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Next publication:
22nd January 2013
(See Notes section)

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Speed of Processing: April 2012 to June 2012

This Statistical First Release contains Official Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Speed of Processing (SoP) of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims.

These show the average time taken to process new claims and changes of circumstances for Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) in calendar days for each local authority, rounded to the nearest day.

These statistics were released on 23 October 2012 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority and contain new statistics relating to quarter 1 2012/13 (April 2012 to June 2012).

These statistics are Official Statistics. See:
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/types-of-official-statistics>.

Key Findings

- The average time taken to process new HB/CTB claims for quarter 1 2012/13 is 25 calendar days, compared with 25 calendar days in quarter 1 of 2011/12.
- The average time taken to process changes of circumstances for HB/CTB claims is 10 calendar days for quarter 1 2012/13, compared with 12 calendar days in quarter 1 of 2011/12.
- The average time taken to process new HB claims for quarter 1 2012/13 is 25 calendar days, compared with 25 calendar days in quarter 1 of 2011/12.
- The average time taken to process changes of circumstances for HB claims is 10 calendar days for quarter 1 2012/13, compared with 11 calendar days in quarter 1 of 2011/12.
- The average time taken to process new CTB claims for quarter 1 2012/13 is 26 calendar days, compared with 25 calendar days in quarter 1 of 2011/12.
- The average time taken to process changes of circumstances for CTB claims is 11 calendar days for quarter 1 2012/13, compared with 12 calendar days in quarter 1 of 2011/12.

Further information and detailed tables, including a breakdown by local authority, can be viewed at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/sop/index.php?page=sop>

If you have any comments or requests regarding this publication, please contact DWP via stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

HB/CTB Speed of Processing

HB and CTB are income related benefits. Speed of processing relates to the average time taken to process new claims and changes of circumstances for these benefits. The average time is measured in calendar days, rounded to the nearest day.

Table 1 Average Speed of Processing for quarter 1, 2012/13:

Average number of days to process (Great Britain)

	New Claims	Change of Circumstances
Quarter 1		
April	25	9
May	26	11
June	26	11

Source: Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

Table 2: Average Speed of Processing for quarter 1, 2012/13 broken down by benefit (Housing Benefit/ Council Tax Benefit):

Average number of days to process (Great Britain)

	New Claims		Change of Circumstances	
Quarter 1	HB	CTB	HB	CTB
April	25	26	9	10
May	25	26	10	11
June	26	27	11	12

Source: Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

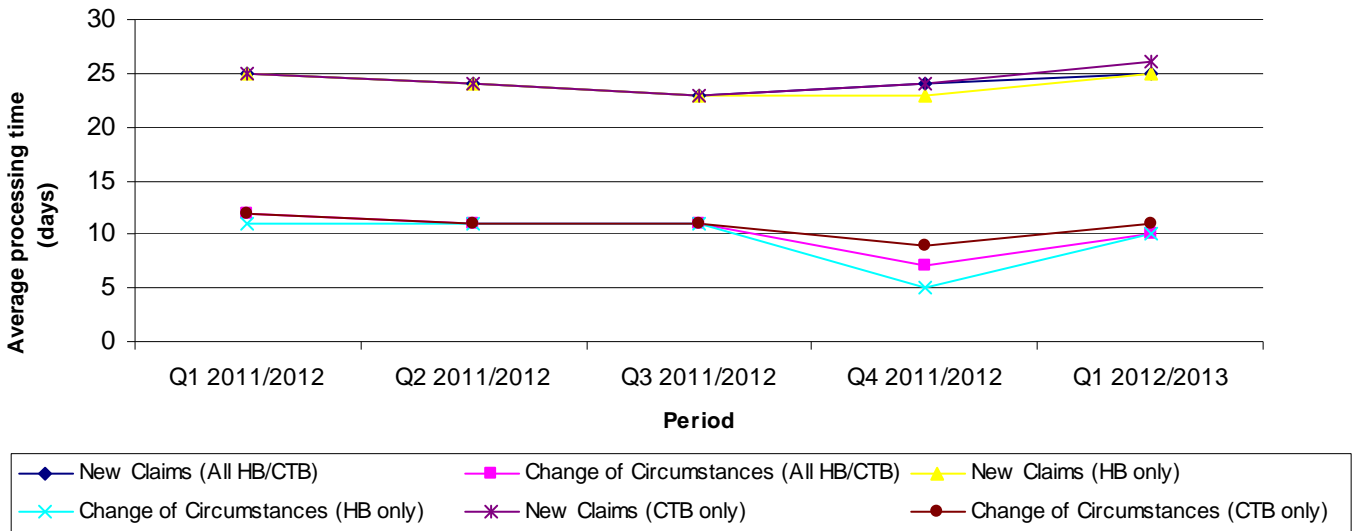
Rent increases are more prevalent at the beginning of the financial year. Most local authorities are now processing a larger proportion of Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) change of circumstances which are attributed 1 day processing times.

These change events can be loaded and processed automatically every day by LAs to amend entitlement to Housing Benefit. This means that Local Authorities can make changes to Housing Benefit much quicker. It is envisaged this will significantly reduce Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) underpayments and overpayments that occur when a customer claims a DWP/HMRC benefit/tax credit or informs DWP/HMRC of changes but fails or is late in notifying the LA.

Although HB/CTB customers have an obligation to inform their LA of changes in their circumstances, evidence suggests this does not always occur, often leading to overpayments and underpayments as well as providing opportunities to defraud.

We'd expect a higher proportion of 1-day processing times to reduce the average processing times, and this is seen as the average processing time for change of circumstances has decreased from 12 to 10 days when comparing the same quarter with last year.

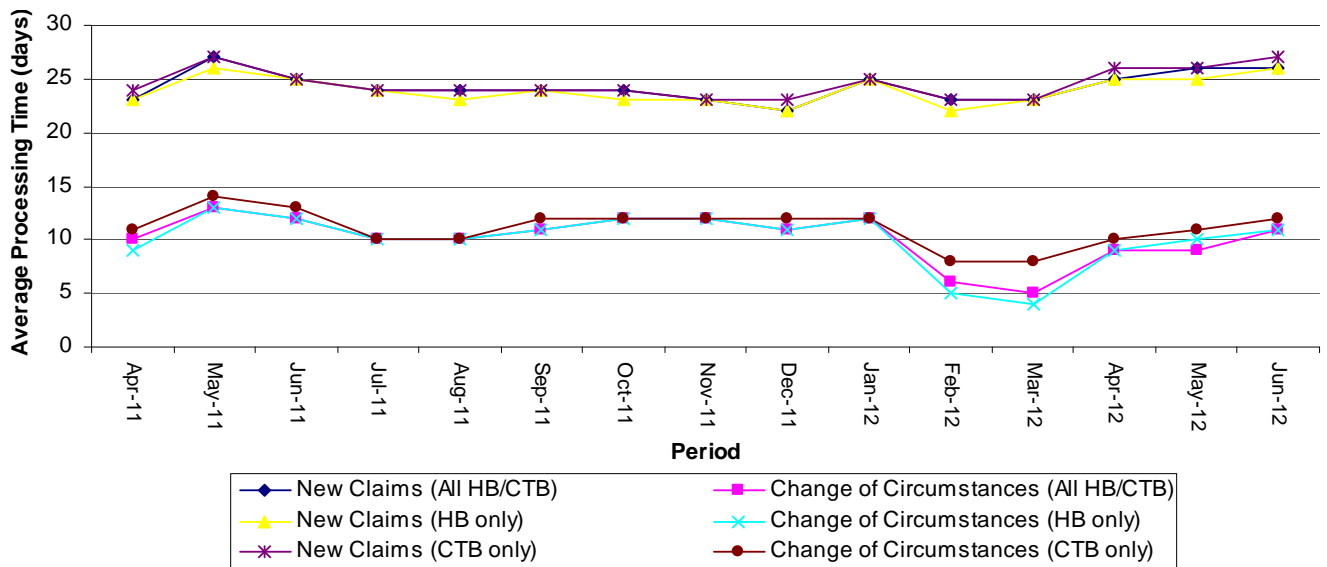
Average Processing Time per Quarter



The chart above shows that the average quarterly processing time for New Claims has increased slightly in comparison with a year ago. Although reductions in processing timescales were evident throughout the year, particularly in Q3, this is likely due to seasonality in fewer claims being process in December.

Quarterly processing timescales for Change of Circumstances were consistent last year, except for those seen in Q4. This particular quarter saw a reduction in average quarterly processing timescales, most likely due to end of financial year changes being captured.

Average Processing Time per Month



The above monthly time series shows a more detailed breakdown of average processing timescales. As expected, this follows the same pattern as the quarterly data shown above.

Notes:

Further information on Speed of Processing data sources and methodology is available at http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/sop/sop_rti_overview.pdf

Latest statistical breakdowns are available at: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/sop/index.php?page=sop>

NOTES

1. Related Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit statistics

a) The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also publish Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit monthly caseload National Statistics – the statistics detail the number of people in receipt of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and the amount of benefit received. They also include breakdowns by local authority, tenancy type, passported benefits, family type and age group. See <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbctb>

b) The historical Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit Claims Administration Quarterly Performance Data which is available to 2007/08 are based on clerical returns made by individual local authorities.

Breakdowns of new claims and changes processing times are available historically, and the new claims processing times are broadly comparable over time. However, a change in definition for changes of circumstances between 2007/08 and 2009/10 means that direct comparison of this element with Speed of Processing statistics is not meaningful. See http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/performance/index.php?page=performance

c) Access to previously reported Right Time Indicator statistics is available via the following page: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=rti>

d) In addition, users can find links to DWP additional statistical analyses that have not been included in our standard publications at http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis.

2. Code of Practice for Official Statistics

DWP complies with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and supporting Principles. Detailed policy statements and statement of compliance with the pre-release access to official statistics order 2008 are available via the link below:

[DWP policy statements](#)

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3. Known Issues, Changes and Revisions to SoP statistics

Quality assurance processes did not identify major problems with quarter 1 data for any local authorities. Therefore Speed of processing statistics have been released (at least partially) for every Local Authority.

4. Notification of future changes to SoP statistics

There are no changes planned for the next publication (for quarter 2 data of 2012/13) due to be released on 22nd January 2013