent), English Metropolitan districts (75 per cent), and English Districts (72 per cent).

One in three LAs (29 per cent) said that they received the ESA LACI too early/before all of the information was on it, however, two in three (66 per cent) thought that they had received it at about the right time. Welsh authorities were significantly more likely to say that they received the ESA LACI too early (55 per cent) than were, for instance, Scottish authorities (24 per cent) or English Districts (27 per cent).

Figure 7.2 In general, does the information in the ESA LACI allow you to assess the customer's claim to benefit without having to request missing information? What type of information is missing?



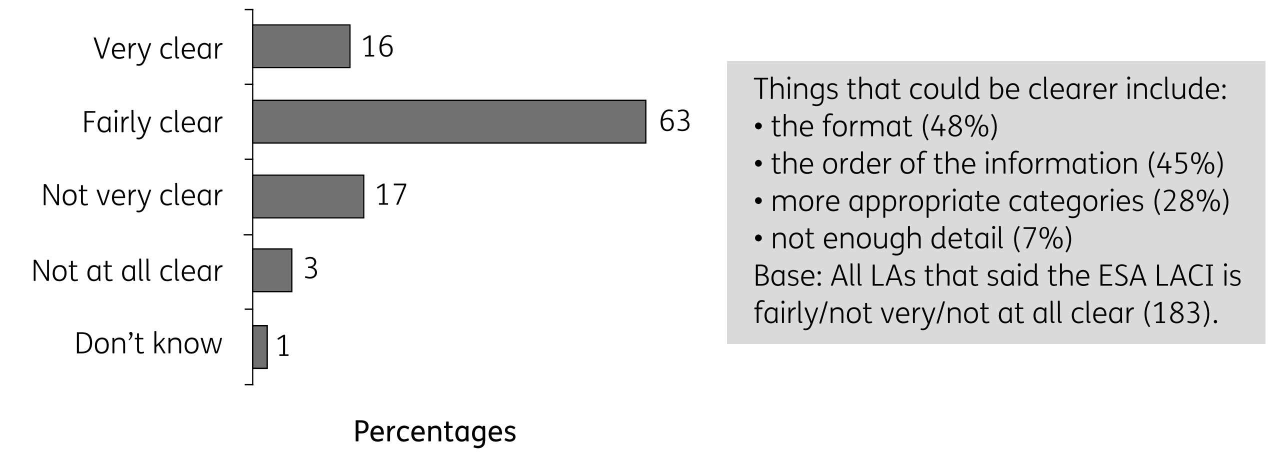
Base: All LAs that said information is missing (186).

More than eight in ten LAs (84 per cent) said that they had to request missing information in order for them to be able to assess a claim to benefit. Scottish authorities were the least likely to have said that they had to request missing information (just 57 per cent in Scotland said this was the case).

When asked to specify the types of missing information, there were particularly high numbers mentioning missing tenancy agreements/rent information (89 per cent). Two-thirds (66 per cent) had to request missing details of resident non-dependants, about half were missing information about the customer's employment or details of their partner. A third (32 per cent) were missing details of dependants and this rose significantly to 55 per cent for English Metropolitan authorities.

(In addition to answers on the chart, one per cent of LAs simply said ‘Everything in general/not enough information’.)

Figure 7.3 Overall how clear would you say the ESA LACI is in terms of how easy it is to read and understand? What areas in particular do you think could be clearer?

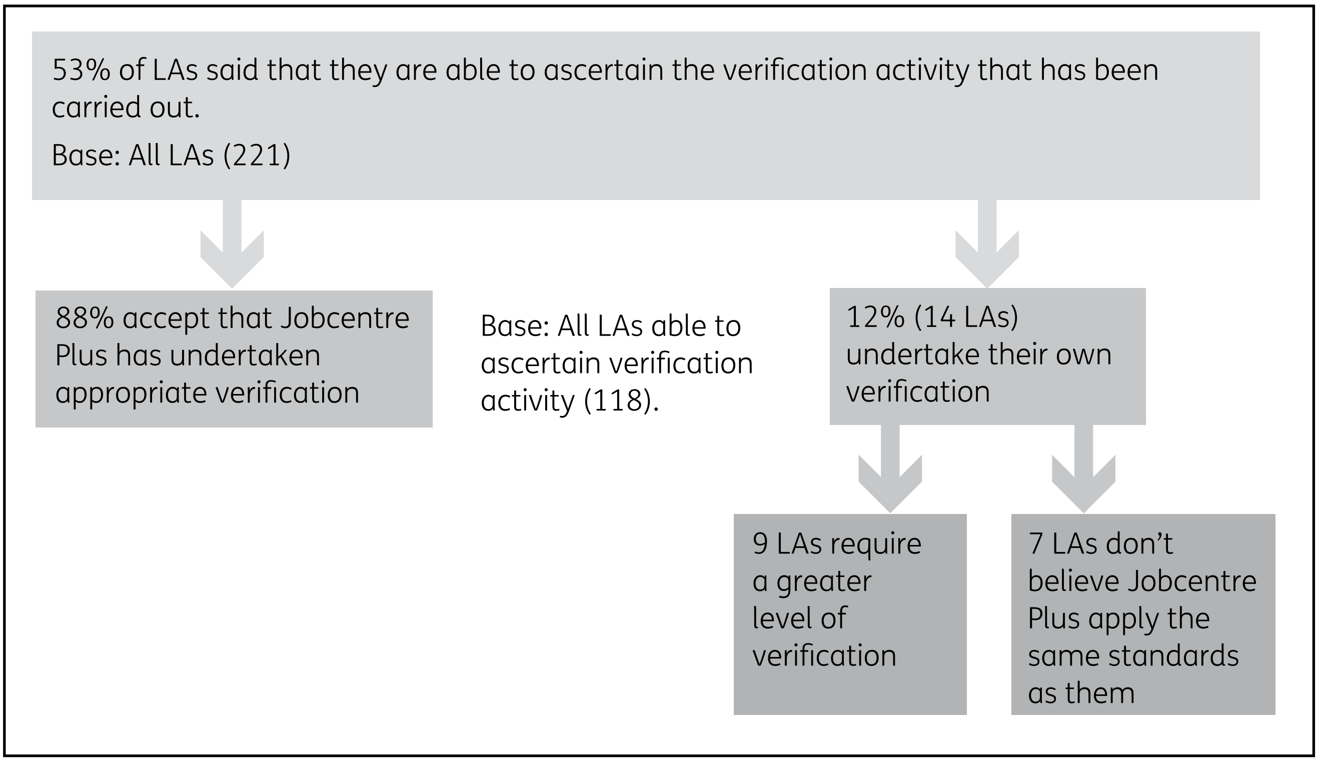


Base: All (221).

Approximately four in five LAs (81 per cent) said that they found the ESA LACI either very or fairly clear in terms of how easy it was to read and understand.

Those LAs that said the ESA LACI was either fairly clear, not very or not at all clear were asked what areas they thought could be made clearer. They were given a list of possible answers and asked to tick those that applied. The format and the order the information was in appeared to be the main areas where improvements in clarity could be made (48 per cent and 45 per cent respectively). Approximately three in ten (28 per cent) said that having the information under a more appropriate category would improve the clarity of the ESA LACI.

**Figure 7.4 Is your LA able to ascertain the verification activity that had been carried out by Jobcentre Plus from the ESA LACI?
Does your LA accept that Jobcentre Plus has undertaken appropriate verification or do you undertake your own verification?
Is this because the information is not clear or is it not given? Or is there another reason why your LA is not able to ascertain the verification activity that has been carried out?**

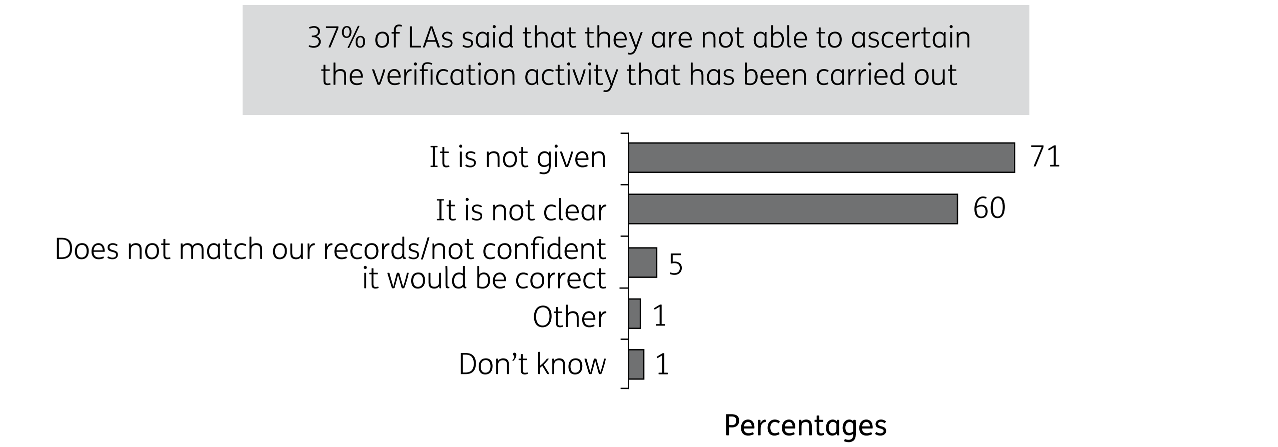


Just over half of LAs (53 per cent) said that they were able to ascertain the verification activity that had been carried out. This rose to a high of 71 per cent amongst English Metropolitan Districts.

Among those that said they were able to ascertain the verification activity, most (88 per cent) accepted that Jobcentre Plus had undertaken appropriate verification and this was particularly the case for LAs with medium and high caseloads (93 per cent and 94 per cent respectively).

However, the remainder (14 LAs, 12 per cent) did not accept that Jobcentre Plus had undertaken appropriate verification and instead undertook their own. The reasons they did this were because they required a greater level of verification (nine LAs) and because they did not believe Jobcentre Plus applied the same standards as them (seven LAs).

Figure 7.5 Is this because the information is not clear or is it not given? Or is there another reason why your LA is not able to ascertain the verification activity that has been carried out?

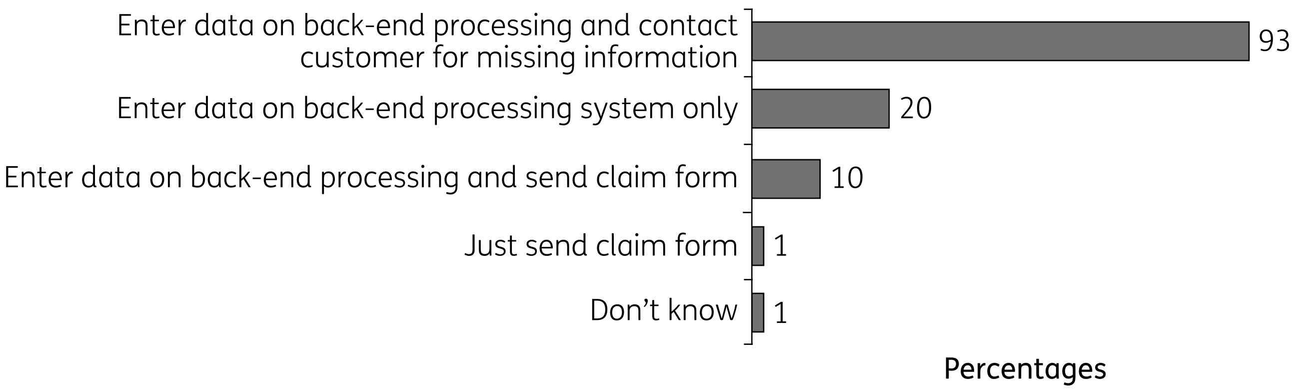


Base: All LAs that are not able to ascertain the verification activity that had been carried out by Jobcentre Plus from the ESA LACI (82).

Returning to the question on whether or not LAs were able to ascertain the verification activity that had been carried out, 37 per cent said that they had not been able to work out what had been done.

The reasons for this seemed to be because the information on verification was not given (71 per cent) and, when it was given, it was not clear (60 per cent). Five per cent said it did not match their records.

Figure 7.6 How does your LA use the data on ESA LACI?



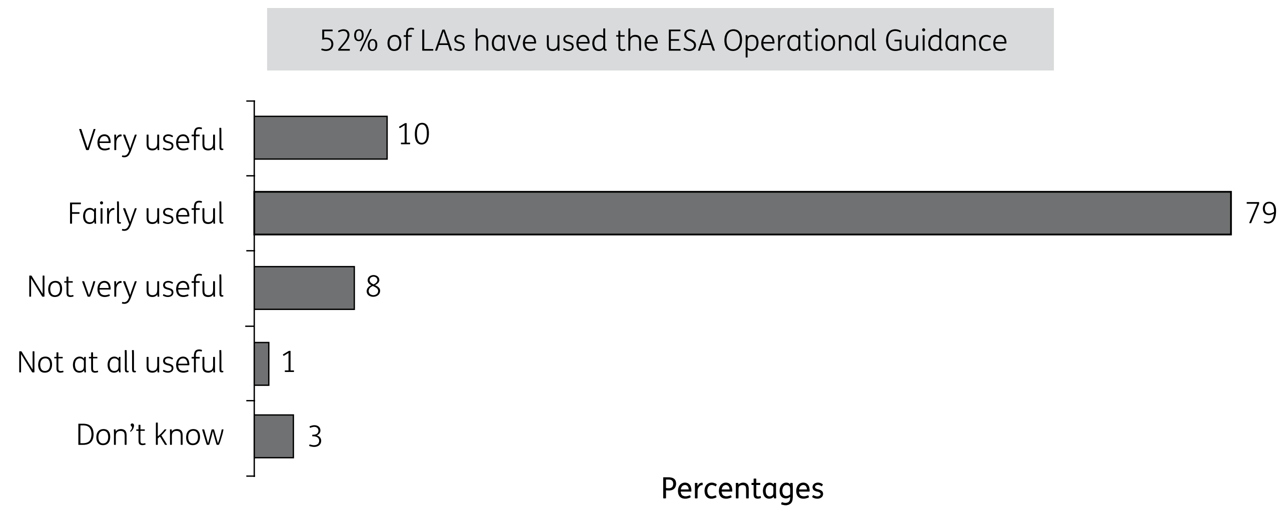
Base: All LAs (221).

In terms of how LAs used the data on ESA LACI, by far the most LAs (93 per cent) entered the data on to the back-end processing system and contacted the customer for missing information. This rose to 100 per cent for two of the regions: the North West and the East Midlands.

One in five (20 per cent) entered the data on to the back-end processing system only and one in ten (ten per cent) entered data on to the back-end processing system and then sent a claim form. Just one per cent simply sent a claim form.

Some LAs said they did more than one of the processes listed. It should not be possible or necessary to do two things with the same form however it is possible some have recently changed the way they deal with the form and so have included both options.

**Figure 7.7 Has your LA used the ESA Operational Guidance on the DWP HB website (http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/employment-and-support-allowance/)?
Overall how useful did you find the ESA Operational Guidance?**



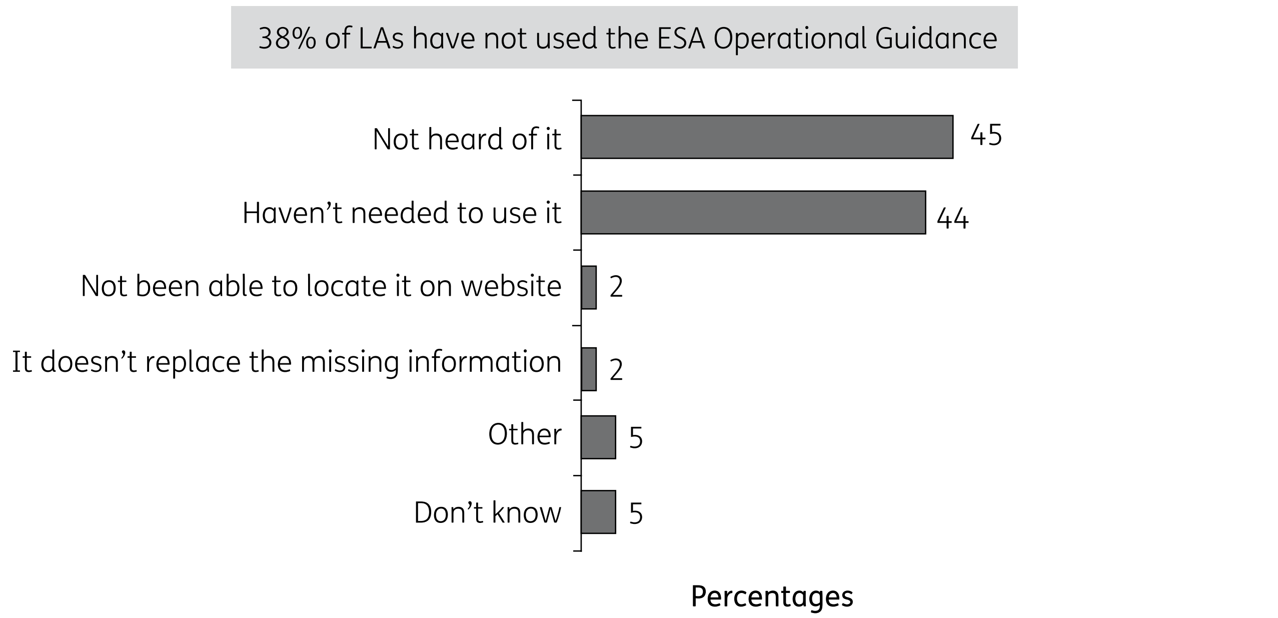
Base: All LAs that have used the ESA Operational Guidance (115).

Just over half of LAs (52 per cent) have used the ESA Operational Guidance. Authorities that were contracted out were much more likely to have used the guidance than those that were not contracted out (100 per cent compared to 58 per cent).

English Unitary authorities (72 per cent) and English Metropolitan authorities (68 per cent) were significantly more likely to have used the Guidance than Welsh authorities (36 per cent) and English Districts (44 per cent). Those authorities with high caseloads were also more likely to have used the Guidance (60 per cent) than those with low or medium caseloads (41 per cent and 52 per cent respectively).

Amongst the 115 LAs that had used the guidance, most of these found it useful (79 per cent fairly and ten per cent very useful).

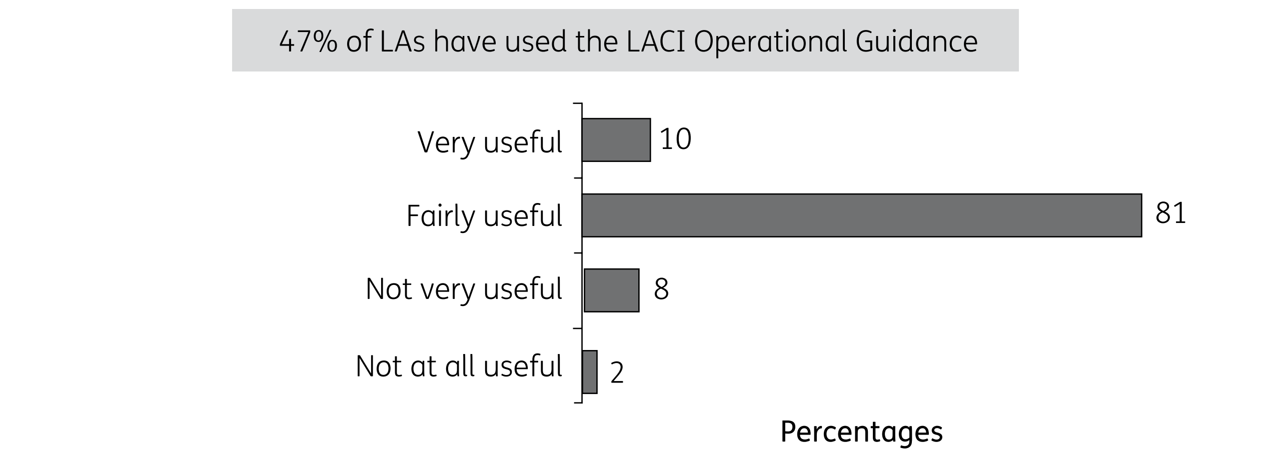
Figure 7.8 Why has your LA not used the ESA Operational Guidance?



Base: All LAs that have not used the ESA Operational Guidance (85).

Among the 85 LAs (38 per cent) that had not used the ESA Operational Guidance, 45 per cent had not heard of it and 44 per cent said they had not needed to use it. Two per cent had not been able to locate it on the website and a further two per cent said it did not replace the missing information.

Figure 7.9 Has your LA used the LACI Operational Guidance on the DWP HB website (http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/employment-and-support-allowance/)? Overall how useful did you find the LACI Operational Guidance?

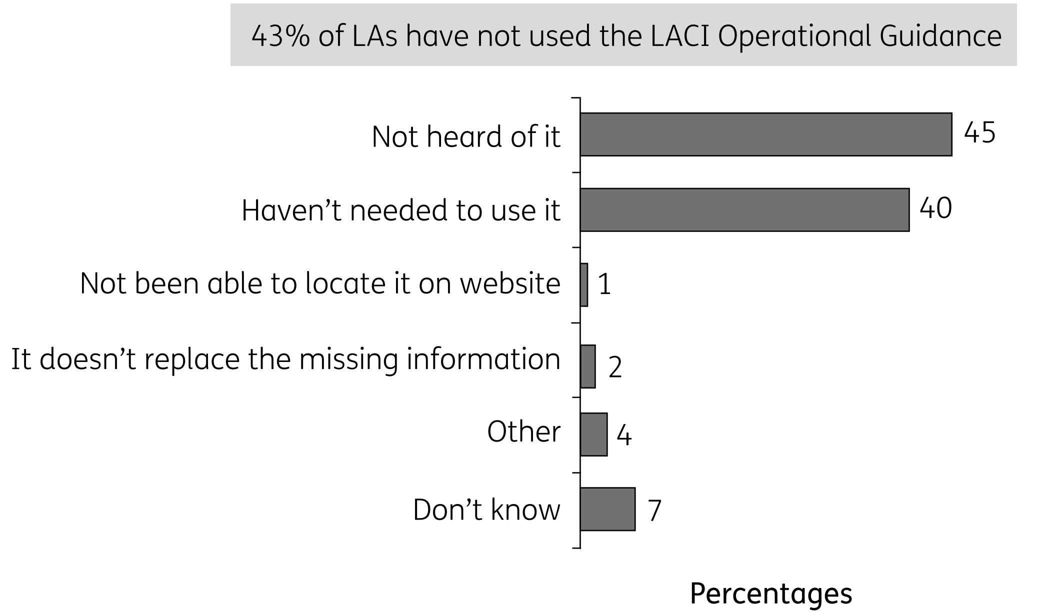


Base: All LAs that have not used the ESA Operational Guidance (85).

Slightly fewer than half of all LAs (47 per cent) had used the LACI Operational Guidance on the DWP HB website. Usage was highest amongst contracted out authorities (100 per cent) and authorities with a high caseload (55 per cent high caseload compared to 34 per cent low caseload).

A very high percentage of those that had used the guidance (90 per cent) found it useful (81 per cent fairly and ten per cent very useful).

Figure 7.10 Why has your LA not used the LACI Operational Guidance?



Base: All LAs that have not used the LACI Operational Guidance (95).

Among the 95 LAs (43 per cent) that have not used the LACI Operational Guidance, 45 per cent had not heard of it and 40 per cent had not needed to use it. A further one per cent had not been able to locate it on the website and two per cent said it did not replace the missing information.

Figure 7.11 Does your LA have a contact in Jobcentre Plus with whom you can raise any queries you may have on ESA LACI? Why has your LA not got a contact in Jobcentre Plus with whom you can raise any queries you may have on ESA LACI?

- 74 per cent of LAs have a contact in Jobcentre Plus with whom they can raise queries; 23 per cent do not have a contact.

Base: All LAs (221).

- The main reasons why LAs do not have a contact are:
  - not been given a contact/no contact available (37 per cent);
  - haven't tried to make contact (18 per cent);
  - contacts (names/numbers) change too often (14 per cent);
  - contact fails to attend meetings/lack of interest (12 per cent);
  - haven't needed to make contact with Jobcentre Plus (ten per cent).

Base: All LAs that do not have a contact (51).

Three-quarters (74 per cent) of LAs had a contact at Jobcentre Plus that they could get in touch with. This rose to 81 per cent of those with a high caseload. English Districts were the most likely to have said that they did not have a contact in Jobcentre Plus with whom they could raise queries they may have on ESA LACI (31 per cent of English Districts said they did not have this kind of contact compared to ten per cent of Scottish authorities, 11 per cent of London Boroughs and 14 per cent of English Metropolitan Districts).

Amongst the 51 LAs that did not have a contact in Jobcentre Plus for ESA LACI queries, the main reason for not having one appears to be that a contact had not been designated or was not available (37 per cent).

8 War pensions

8.1 Introduction and summary

When assessing Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) entitlement local authorities (LAs) have discretionary powers to disregard part or all of a War Disablement Pension, a War Widow's Pension or a War Widower's Pension, in addition to the mandatory £10 disregard of these payments. The majority of costs are borne by the LA with a contribution from benefit subsidy. (Regulations which came into effect on 26 January 2010 made it clear that service attributable pensions payable under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme were included in the war pensions definitions as income that could be disregarded under the discretionary powers.) Authorities are currently only asked to provide the overall cost of the discretionary scheme for the purpose of benefit subsidy.

The aim of this section was to find out more detail about the scope of individual schemes in order to inform policy development. Information about the numbers of claims from war pensioners, the numbers receiving a discretionary disregard in their benefit claim and the extent of the discretionary disregard made will all assist Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in responding to questions and monitoring the scheme.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

The majority of LAs (95 per cent) had data on the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension. When asked how many HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension their LA currently had, the average response was 82.

The majority of LAs (89 per cent) had data on the numbers of claims where a discretionary disregard was made. When asked how many claims with a discretionary disregard they had, the average recorded was 85.

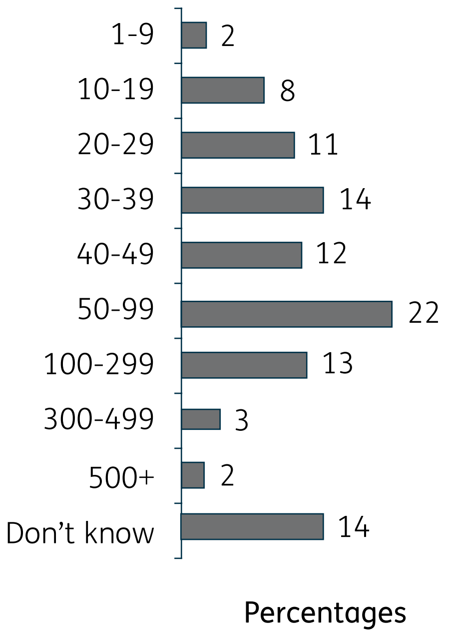
The majority of LAs (95 per cent) applied a discretionary disregard to war pensions in full, three per cent applied a disregard in part and one per cent did not apply a disregard at all. Approximately two-thirds (64 per cent) of LAs said that they included the Service Attributable Pension (SAP) in war pension income to be disregarded.

8.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

**Figure 8.1 Does your LA have data on the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension (War Disablement Pension, War Widow's Pension or War Widower's Pension)?
How many HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension does your LA currently have?**

95% of LAs have data on the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension



Averages

Welsh	60
Scottish	143
English:	
Unitary	126
Metropolitan	214
District	41
London Borough	35

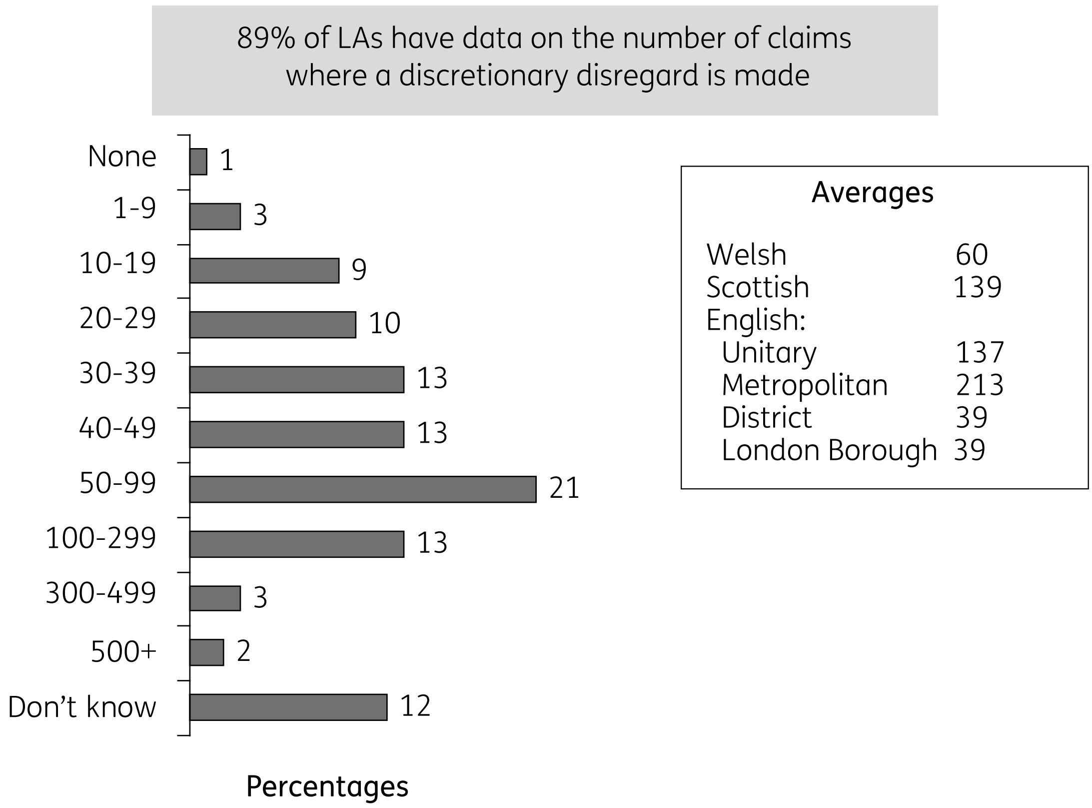
Base: All LAs that have data on the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension (208).

The majority of LAs (95 per cent) had data on the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension. Two per cent of LAs did not have this data and two per cent did not know if they had it (two English Metropolitan authorities, six English Districts, two London Boroughs).

When asked how many HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension their LA currently had, the average recorded was 82. There were big differences according to LA type. The highest average was recorded amongst English Metropolitan authorities (214) and the lowest was amongst London Boroughs (35). The average recorded for Scottish authorities was also significantly high at 143.

There appears to be a strong correlation between the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a war pension and the size of caseload. Authorities with low caseloads had, on average, 32 claims with income classified as a war pension, authorities with medium caseloads had an average of 49, whereas authorities with high caseloads had an average of 150 claims of this sort.

**Figure 8.2 Does your LA have data on the numbers of claims where a discretionary disregard is made?
How many claims where a discretionary disregard is made does your LA currently have?**



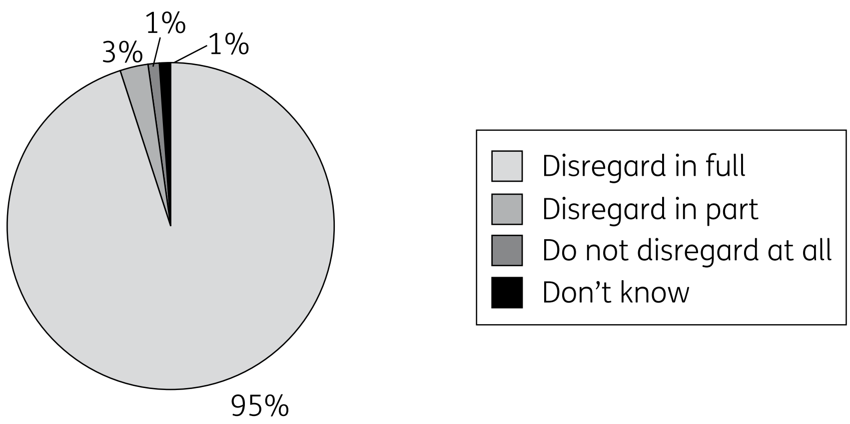
Base: All LAs that have data on the number of claims where a discretionary disregard is made (194).

The majority (89 per cent) of LAs had data on the numbers of claims where a discretionary disregard was made. This figure rose significantly to 100 per cent amongst Scottish authorities.

When asked how many claims with a discretionary disregard they had, the average recorded was 85. The findings differed by LA type with significantly high averages recorded for English Metropolitan authorities (213), English Unitary authorities (137) and Scottish authorities (139).

The findings for how many claims with a discretionary disregard LAs had also differed by caseload. LAs with a low caseload had, on average, 32 claims of this sort, LAs with a medium caseload had, on average, 45 and LAs with a high caseload had, on average, 156 claims with a discretionary disregard.

Figure 8.3 Does your LA apply a discretionary disregard to war pensions in full, in part or not at all?



Base: All LAs (218).

The majority of LAs (95 per cent) applied a discretionary disregard to war pensions in full, three per cent applied a disregard in part and one per cent did not apply a disregard at all.

Figure 8.4 Does your LA include the SAP in war pension income to be disregarded?

64 per cent include the SAP in war pension income to be disregarded
(ten per cent do not, 27 per cent do not know)

Approximately two-thirds (64 per cent) of LAs said that they included the SAP in war pension income to be disregarded. This figure was significantly higher amongst authorities in Scotland and the North West where four in five included it (81 per cent and 78 per cent respectively)

Appendix A
The survey

Methodology

Up to Wave 9 of the LA Omnibus Survey we interviewed respondents on the telephone. However, at Wave 9 respondents were given a choice of completing the questionnaire on the telephone, as a self-completion questionnaire on paper or as a self-completion questionnaire on the internet. This mixed mode approach achieved a relatively good response rate of 71 per cent and therefore, has been used from Wave 9 onwards. The response rate achieved at Wave 21 was 61 per cent (see below for more detail).

Sample

Using the updated contacts database from Wave 20, the local authority (LA) manager with responsibility for the most areas (out of Rent Rebate, Rent Allowance, Council Tax Benefit (CTB), Overpayment Recovery and Benefit Fraud) was identified. This manager then became our contact for Wave 21 and was sent a letter on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) headed paper which set out the aims of the survey, explained the nature of the input required and advised the recipient that they had a choice of how to complete the questionnaire. The letter was signed by a DWP signatory and included contact names at both GfK NOP and DWP for queries, or if the respondent wanted to opt out of the survey.

The advance letter included details of each methodology – web-based questionnaire, paper questionnaire and telephone interview. Each respondent was assigned a user ID/password, which had to be entered at the start of the web survey. This enabled GfK NOP to keep track of interviews and ensure no one completed a survey more than once. Including an ID also allowed respondents to stop and restart an interview at any point and meant that different managers could easily access and complete the sections relevant to them.

Respondents were also sent a copy of the questionnaire so that they could prepare their answers in advance, or if they chose to, use it to fill in their answers and return it to GfK NOP in the reply-paid envelope provided. It emphasised that, if necessary, they should consult other managers and staff for their input into the questionnaire. Telephone interviewers were instructed to check that the respondent had completed the questionnaire sent in advance and that it was readily available for reference during the interview.

A summary of Wave 20 key findings was also included in the mail-out to respondents, detailing the main results plus details of how DWP would be using the data.

Questionnaire design

Both Department officials and LA managers were consulted about the content of the questionnaire in order to gain as much useful information as possible from the research.

The first stage of questionnaire development involved a meeting between GfK NOP and relevant officials within the Department to discuss current issues and policy initiatives and establish the question areas that they would like to be included in the questionnaire.

The Wave 21 questionnaire comprised seven sections as follows: Information, Efficiency Work Programme, Rooms for Carers, Temporary Accommodation, HB and CTB Take-up and Changing the name of CTB, ESA and LACI, War Pensions and Contracting Out and Contact Information.

LAs were asked to pass the section on Temporary Accommodation to the Temporary Accommodation Manager or Homelessness Team. The sections on Information, Efficiency and Temporary Accommodation all contained questions asked at previous waves of the survey.

Once the questionnaire had been through several drafts, eight LA managers were contacted in order to ask them about their understanding and comprehension of the questions. We discussed the questionnaire face-to-face with three LA managers and on the telephone with a further four. These discussions also gave managers an opportunity to raise any issues that were particularly important and relevant to them at the time. They were structured around the draft questionnaire but the structure of the session was kept fluid enough to allow managers to raise new issues and enlarge on existing subjects as they wished.

The comments of these managers were reviewed with the relevant officials at DWP and the questionnaire was, wherever possible, amended to take on board their views. The questionnaire was then piloted to test the wording and coverage of the draft document as well as the length of the questionnaire (24-28 May 2010). The questionnaire was tested on a total of 15 LA managers on the telephone, using a paper version of the questionnaire.

Our specialist web department within GfK NOP developed the web-based questionnaire. It was written in mrInterview, software supplied by SPSS and hosted on the GfK NOP facility. Every attempt has been made to make sure that the web questionnaire is as user-friendly and straightforward as possible, in order to encourage as many authorities as possible to use it. For example, respondents do not have to input their own and their colleagues' contact details – they are on the screen for them to check and amend; more than one person can be in the questionnaire at one time; respondents can fill in a section at a time, in any order.

As for the main stage of fieldwork, each pilot respondent was sent an advance letter and questionnaire. The GfK NOP executive team and a representative from DWP briefed a small team of interviewers. The briefing covered the purpose of the survey and explanations of any particular questionnaire points, as well as allowing time for practice on the questionnaire by means of dummy interviewing. A debrief was held at the end of the pilot interviewing which involved interviewers talking through their experiences in carrying out the pilot work and highlighting any areas of confusion or ambiguity they had observed.

Fieldwork

The same team of interviewers that worked on the pilot was briefed on the telephone for the main stage of the survey. Interviewers were also issued with full interviewer instructions, which included all survey materials including a hard copy of the questionnaire and the advance letter.

As in previous waves of the survey, interviewers' first task was to telephone LAs and check how they planned to complete the questionnaire. Respondents choosing to undertake the survey on the telephone were then either interviewed or an appointment for another more convenient time was set up. Those selecting to complete the questionnaire on paper or on the web were asked to complete it as soon as possible before 30 July 2010. Interviewers were then instructed to 'telephone chase' those respondents who did not return their completed questionnaire within the following ten days or so and ask them to complete it as soon as possible. This process continued throughout fieldwork. Two reminder emails were also sent to all non-respondents after four and six weeks of fieldwork.

Given the fact that this was a census of all LAs and that Housing Benefit (HB) managers are difficult to get hold of due to workload and turnover of staff, interviewers were not given a maximum number of call-backs. Instead, in order to maximise the response rate across the country as a whole, they were asked to adopt a flexible approach in terms of call-backs and to liaise closely with head office throughout the fieldwork period.

Interviewers were required to provide weekly progress figures that were used to identify response difficulties during fieldwork. Unobtainable numbers, no answers, wrong numbers, etc. were all investigated immediately.

Fieldwork started on 21 June 2010 and was supposed to finish on 30 July 2010, although it was actually held open until 25 August 2010 to try and increase the response rate. By the end of fieldwork we had achieved interviews with a total of 232 LA managers, representing a response rate of 61 per cent. Within this achieved sample of 232 there were 29 LAs that did not complete every section of the questionnaire. The section filled in by the highest number of LAs (229) was Room for Carers.

This total sample of 232 LAs breaks down as 173 web-based questionnaires, 40 paper questionnaires and 19 telephone interviews (including the 15 pilot telephone interviews). The percentage of authorities completing the questionnaire has gone up slightly from 60 per cent at Wave 20 to 61 per cent at Wave 20.

Interpretation of the data

Data used for the analysis is derived from three sources: the Contacts Database, DWP and the interview itself. The data was analysed by a number of different variables as shown below:

Table A.1 Data analysis variables

LA type	Welsh, Scottish, English Unitary, English Metropolitan, English District, London Borough
Contracting-out status	Contracted out, not contracted out
HB/CTB caseload	Low (up to 10,000 cases), medium (10,001-20,000 cases), high (20,001+ cases)
Region	Scotland, North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, North West, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, South East, South West, London, Wales

Information on LA type, HB/CTB caseload and region was provided as part of the Contacts Database, while contracting-out status was asked as part of the interview.

The following points should be noted when using this report:

- a sample, not the entire 'population', of LA HB managers has been interviewed. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. Where bases are low, care should be taken when interpreting the data;
- where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'other' categories, or multiple answers;
- throughout the report, an asterisk indicates a value of less than 0.5 per cent but not zero, and '0' denotes no observation in that cell.

Statistical reliability

It should be remembered that a sample, not the entire population, of HB managers was interviewed. We cannot, therefore, be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the 'true' values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95 per cent – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value will fall within a specified range.

However, given that this sample comprises 61 per cent of the total population, the level of statistical reliability is slightly higher than if the sample had come from a larger population. On this basis, responses to the questionnaire provide data with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.0 percentage points at the 95 per cent level. In practice this means that where 50 per cent give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value will fall between 46.0 per cent and 54.0 per cent. Table A.2 shows the sampling error for the whole sample and key sub-groups across a range of parameters. Note that the closer a finding is to 50 per cent the greater the variability of responses within the sample.

Table A.2 Wave 21 sampling error

	Sample size	Universe	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
All LAs	232	380	2.4	3.7	4.0
LA type					
Welsh	12	22	11.4	17.5	19.1
Scottish	23	32	6.5	9.9	10.8
English Unitary	26	57	8.5	13.0	14.2
English Metropolitan	29	36	4.8	7.4	8.0
English District	121	200	3.4	5.1	5.6
London Borough	21	33	7.7	11.8	12.9

Response rates

As mentioned earlier, a total of 232 LAs participated in Wave 21 of the survey, which represents a response rate of 61 per cent. As Figure A.1 shows, response rate varies by LA type, from a high of 81 per cent of English Metropolitan districts to just 46 per cent of English Unitary authorities.

Figure A.1 Wave 21 response rates, by LA type

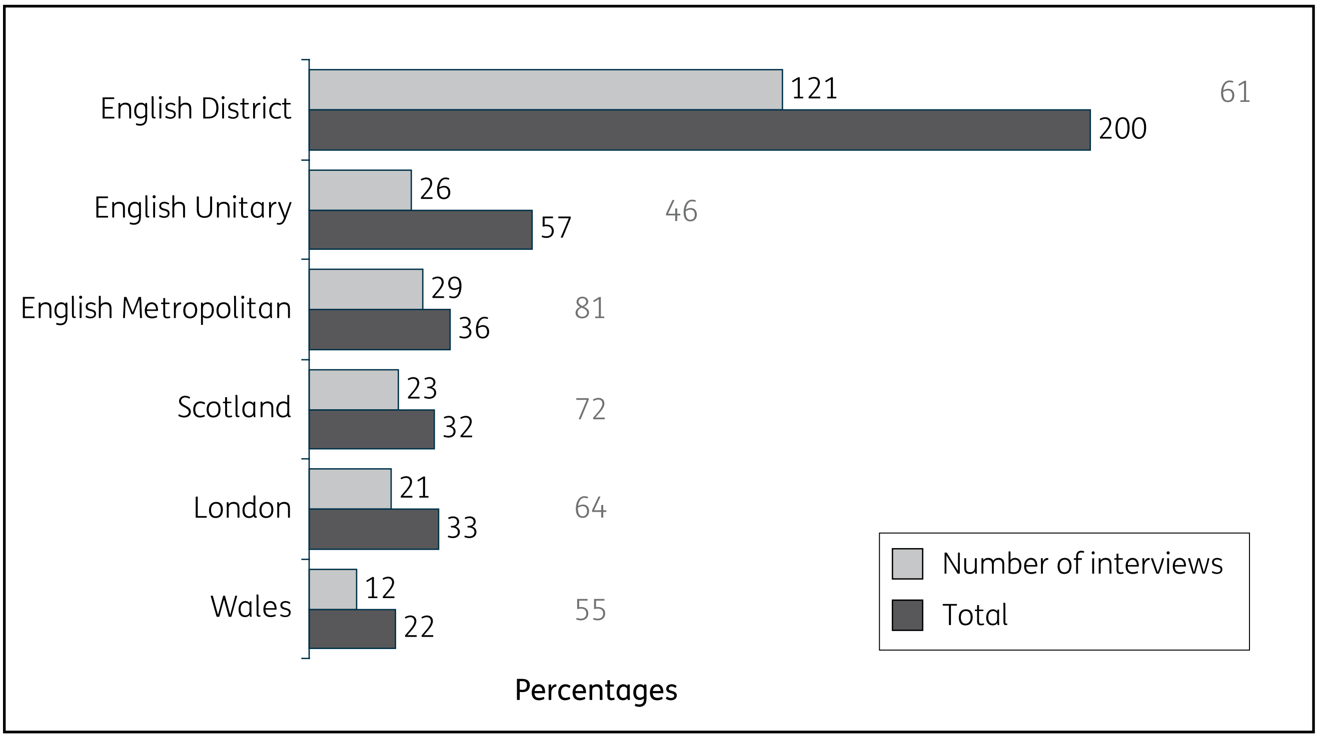


Table A.3 provides further details of response rate by LA type.

Table A.3 Response rates by local authority type

	Total	Scotland	Wales	English District	English Unitary	English Metropolitan District	London Borough
Telephone: mainstage completes	3			3			
Telephone: pilot completes	16		2	9	3	1	1
Web: completes	144	12	7	72	16	24	13
Paper: completes	40	5	1	26	6	1	1
Total completes	**203**	**17**	**10**	**110**	**25**	**26**	**15**
Partial web completes	29	6	2	11	1	3	6
Total completes and partial completes	**232**	**23**	**12**	**121**	**26**	**29**	**21**
Soft call-back	18	3	1	7	2	2	3
Will complete on paper questionnaire	20		2	13	3	1	1
Will complete on web	53	2	4	28	14	3	2
Refusal (insufficient time/resources)	35	3	2	24	4		2
Refusal (other/no reason provided)	15	1	1	5	5		3
No answer/engaged/ voicemail	7			2	3	1	1
Total	**380**	**32**	**22**	**200**	**57**	**36**	**33**
Response rate	61%	72%	55%	61%	46%	81%	64%

Sample profile

Table A.4 Sample profile

	Number	%
Total	232	100
LA type		
Welsh	12	5%
Scottish	23	10%
English Unitary	26	11%
English Metropolitan	29	13%
English District	121	52%
London Borough	21	9%
Contracting out status (based on 222 only as ten LAs did not answer this question):		
Contracted out	23	10%
Not contracted out	199	90%
HB/CTB caseload		
Low	63	27%
Medium	77	33%
High	92	40%
Decentralisation status (based on 221 only as 11 LAs did not answer this question):		
Centralised	210	95%
Decentralised	11	5%
Region:		
Scotland	23	10%
North East	9	4%
Yorkshire and Humberside	13	6%
North West	23	10%
East Midlands	26	11%
West Midlands	19	8%
East	28	12%
South East	37	16%
South West	21	9%
London	21	9%
Wales	12	5%

Appendix B
Advance letter

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Housing and Fraud Research
Housing Research & Analysis Division
1st Floor, Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9NA

Tel: 020 7449 5729

<<ID>>

«REName»
«REJob»
«LA_Name2»
«REAdd1»
«REAdd2»
«REAdd3»
«REAdd4»
«REAdd5»
«REPCD»

8 June 2010

Dear «REName»,

LA Omnibus Survey Wave 21

I am writing to ask for your help with Wave 21 of the LA Omnibus Survey. As you probably know, the Survey is undertaken every six months and aims to provide up-to-date information on how LAs organise benefit administration and find out managers' views of current policy and regulations, future initiatives and changes. By conducting one regular survey, as opposed to a number of individual ones, we are trying to reduce the burden on local authority managers. You can complete the questionnaire on the web, on the enclosed paper version or on the telephone with an interviewer.

The Wave 21 Survey covers the following areas:

- Information
- Efficiency
- Rooms for Carers
- Temporary Accommodation
- HB and CTB Take-up and Changing the name of CTB

- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Local Authority Claim Information (LACI)
- War Pensions

Each of the above sections should be easily answered by your department with the exception of Temporary Accommodation which would be best answered by your Temporary Accommodation Manager or Homelessness/Housing Team. We would be very grateful if you could pass this section on to whoever you think is the most appropriate person and ask them to feed back their answers to you in time for the telephone interview.

If you choose to fill-in the ***internet version of the questionnaire***, you may access it anytime from 21 June 2010. You will find the questionnaire at the following URL: http://www.surveys.com/lao21

For each section you will be asked for your User ID. Please copy this carefully from the top of this letter or the enclosed questionnaire. You, or your colleagues, can access the questionnaire more than once using this User ID until you have completed it. Please complete it by 30 July 2010.

Alternatively, you may choose to complete the survey in one of the following ways:

Telephone Interview: If you choose to conduct a telephone interview, then it would be very useful if you could prepare your answers in advance of the interview (on the enclosed questionnaire), in particular for those questions which involve you giving us numerical answers. There are also some sections of the questionnaire that may benefit from prior consideration with other colleagues or contractors. You will receive a call from a GfK NOP interviewer sometime between 21 June and 30 July 2010 or please contact jo.hrabi@gfk.com if you would prefer to make an appointment.

Self-Completion Questionnaire on Paper: If you choose to fill in the questionnaire on paper, please use the enclosed questionnaire and follow the instructions on the front page. Please return it as soon as possible – by 30 July at the latest – in the pre-paid envelope provided.

The information provided in the survey is completely confidential and will be used only for research purposes by GfK NOP Research and analysts within the Department (part of IAD - who may look at the data in conjunction with other management information collected by the Department). Neither you nor your authority will be identified in any report.

We hope that you find the enclosed Wave 20 Key Findings on Local Housing Allowance interesting and informative. The second page includes details of how DWP is using the findings which we hope you will find useful. If you are interested in looking at the findings for Wave 20 in more detail, you will be able to access the full report through the DWP website from late June/early July.

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

Thank you in advance for your co-operation. If you have any queries about the survey please contact Dan Heap at the DWP on 020 7449 5729 or Darren Yaxley (GfK NOP) on 020 7890 9759.

Yours sincerely

Dan Heap – Housing Research and Analysis Division

Appendix C Questionnaire

USER ID: label

JN 452345

Local Authority Omnibus Survey Wave 21

Thank you for taking part in Wave 21 of the Survey. As mentioned in the enclosed letter, you have the choice of completing the Survey on the internet, the telephone or on paper. Please read the instructions below before you start. If you feel that all, or part, of this questionnaire would be better completed by someone else, either in your authority or a contractor, please pass the relevant sections on to them, or send them a web link as soon as possible.

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU MAY NEED TO ASK YOUR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MANAGER OR HOMELESSNESS/HOUSING TEAM TO FILL IN SECTION D WHICH IS ABOUT TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION.

Self-completion questionnaire on the Internet: If you choose to fill in the questionnaire on the internet, you may access it anytime from 21 June to 30 July 2010. You will find the questionnaire at the following URL: **http://www.surveys.com/lao21** and will need the User ID at the top of this questionnaire to access it.

This method is quite simple and you will be automatically routed through the questionnaire as you answer each question. You can access the questionnaire more than once until you have completed it. Please read the instructions on the contents page of the web questionnaire before starting. All information is password protected and no one other than the GfK NOP team will be able to access your site or see your entries.

Telephone Interview: If you choose to conduct a telephone interview, then it would be very useful if you could prepare your answers in advance of the interview (on the enclosed questionnaire). By doing this, you should find that the interview itself will take no longer than 10/15 minutes. You will receive a call from a GfK NOP interviewer sometime between 21 June and 30 July 2010 or please contact jo.hrabi@gfk.com if you would prefer to make an appointment.

Self-completion questionnaire on paper: If you choose to fill-in the questionnaire on paper and post it back in the pre-paid envelope enclosed, please follow the instructions below and return it as soon as possible – by 30 July 2010 at the latest.

- Most questions can be answered simply by putting one (or more) tick(s) in the box(es) next to the answer(s) that applies to your local authority
- If you are unable to answer a particular question, please tick the "don't know" box
- Normally, after answering each question, you go on to the next one, UNLESS a box you have ticked has an instruction to GO TO another question
- **When you have finished, please POST THE QUESTIONNAIRE to us as soon as possible in the PRE-PAID ENVELOPE provided.**

CONTENTS

The information you provide will be used for research purposes only. You or your authority will not be identified in any report. A summary of the results will be sent to you in due course.

Section A: Information

This section asks about how long it takes your authority to run the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) (formerly known as the HBSD-IAD scan), which DWP asks local authorities to run every month. This data scan now provides the Department with the majority of data used for policy evaluation, forecasting, performance monitoring and data matching, replacing the need for local authorities to return statistical data clerically each quarter.

Over the last few years the Department has transformed the way it collects data on Housing and Council Tax Benefit from local authorities, with the changes making data collection more efficient for all parties. Local authorities have shown real commitment to playing their part in the transformation and modernisation programme and the Department appreciates the significant part they have played in making it a success.

The Department remains committed to ensuring that the burdens of HB/CTB data collection on local authorities are minimised going forward. As a result, we are keen to understand how long it takes to run the Single HB Extract every four weeks.

The following question should be answered with regard to the most recent SHBE that has been delivered to DWP by your local authority.

ALL ANSWER

A1 How many hours and minutes did it take to run your most recent Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) data scan that has been delivered to DWP. Please distinguish between:

(a) time taken to actually extract the data from your system and

(b) any additional time taken to deal with follow-up queries or issues and cleaning the data.

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW. IF THE TIMES ARE NOT KNOWN THEN PLEASE TICK 'DON'T KNOW'.

(a) Extracting the information required for the SHBE

☐☐ hours and ☐☐ minutes for most recent Single HB Extract

Don't know ☐

(b) Any additional time taken to deal with follow-up queries or issues and cleaning the data

☐☐ hours and ☐☐ minutes for most recent Single HB Extract

Don't know ☐

Section B: Efficiency Work Programme

This section asks questions previously asked about changes you may have carried out from April 2008 or plans you have in the future for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of HB/CTB services, in order to improve the overall value for money of the service. It also asks about your awareness of the DWP resources available to support you in this. We are repeating these questions so that your responses can help DWP monitor and improve its support programme for LAs in achieving their own efficiencies over the remainder of the spending review period 2008-2011 and beyond.

ALL ANSWER

B1a Which of the following initiatives are included in any of your LA's overall plans to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your HB/CTB services? TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN THE FIRST COLUMN BELOW AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER PLANNED INITIATIVES. ONLY TICK INITIATIVE IF YOUR LA IS INCLUDING IT SPECIFICALLY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

ANSWER FOR EACH INITIATIVE INCLUDED IN YOUR LA'S OVERALL PLAN AT B1a

B1b Has this initiative ....(EACH INITIATIVE MENTIONED AT B1a) achieved a net saving? TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN SECOND COLUMN BELOW

ANSWER FOR EACH INITIATIVE FOR WHICH NET SAVINGS ACHIEVED AT B1b

B1c Would you say that this net saving is high, medium or low? TICK AS APPROPRIATE IN THIRD COLUMN BELOW

	B1a	B1b	B1c			
	Included in plans	Net savings achieved	Level of savings High	Medium	Low	DK
Home working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobile working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On line claim forms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Joint working/shared services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accommodation changes (i.e. cheaper or moving staff in order to relinquish estates)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Benchmarking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organisational restructure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improving IT	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved performance management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Outsourcing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Telephone claims	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐
Don't know	☐	☐				

ALL ANSWER

B2 Which, if any, of the following barriers do you feel your LA will need to address in trying to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your service? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- HB/CTB seen as lower priority service ☐
- Budgetary control ☐
- Internal Management/Staff resistance to change ☐
- Administration e.g. Senior management agreement ☐
- Staffing/resource constraints ☐
- External pressures (e.g. local political) ☐
- IT issues ☐
- Current financial situation ☐
- Change of culture in organisation ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- None of these ☐
- Don't know ☐

B3 Which, if any, of the following resources that can support your LA's plans to deliver your HB/CTB service more efficiently and effectively have you used in the last year? TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN FIRST COLUMN BELOW AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER RESOURCES USED

ANSWER B4 FOR EACH RESOURCE USED AT B3

B4 How useful have you found this/these resource/s to date? TICK ONE ONLY FOR EACH RESOURCE USED

	B3	B4				
	Resources used	Very useful	Fairly useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Don't know
DWP resources:						
HB/CTB Good Practice Guide	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Performance Development Team Consultancy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-DWP resources:						
IDeA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnerships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvement Network	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CIPFA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IRRV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
None	☐					
Don't know	☐					

ALL ANSWER

B5 Which, if any, of these resources, does your LA plan to use as part of your plans to deliver your HB/CTB service more efficiently and effectively <u>in the future</u>? TICK ALL THAT APPLY

DWP resources:
- HB/CTB Good Practice Guide ☐
- Performance Development Team Consultancy ☐

Non-DWP resources:
- IDeA ☐
- Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnerships ☐
- Improvement Network ☐
- CIPFA ☐
- IRRV ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- None of these ☐
- Don't know ☐

The following section repeats some additional questions asked previously in relation to the economic downturn and how it has impacted on HB/CTB services. Your responses can continue to help inform how DWP works with LAs during this period.

B6 For your HB/CTB services in 2009 and so far in 2010, which of the following impacts, if any, have you experienced as a result of the economic downturn? TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN THE LIST BELOW AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER IMPACTS

- An increase in customer enquiries via phone, post, face-to-face, email ☐
- An increase in claim form and information requests ☐
- An increase in debt management activity, including overpayment recovery and knock on effects from rent and council tax arrears ☐
- An increase in home visits ☐
- An increase in overpayment activity ☐
- An increase in visits to employers ☐
- An increase in take-up activity ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- Don't know ☐

B7 Which of the following, if any, have you implemented in order to cope with any increase in your caseload/workload and/or other activities mentioned in B7. TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN THE LIST BELOW AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER PLANNED INITIATIVES

- Additional staff (permanent or short term contract not agency) ☐
- Agency staff ☐
- Aborting any plans for reducing headcount ☐
- Overtime ☐
- Business process re-engineering ☐
- Reallocation of existing resource ☐
- Off site processing ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- Don't know ☐

B8 Would you say that the impact of the economic downturn on HB/CTB services has lessened so far in 2010 compared with 2009, or not?

- Yes, it has lessened ☐
- No, it has not lessened ☐
- Don't know ☐

Section C: Rooms for Carers

As part of the HB consultation document *Supporting people into work: the next stage of HB reform* (Cm 7769) we asked whether HB should be extended to provide an extra room for a non-resident carer. We would like to get an idea of the scale of this issue and how the cost is currently being met, if at all. We realise data is not collected on this and so your help is required to answer a few questions on this as best you can.

ALL ANSWER

C1 Please can you estimate the number of private sector claims your LA has received in the last month where the accommodation has a sleepover/additional room/s, over and above what might normally be allowed, which is/are required to accommodate carers who don't live with the claimant? PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

☐☐☐

Don't know ☐

ANSWER IF ONE OR MORE CLAIMS AT C1. OTHERS GO TO C4

C2 In these cases, how often does your LA meet the shortfall by awarding a Discretionary Housing Payment?

Always ☐ Go to C4
Sometimes ☐ Answer C3
Never ☐ Answer C3
Don't know ☐ Answer C3

ANSWER IF 'SOMETIMES' 'NEVER' OR 'DON'T KNOW' AT C2

C3 Does your LA have any other funding streams available to meet the shortfall in these cases?

Yes ☐
No ☐
Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

C4 Are there any other circumstances where your LA might consider an additional room in the accommodation necessary? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER REASONS BELOW

If someone has large medical equipment, e.g. for dialysis or help with breathing ☐
If a couple can't sleep in the same room for medical reasons ☐
If siblings can't sleep in the same room for medical reasons ☐
If care is shared between parents, a room for non-resident children ☐
Other (please specify) ☐

....

No, no other reasons ☐
Don't know ☐

Section D: Temporary Accommodation

YOUR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MANAGER OR HOMELESSNESS TEAM IS MORE LIKELY TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, SO YOU MAY WANT TO FORWARD THIS SECTION ON TO THEM. YOU CAN DO THIS BY EMAILING YOUR COLLEAGUE THE LINK AND ID FOR THE WEB QUESTIONNAIRE http://www.surveys.com/lao21 AND ASK THEM TO COMPLETE SECTION D ONLY.

You may be aware that a new Housing Benefit subsidy scheme for customers living in temporary accommodation (Private Sector Leased (PSL), Licensed and Bed and Breakfast accommodation[1]) was introduced from 1 April 2010. This subsidy scheme does not directly affect households placed into Housing Association Leasing (HAL) schemes, but we have included some questions in relation to this type of accommodation. Please only include Housing Association Leased accommodation (where the Registered Housing Association is the landlord) in your answers where specifically asked to do so (D7-D10).

These questions have been designed to support the Department's understanding of temporary accommodation usage by local authorities. Their inclusion in the Omnibus is designed to assist with a wider programme of monitoring and evaluating the impact of the new subsidy scheme. Your help by completing this section is fully appreciated.

D1 Which of the following types of property does your LA hold for use as temporary accommodation? TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Private Sector Leased (PSL) properties ☐
Licensed properties ☐
Housing Association Leasing (HAL) properties ☐

None of these ☐

IF YOU TICKED 'NONE OF THESE' AT D1, PLEASE GO TO D11
IF YOU TICKED 'HAL' ONLY AT D1, PLEASE GO TO D7
IF YOU TICKED 'PSL' AND/OR 'LICENSED' PROPERTIES AT D1, PLEASE ANSWER D2

D2 How many <u>self-contained</u> temporary accommodation units (PSL and Licensed only)[2] does your local authority currently hold an interest in? PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

☐☐☐☐☐

☐ Don't know

[1] This refers to accommodation owned by a private landlord that is used by local authorities as part of a homelessness function (where the rent liability is to the local authority).

[2] Accommodation is self-contained if the household is not required to share either: (a) a kitchen (b) a toilet (c) a bathroom.

ANSWER IF YOUR LA HAS SELF-CONTAINED TEMPORARY UNITS AT D2. IF YOU ANSWERED 'NONE' AT D2, PLEASE GO TO D6

D3 Approximately what percentage of households living in self-contained (PSL and Licensed) temporary accommodation contain at least one member of the household in full- or part-time employment? PLEASE PROVIDE AN ESTIMATE IF NECESSARY. PLEASE WRITE IN THE PERCENTAGE IN THE BOXES BELOW

☐☐☐ %

☐ Don't know

D4 Please provide an approximate breakdown of your self-contained temporary accommodation portfolio (PSL and Licensed only) by property size. PLEASE WRITE IN THE NUMBER IN EACH OF THE CATEGORIES BELOW

No. of bedrooms	Quantity
Studios	☐☐☐☐
1 bed	☐☐☐☐
2 bed	☐☐☐☐
3 bed	☐☐☐☐
4 bed	☐☐☐☐
5 bed	☐☐☐☐
More than 5 bed	☐☐☐☐
Don't know	☐

D5 Approximately what proportion of households in those self-contained (PSL and Licensed) units live in properties that could be considered too small, about right or too large for the size of the household?
PLEASE PROVIDE AN ESTIMATE IF NECESSARY. PLEASE WRITE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN EACH CATEGORY BELOW. THE TOTAL FOR ALL THE PERCENTAGES SHOULD EQUAL 100%.

Suitability	Percentage
Too small for the size of the household	☐☐☐
About right for the size of the household	☐☐☐
Too large for the size of the household	☐☐☐
(Total	100%)
Don't know	☐

ANSWER IF YOU TICKED 'PSL' AND/OR 'LICENSED' PROPERTIES AT D1

D6 How many non-self-contained temporary accommodation units (PSL and Licensed only) does your local authority currently hold an interest in? PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

☐☐☐☐☐

☐ Don't know

Housing Association Leasing (HAL) accommodation

ANSWER IF 'HAL' TICKED AT D1. OTHERS PLEASE GO TO D11

D7 How many HAL scheme units does you local authority currently hold an interest in?
PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

☐☐☐☐☐

☐ Don't know

D8 Approximately, what percentage of households living in HAL scheme properties contain someone in employment?
PLEASE PROVIDE AN ESTIMATE IF NECESSARY. PLEASE WRITE IN THE PERCENTAGE IN THE BOXES BELOW

☐☐☐ %

☐ Don't know

D9 Please provide an approximate breakdown of your HAL scheme portfolio by property size.
PLEASE WRITE IN THE NUMBER IN EACH OF THE CATEGORIES BELOW

No. of bedrooms	Quantity
Studios	☐☐☐☐
1 bed	☐☐☐☐
2 bed	☐☐☐☐
3 bed	☐☐☐☐
4 bed	☐☐☐☐
5 bed	☐☐☐☐
More than 5 bed	☐☐☐☐
Don't know	☐

D10 Approximately, what proportion of households in HAL scheme properties live in properties that could be considered too small, about right or too large for the size of the household?
PLEASE PROVIDE AN ESTIMATE IF NECESSARY. PLEASE WRITE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN EACH CATEGORY BELOW. THE TOTAL FOR ALL THE PERCENTAGES SHOULD EQUAL 100%.

Suitability	Percentage
Too small for the size of the household	☐☐☐
About right for the size of the household	☐☐☐
Too large for the size of the household	☐☐☐
(Total	100%)
Don't know	☐

ALL ANSWER

D11 To assist further evaluation work planned for this year, we would be grateful if you could provide (for internal use only) the contact details of someone who works in housing/ temporary accommodation who the DWP may use to get in touch with in the future to see if they would be willing to take part in further research. PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

Housing/Temporary accommodation manager:

NAME: --

JOB TITLE: --

TELEPHONE NUMBER WITH EXTENSION: --

FAX NO: --

EMAIL ADDRESS: --

ADDRESS: --

Section E: HB and CTB Take-up

Take Up the Challenge – a Government commissioned report on how the take-up of benefits and tax credits can be increased was released in 2009 and stated that around 400,000 children live in poverty because their parents do not take up all the financial support they are entitled to. The report made a number of recommendations for national and local government on how they can improve take-up, with the aim of helping people claim what they are entitled to in order to lift children out of poverty.

As administers of Housing and Council Tax Benefit, local authorities have an important role to play in increasing take-up. Your answers to the following questions will inform us of what action is being taken by local authorities to implement the report's recommendations, and to increase the take-up of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit by entitled residents. The findings can then inform what additional support local authorities need in order to increase the take-up of the benefits they administer.

ALL ANSWER

E1 Does your LA actively promote Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Benefit (CTB) to your residents in any of these ways? Does it promote them in any other ways? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN SEPARATE COLUMNS FOR BOTH HB AND CTB AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER METHODS USED

Yes:	HB	CTB
Newspaper advertising (independent or council-run)	☐	☐
Leaflet drops to residents' homes	☐	☐
Outdoor advertising, e.g. bus tops, billboards	☐	☐
Messages in correspondence to residents, e.g. council tax bills	☐	☐
Articles on the website	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐
....		
No	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT E1 FOR EITHER HB OR CTB. OTHERS GO TO E7

E2 Has your LA actively promoted Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit to residents in any of these ways <u>in the last 12 months</u>? PLEASE TICK ONE IN EACH COLUMN AS APPROPRIATE

	HB	CTB
Yes	☐	☐
No	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

ANSWER IF 'YES' FOR EITHER HB OR CTB AT E2. OTHERS GO TO E4

E3 Did your LA notice an increase in take-up as a result of the campaign or not? PLEASE TICK ONE IN EACH COLUMN AS APPROPRIATE

	HB	CTB
Yes, a significant increase	☐	☐
Yes, some increase	☐	☐
No, take-up did not increase	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT SAID 'YES' FOR EITHER HB OR CTB AT E1. OTHERS GO TO E7

E4 When promoting Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit, does your LA use customer data to target those residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible? PLEASE TICK ONE IN EACH COLUMN AS APPROPRIATE

	HB	CTB
Yes	☐	☐
No	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

ANSWER IF 'NO' AT E4 FOR EITHER HB OR CTB AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN APPROPRIATE COLUMNS BELOW. OTHERS GO TO INSTRUCTION ABOVE E6

E5 Why does your LA not use data to target residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER REASONS

	HB	CTB
Have tried in the past but it was not cost effective	☐	☐
Data sharing protocols between different agencies are unclear	☐	☐
We cannot obtain the data we need to do this	☐	☐
We are not aware how to use data for this purpose	☐	☐
Other (please specify)		
....	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT E4 FOR EITHER HB OR CTB AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN APPROPRIATE COLUMN BELOW. OTHERS GO TO E7

E6 Has take-up of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit increased since you started using data to target those residents/groups of residents most likely to be eligible? PLEASE TICK ONE IN EACH COLUMN AS APPROPRIATE

	HB	CTB
Yes, a significant increase	☐	☐
Yes, some increase	☐	☐
No, take-up did not increase	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

ALL ANSWER

E7 Does your LA actively promote Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit to your own employees in any of these ways? Does it promote them in any other ways? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY IN SEPARATE COLUMNS FOR BOTH HB AND CTB AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER METHODS USED

Yes:	HB	CTB
Staff magazine articles	☐	☐
Intranet articles	☐	☐
Messages in payslips	☐	☐
Email bulletins	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐
....		
No	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

E8 Which department in your LA is/would be responsible for promoting HB/CTB with a view to increasing take-up? PLEASE WRITE IN

Changing the name of Council Tax Benefit

The Welfare Reform Act 2009, which received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009, introduced an order making power to rename Council Tax Benefit as Council Tax Rebate. The name change is aimed at improving benefit take-up. Although the Act commits the Government to change the name it does not provide for a timeframe. The Government made it clear that timing would depend on further preparatory work on the practical impact for local authorities and the costs involved (DWP would be helping with the costs of these changes), and the likely impact on benefit take-up.

This section of the questionnaire aims to give DWP a clearer estimate of the costs to local authorities of making the name change in terms of changes to computer systems and software, to customer notifications which refer to the benefit, and to necessary publicity to make it clear that the benefit name has changed for existing and new customers and to encourage take-up.

ALL ANSWER

E9 If DWP were to change the name of Council Tax Benefit to Council Tax Rebate, which of the following would your LA have to change? What else would it have to change?
PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY AND WRITE IN ANYTHING ELSE THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED

- **Computer system** (e.g. CTB software, customer services system software Automated telephone software/scripts) ☐
- **Letters** (e.g. notification letters, document management letters, standard template letters, Departmental letter heads/footers/sign off) ☐
- **CTB bills/demand notices/reminders/summons** ☐
- **Leaflets** ☐
- **Forms** (e.g. application form) ☐
- **Stationery** (e.g. compliment slips/business cards) ☐
- **Website** (Intranet and Internet) e.g. E forms, Electronic application form, Telephone directory, any pages referring to CTB ☐
- **Signage and estates** ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

  ....

- Don’t know ☐

ALL ANSWER

E10 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much your LA would spend IN TOTAL to make the change. This should include:

- everything mentioned at E9 (e.g. computer system, letters/bills/notices/leaflets/forms/ stationery, website, signage and estates)

PLUS

- publicity to ensure that people know about the name change and understand what it means?

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

£ ☐☐☐☐☐

Don't know ☐

DWP is keen to keep the cost of making the name change as low as possible for local authorities. The following questions will help inform DWP of the best way of doing this, by asking the optimal time of year and estimated cost (where possible) of each separate item that you said your LA would have to change at E9.

We appreciate that some people may not be able to provide best times and estimated itemised costs for everything that would have to be changed (i.e. all those ticked at E9). If you can answer any of the detail at E11-E18, even if it is estimated, it would be very helpful, but if this amount of detail is not possible please try to provide an estimate of the TOTAL cost of everything that would have to be changed plus the cost of publicity at E10 above.

ANSWER IF YOUR LA WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CHANGES TO 'COMPUTER SYSTEM' AT E9

E11 In order to avoid additional costs associated with changing the name to Council Tax Rebate on your computer system, what would be the best month/year for the change to be made. PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don't know ☐

E12 If the name were to be changed from 1st April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your local authority to make the changes to your computer system. WRITE IN BELOW. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ESTIMATE THIS COST SEPARATELY, THEN TICK DON'T KNOW.

£ ☐☐☐☐

Don't know ☐

ANSWER IF YOUR LA WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CHANGES TO ANY OF 'LETTERS', CTB BILLS/DEMAND NOTICES/REMINDERS/SUMMONS', 'LEAFLETS','FORMS' OR 'STATIONERY' AT E9

E13 Please write in below the month and year by which your LA would need to have been informed of the name change to avoid additional costs to:(EACH OF THE PAPER BASED CHANGES MENTIONED AT E9). PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

LETTERS:

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don't know ☐

CTB BILLS/DEMAND NOTICES/REMINDERS/SUMMONS:

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don't know ☐

LEAFLETS:

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don't know ☐

FORMS:

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don't know ☐

STATIONERY:

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don't know ☐

E14 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your local authority to make the changes to all of the following combined: 'Letters', CTB Bills/Demand Notices/Reminders/Summons', 'Leaflets', 'Forms' Or 'Other Stationery'. PLEASE WRITE IN A TOTAL FIGURE FOR ALL PAPER BASED CHANGES COMBINED. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ESTIMATE THIS COST SEPARATELY, THEN PLEASE TICK DON'T KNOW.

£ ☐☐☐☐

Don't know ☐

ANSWER IF YOUR LA WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CHANGES TO ‘WEBSITE’ AT E9

E15 Please write in below the month and year by which your LA would need to have been informed of the name change to avoid the additional costs of changing the name on your website. PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don’t know ☐

E16 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your local authority to make changes to the website? WRITE IN BELOW. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ESTIMATE THIS COST SEPARATELY, THEN PLEASE TICK DON’T KNOW.

£ ☐☐☐☐

Don’t know ☐

ANSWER IF YOUR LA WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CHANGES TO ‘SIGNAGE AND ESTATES’ AT E9

E17 In order to avoid additional costs associated with changing the name to Council Tax Rebate on signage and estates, what would be the best month/year for the change to be made. PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

Don’t know ☐

E18 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much it would cost your local authority to make changes to signage and estates. WRITE IN BELOW. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ESTIMATE THIS COST SEPARATELY, THEN PLEASE TICK DON’T KNOW.

£ ☐☐☐☐

Don’t know ☐

ALL ANSWER

E19 If the name were to be changed from 1 April 2011, please write in an estimate below of how much your LA would spend on publicity to ensure that people know about the name change and understand what it means? PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW.

£ ☐☐☐☐

Don’t know ☐

Section F: Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Local Authority Claim Information (LACI)

Since the end of October 2009 local authorities have received their HB/CTB claims, when associated with the Jobcentre Plus Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefit, via LA Claim Information (LACI) documents. These documents are sent to the LAs once all the data has been gathered for both the ESA claim and the HB and/or CTB claim, and when all the relevant ESA claim information has been verified. After some initial teething problems DWP has issued further communications to Jobcentre Plus staff and also implemented further changes at the end of May 2010 to improve the quality and quantity of data received by LAs on the LACl document.

We are interested in your views on how the communications to Jobcentre Plus staff and the further changes in May 2010 have affected the LACI and your authority's claims processing times.

ALL ANSWER

F1 In general, how would you describe the completeness of the data on an ESA LACI?
PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

- Very complete ☐
- Fairly complete ☐
- Not very complete ☐
- Not at all complete ☐
- Don't know ☐

F2 In general, how would you describe the accuracy of the data on ESA LACI?
PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

- Very accurate ☐
- Fairly accurate ☐
- Not very accurate ☐
- Not at all accurate ☐
- Don't know ☐

F3 In general, would you say that your LA receives the ESA LACI too early (i.e. before all the information is on it) or at about the right time? PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

- Too early ☐
- About the right time ☐
- Don't know ☐

F4 In general, does the information in the ESA LACI allow you to assess the customer's claim to benefit without having to request missing information?

- Yes ☐ Go to F6
- No, information is missing ☐ Answer F5
- Don't know ☐ Go to F6

ANSWER IF 'NO' AT F4. OTHERS GO TO F6

F5 What type of information is missing? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER TYPE OF MISSING INFORMATION

- Very complete ☐
- Details of partner ☐
- Details of dependants ☐
- Details of non-dependants living in household ☐
- Information about customer's employments ☐
- Tenancy agreements/rent information ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

F6 Overall how clear would you say the ESA LACI is in terms of how easy it is to read and understand? PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

- Very clear ☐ Go to F8
- Fairly clear ☐ Answer F7
- Not very clear ☐ Answer F7
- Not at all clear ☐ Answer F7
- Don't know ☐ Go to F8

ANSWER IF 'FAIRLY CLEAR'/'NOT VERY CLEAR' OR 'NOT AT ALL CLEAR' AT F6. OTHERS GO TO F8

F7 What areas in particular do you think could be clearer? PLEASE WRITE IN

- The format ☐
- The order the information is in ☐
- Information under a more appropriate category ☐
- Other (please specify)

.... ☐

- Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

F8 Is your LA able to ascertain the verification activity that had been carried out by Jobcentre Plus from the ESA LACI?

- Yes ☐ Answer F9
- No ☐ Go to F11
- Don't know ☐ Go to F12

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT F8

F9 Does your LA accept that Jobcentre Plus has undertaken appropriate verification or do you undertake your own verification?

- We accept that Jobcentre Plus has undertaken appropriate verification ☐ Go to F12
- We undertake our own verification ☐ Answer F10
- Don't know ☐ Go to F12

ANSWER IF 'WE UNDERTAKE OUR OWN VERIFICATION' AT F9

F10 Why does your LA undertake its own verification?

- We don't believe Jobcentre Plus apply the same standards as we do ☐
- Our LA requires a greater level of verification than Jobcentre Plus ☐
- Other (please specify)

  .... ☐
- Don't know ☐

ANSWER IF 'NO' AT F8. OTHERS GO TO F12

F11 Is this because the information is not clear or is it not given? Or is there another reason why your LA is not able to ascertain the verification activity that has been carried out?
PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY AND WRITE IN ANY OTHER REASONS

- It is not clear ☐
- It is not given ☐
- Other (please specify ☐

  ....
- Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

F12 How does your LA use the data on ESA LACI? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Enter the data on to back-end processing system only ☐
- Enter the data on to back-end processing system and contact customer for missing information ☐
- Enter the data on to back-end processing system and send a claim form ☐
- Don't enter the data on to back-end processing system but send a claim form ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

  ....
- Don't know ☐

F13 Has your LA used the ESA Operational Guidance on the DWP HB website (http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/employment-and-support-allowance/)?

- Yes ☐ Answer F14
- No ☐ Go to F15
- Don't know ☐ Go to F16

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT F13. OTHERS GO TO INSTRUCTION ABOVE F15

F14 Overall how useful did you find the ESA Operational Guidance?

- Very useful ☐
- Fairly useful ☐
- Not very useful ☐
- Not at all useful ☐
- Don't know ☐

ANSWER IF 'NO' AT F13, OTHERS GO TO F16

F15 Why has your LA <u>not</u> used the ESA Operational Guidance? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Not heard of it ☐
- Haven't needed to use it/haven't had any problems with ESA ☐
- Not been able to locate it on the DWP website ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

F16 Has your LA used the LACI Operational Guidance on the DWP HB website (http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/housing-benefit/claims-processing/closer-working-with-dwp/employment-and-support-allowance/)?

- Yes ☐ Answer F17
- No ☐ Go to F18
- Don't know ☐ Go to F19

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT F16. OTHERS GO TO INSTRUCTION ABOVE F18

F17 Overall how useful did you find the LACI Guidance?

- Very useful ☐
- Fairly useful ☐
- Not very useful ☐
- Not at all useful ☐
- Don't know ☐

ANSWER IF 'NO' AT F16, OTHERS GO TO F19

F18 Why has your LA <u>not</u> used the LACI Guidance? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Not heard of it ☐
- Haven't needed to use it/haven't had any problems with LACI ☐
- Not been able to locate it on the DWP website ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

....

- Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

F19 Does your LA have a contact in Jobcentre Plus with whom you can raise any queries you may have on ESA LACI?

Yes	☐	Go to Section G
No	☐	Answer F20
Don't know	☐	Go to Section G

ANSWER IF 'NO' AT F19, OTHERS GO TO SECTION G

F20 Why has your LA not got a contact in Jobcentre Plus with whom you can raise any queries you may have on ESA LACI? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Haven't tried to make contact	☐
Haven't needed to make contact with Jobcentre Plus	☐
Other (please specify)	☐
....	
Don't know	☐

Section G: War Pensions

Local Authorities have discretionary powers to disregard part or all of a War Disablement Pension, a War Widow's Pension or a War Widower's Pension in addition to the mandatory £10 disregard of these payments when assessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit entitlement. The majority of costs are borne by the local authority with a contribution from benefit subsidy. [Regulations which came into effect on 26 January 2010 made it clear that service attributable pensions payable under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme were included in the War Pensions definitions as income that could be disregarded under the discretionary powers.]

Authorities are currently only asked to provide the overall cost of the discretionary scheme for the purpose of benefit subsidy. DWP would like to have more detail about the scope of individual schemes in order to inform policy development. Information about the numbers of claims from war pensioners, the numbers receiving a discretionary disregard in their benefit claim and the extent of the discretionary disregard made – i.e. whether it includes all elements or part of income from war pensions – will assist DWP in responding to questions and monitoring the scheme.

ALL ANSWER

G1 Does your LA have data on the number of HB and CTB claims with income classified as a War Pension (War Disablement Pension, War Widow's Pension or War Widower's Pension)?

Yes ☐ Answer G2
No ☐ Go to G3
Don't know ☐ Go to G3

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT G1

G2 How many HB and CTB claims with income classified as a War Pension does your LA currently have? PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

☐☐☐☐☐

Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

G3 Does your LA have data on the numbers of claims where a discretionary disregard is made?

Yes ☐ Answer G4
No ☐ Go to G5
Don't know ☐ Go to G5

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT G3

G4 How many claims where a discretionary disregard is made does your LA currently have?

☐☐☐☐☐

Don't know ☐

ALL ANSWER

G5 Does your LA apply a discretionary disregard to war pensions in full, in part or not at all?
TICK ONE ONLY

- Disregard in full ☐
- Disregard in part ☐
- Do not disregard at all ☐
- Don’t know ☐

G6 Does your LA include the Service Attributable Pension (SAP) in War Pension income to be disregarded?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Don’t know ☐

Section H: Contracting Out and Contact Information

DWP is interested in identifying how LAs' CTB and HB administration is organised and whether it is centralised, contracted out and/or de-centralised. They are also keen to keep the contact information they have for your LA updated. The information that you provide on the following questions will only be passed back to DWP Policy Group, where appropriate.

ALL ANSWER

H1 Is HB and CTB administration:

Centralised i.e. one or two offices deal with and process claims ☐
Decentralised i.e. on three or more sites/offices – (by decentralised we mean that the management of the service is decentralised and not the access points for claimants) ☐
Don't know ☐

H2 Is HB and CTB administration contracted out?

Yes, fully ☐ Go to H3
Yes, partially ☐ Go to H3
No ☐ Go to H5
Don't know ☐ Go to H5

ANSWER IF 'YES' AT F2, OTHERS GO TO TO F5

H3 When did this contract start?

Enter month ☐☐ and year ☐☐

H4 Please write in below which services are contracted out (WRITE IN)

....

....

ALL ANSWER

H5 Has your authority contracted out HB/CTB fraud investigations?

Yes ☐
No ☐
Don't know ☐

H6 Managers often have split or shared responsibilities for HB/CTB administration, can you please specify which aspects of the role you personally have full responsibility for, which are shared and which other manager/s have full responsibility for.
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	I have sole responsibility	I share responsibility	Other manager(s) full responsibility
Rent Rebate/Rent Allowance	☐	☐	☐
Council Tax Benefit/Revenues	☐	☐	☐
Overpayment Recovery	☐	☐	☐
Benefit Fraud	☐	☐	☐
Visiting Services (Combined)	☐	☐	☐
Front Office/Call Centres	☐	☐	☐
Discretionary Housing Payments/ vulnerability	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐

PLEASE COMPLETE DETAILS FOR OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY AND BENEFIT FRAUD IF YOU ARE <u>NOT</u> RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM YOURSELF OR SHARE RESPONSIBILITY. IF YOU ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR BOTH, PLEASE GO TO H8

H7 Please provide details of the manager with overall responsibility for each of the following...

a) Overpayment recovery:

NAME: --

JOB TITLE: --

TELEPHONE NUMBER WITH EXTENSION: --

FAX NO: --

EMAIL ADDRESS: --

ADDRESS: --

----

b) Benefit Fraud:

NAME: --

JOB TITLE: --

TELEPHONE NUMBER WITH EXTENSION: --

FAX NO: --

EMAIL ADDRESS: --

ADDRESS: --

ALL ANSWER

H8 We are interested in receiving your opinions/views on this or future waves of the LA Omnibus Survey or any issues around HB. Please use the space below for your comments.

H9 And finally please can you check your own contact details (printed below) and tick the appropriate box below.

All my contact details are correct ☐
I have made some amendments ☐
I have written in the missing contact details ☐

FULL NAME: <<RENAME>>

JOB TITLE: <<REJOB>>

TELEPHONE NUMBER, WITH EXTENSION: <<RETEL>>

FAX NUMBER: <<REFAX>>

EMAIL ADDRESS: <<REEMAIL>>

ADDRESS (INC, POSTCODE): <<READD1>>, <READD2>>, <<READD3>>, <<READD4>>, <<READD5>>, <<REPCD>>

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WAVE 21 LOCAL AUTHORITY OMNIBUS SURVEY

This report presents finding from the 21st wave of the Local Authority (LA) Omnibus Survey. The survey takes place every six months and attempts to survey Housing Benefit managers in every LA in Great Britain. This wave of the survey included questions on:

- the efficiency work programme;
- rooms for carers;
- temporary accommodation;
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit take-up;
- changing the name of Council Tax Benefit;
- Employment and Support Allowance and Local Authority Claim Information (LACI);
- war pensions.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please contact:
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http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

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