



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Findings from Wave 26 of the Local Authority Insight Survey: Removal of access to Housing Benefit for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers

November 2014

DWP ad hoc research report no. 10

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Ad hoc research publication

Findings from Wave 26 of the Local Authority Insight Survey: Removal of access to Housing Benefit for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers

Survey background and methodology

Background to the survey

This publication presents findings from wave 26 of the Local Authority Insight survey, which focuses on the removal of access to Housing Benefit for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers. The survey covered a number of key aspects of this policy, namely:

- the number of affected EEA jobseekers in each LA;
- the usefulness of the Circular (HB A6/2014) regarding the changes;
- actions/plans among LAs to deal with these changes;
- the ease or difficulty of implementation and LA experiences of this; and
- what, if any, further assistance is required from DWP by LAs.

The full questionnaire can be found in the appendices of this report.

The analyses in this summary have been prepared by Ipsos MORI, an independent research organisation operating under contract to DWP.

Background to the policy

The Government has recently implemented a number of measures to limit access to United Kingdom (UK) means-tested benefits for EEA nationals. Since 1 January 2014, EEA nationals entering the UK to seek work have been unable to claim income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)) until they can demonstrate that have been resident here for three months.

This measure applies to anyone making a claim for JSA (IB), including UK nationals and Irish citizens coming or returning to the UK from outside the Common Travel Area (CTA).

Other measures have included the introduction of a Minimum Earnings Threshold and time-limiting an EEA national's entitlement to JSA(IB) to 6 months, with limited extensions where a claimant can demonstrate a genuine prospect of work.

Most recently, an EEA jobseeker making a new claim will not be able to access Housing Benefit (HB), even if they are entitled to JSA(IB). This change is the focus of wave 26 of LA Insight.

Methodology

Ipsos MORI conducted an online survey of benefit managers or those in a similar position at 380 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales, and City of London. Email invitations containing unique links to the survey were sent to each organisation, and an initial 'annual letter' was sent to all organisations to explain the new survey approach.

In total, Ipsos MORI received 153 responses to the survey. Of the 380 individual contacts, 13 respondents could not be contacted. Many local authorities operated using some form of shared services for benefits management – 48 authorities included in the survey were managed by 19 named individuals.

Adjusting for this, the survey achieved a response rate of **45%**.

This response rate was in-line with past waves of the survey; however in an effort to increase this for future waves, Ipsos MORI conducted a 'non-response' survey. Short telephone interviews with LAs who chose not to take part in the survey revealed issues around the subject matter was the main reason for non-participation. This may suggest that the Local Authorities that responded were those that were more affected by issues around EEA jobseekers and LAs with low/nil caseloads were less likely to respond.

Summary of findings

While more than seven in ten LAs taking part in the survey have affected EEA jobseekers, most LAs have relatively few cases, with just seven authorities who say they have more than 50 cases.

Those with smaller caseloads (between one and ten cases) tend to be less concerned about the changes, although nine in ten (92%) of these LAs have taken some action to assist EEA jobseekers.

Authorities with 11 or more cases had done more to prepare staff and systems and were more active in assisting affected EEA jobseekers.

Most local authorities (63%) said that implementing the changes had either been very easy, fairly easy or neither easy nor difficult.

There are clear indications from authorities of the sorts of things that would help them in the future, such as more information or tools online, further circulars, and (reported spontaneously) more specific guidance to refer affected jobseekers to, as well as a direct point of contact at the DWP to respond to queries and issues. Amongst the authorities responding, many reported difficulties with getting information from DWP, especially around eligibility information. Some LAs seem to be looking for more detailed guidance on top of the Circular, although over eight in ten say they found the Circular itself useful (85%).

Findings from Wave 26: Removal of access to Housing Benefit for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers

Number of affected EEA jobseekers in each LA

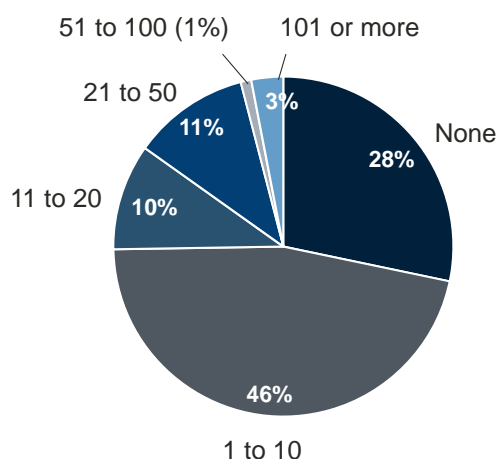
The survey found that more than seven in ten (72%) of LAs have affected EEA jobseekers. Over half (54%) have families of affected EEA jobseekers (with children), and about a third (35%) have other vulnerable/difficult cases amongst their affected EEA jobseekers.

The vast majority of LAs that do have EEA jobseekers tend only to have a few of them (between one and 10).

Majority of LAs with affected EEA jobseekers have 1-10 cases

1

Q. In your LA, how many [people] are affected by the removal of access to Housing Benefit (HB) for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers...?



56%

Of Local Authorities say the figures they gave are estimates

Base: All local authorities (153)

Source: Ipsos MORI

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It should be noted that these figures are representative of those authorities responding to the survey, with response rates from some regions higher than others. The greatest response was from the East of England (52%), while the lowest response rate was in Wales (26%). Furthermore, 56% of authorities explained that the numbers they provided in response to the survey were estimates rather than precise figures.

This pattern of number of cases is similar for the numbers of families of affected EEA jobseekers and other vulnerable or difficult cases. Many authorities (46%) have no families of EEA jobseekers, with those who do typically having between one and ten cases (41%) rather than ten or more (12%). The figures for other vulnerable or difficult cases are 65% with no cases, 30% with one to ten cases and 5% with 11 or more.

For analysis purposes, Local Authorities in England have been grouped into 'North' (including the Midlands) and 'South' (including London). Full detail of these groups can be found in the appendices of this report.

Broadly speaking, there is not a great deal of variation between LAs in the North and South with regard to number of EEA jobseekers, though those in the South are significantly more likely than LAs

in the North to say they have 21 or more cases (22% vs. 10%). In London, 54% of LAs said they have 21 or more cases.

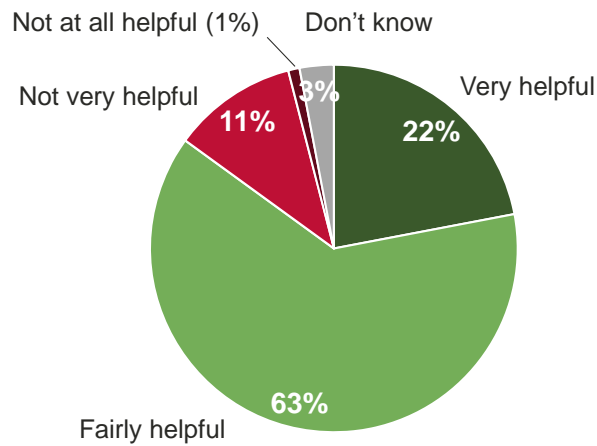
Usefulness of Circular communicating these changes

Over eight in ten LAs found the HB A6/2014 Circular helpful and two in ten found it very helpful.

The vast majority of LAs found the Circular useful, with one in five saying it was 'very helpful'

2

Q. How useful, or not, was the Circular (HB A6/2014) sent to your LA regarding the HB changes for EEA jobseekers?



Base: All local authorities (153)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Actions/plans to deal with these changes

Almost all LAs had taken some form of action to prepare staff and systems for the changes. LAs had most commonly sent generic information, held meetings or training courses aimed at improving awareness, and many had sent tailored guidance.

Most authorities have taken action to prepare staff and systems

3

Q. What, if anything, has your LA done already to prepare staff and systems for the removal of access to HB for EEA jobseekers?



Base: All local authorities (153)

Source: Ipsos MORI

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Again, those with larger caseloads were more likely to have been active in this regard, as had those authorities with families of EEA jobseekers.

Many LAs also had plans to prepare staff and systems, with training the most mentioned plans (either courses aimed at improving general awareness or specific training in implementing at 19% and 15% respectively), though LAs were far more likely to have taken action already than have plans to do so.

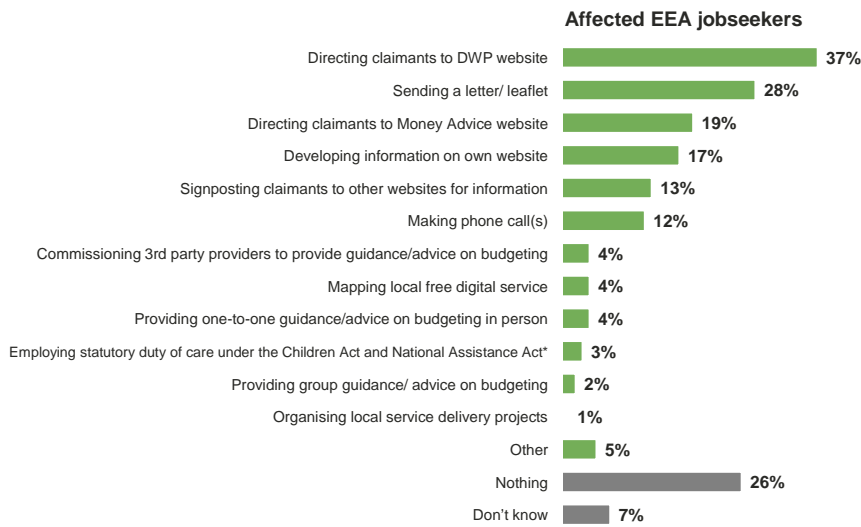
Over half of LAs without affected EEA jobseekers (56%) had prepared staff and systems in some way for the changes, despite not having any cases at the time of the survey, although three in ten (35%) said they had not prepared.

Those LAs with at least one or more affected EEA jobseeker were then asked what, if anything, they had been doing to help affected EEA jobseekers. LAs were most likely to have signposted them to websites, including the DWP website, Money Advice website or other websites such as Citizens Advice. Over a quarter sent jobseekers a leaflet or letter.

Most LAs are directing affected claimants to DWP website, followed by sending letters /leaflet

4

Q. What, if anything, is your LA doing already with (all) affected EEA jobseekers?



Base: All local authorities with affected EEA jobseekers (110) *(NB applies to families with children only)

Source: Ipsos MORI

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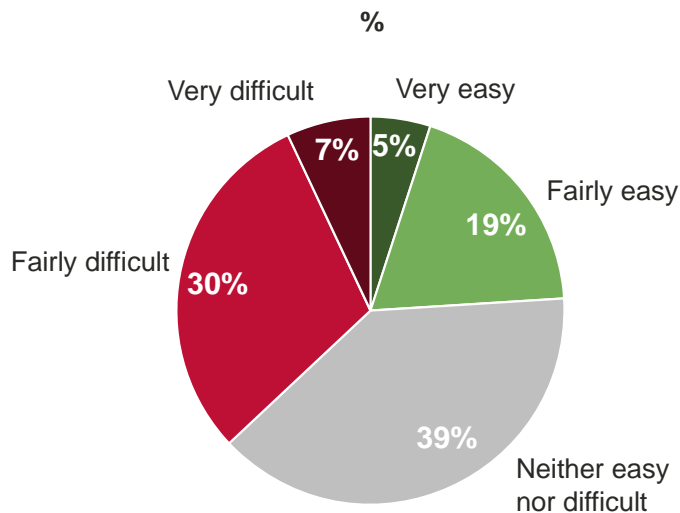
Assistance offered to families of affected jobseekers or other vulnerable/difficult cases did not differ much at all from that offered to EEA jobseekers in general.

Ease/difficulty of implementation and experiences around this

Over six out of ten Local Authorities (63%) said that implementing the changes had been very easy, fairly easy or neither easy nor difficult.

Over six in ten LAs found implementing the HB changes for EEA jobseekers very easy, fairly easy or neither easy nor difficult

Q. How easy or difficult has your LA found implementing the HB changes for EEA jobseekers?



Base: All local authorities with affected EEA jobseekers (110)

Source: Ipsos MORI

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LAs were asked if they have any specific experiences of implementing changes for affected EEA jobseekers with children and other difficult or vulnerable cases. Almost two-thirds (65%) said they felt it was too early to say, but a handful of authorities (12) did give a comment here. While these comments were not coded there were a number of emerging themes, including (but not restricted to) the inaccuracy/lack of clarity of the Customer Information Service (CIS), and a feeling that the complexity of many cases means that DWP should be doing more to help rather than asking claimants to contact their LA. However, it should be noted these views are based on a very small number of responses and cannot be taken as being representative of all LA views.

“We have found that we are receiving notifications (via [ATLAS]) from DWP stating that customers are not entitled to JSA because they fall into an affected group. These have often been on the wrong templates and included customers who we believe should not have been affected”

English District

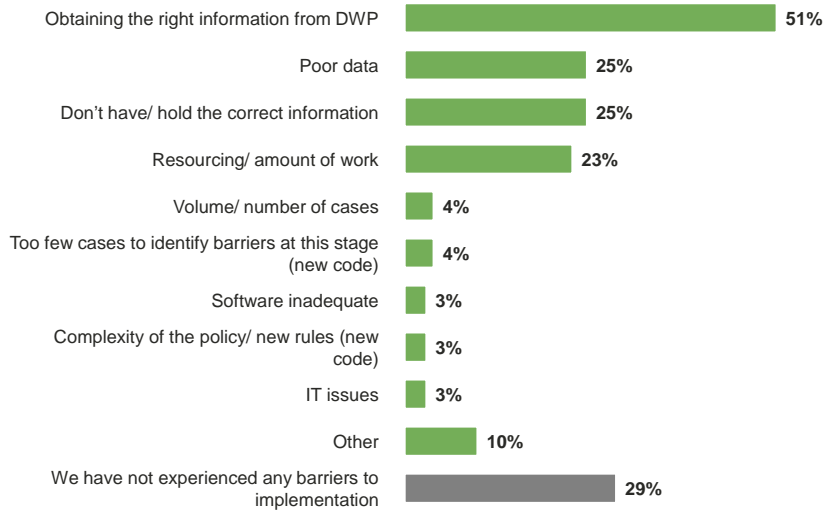
LAs were also asked an open question about their experiences in implementing the changes more generally. Again, almost two-thirds (65%) said that it is too early to say, though close to one in five (19%) did comment on their experiences. Again, these responses were not coded, but some of the experiences mentioned by LAs included technical issues (such as those relating to obtaining information from CIS), resourcing issues impacting on ability to prepare, and the fact that some did not think guidance or information received from DWP gave them everything that they needed to know. Some responses also suggested that LAs were thinking about the suite of changes to migrants’ access to benefits and not just the removal of access to Housing Benefit for EEA jobseekers.

Respondents were asked explicitly about what, if any, barriers to implementation there had been in their LA, with a view to improving processes in the future. Three in ten (29%) said they had not experienced any barriers to implementation and LAs with fewer cases were significantly more likely to say this (37% vs. 15% for LAs with 11 or more cases). When LAs mentioned barriers in implementation, these centred around obtaining the right information, as shown below.

Barriers to implementation centred around obtaining the right information

6

Q. What, if any, have some of the barriers to implementation been?



Base: All local authorities with affected EEA jobseekers (110). Two new codes added based on 'other' responses.

Source: Ipsos MORI

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As well as responding to the list of suggested pre-codes, some LAs mentioned some specific barriers such as the availability of training for staff.

When asked what additional assistance DWP could provide, close to half of LAs (48%) would like further information or tools online in order to help deal with the changes. Around one third (34%) would like further circulars, and a smaller proportion (18%) say they'd like forums to assist with implementation.

Some of the spontaneous 'other' comments, based on small numbers of responses, suggest that LAs would like a tool-kit or webpage hosted by the DWP to which LAs can refer affected claimants to find more detailed information and guidance. Many others suggest that a direct point of contact who could address queries more quickly would be beneficial and save time, which could relate to a previous arrangement whereby LAs could call to receive an explanation about decisions taken on specific more complex cases.

"Easier access to DWP decision makers. At present we have to speak to the Call Centre and ask for the DM to ring us back".

Metropolitan

Appendices

Regional groupings

Owing to the small base sizes in a survey of this nature, and in order to help analyse the results in a more meaningful way, English sub-regions have been combined into two regional groups: 'North' and 'South'. The table below shows which Government Office Regions fall into which regional groups.

North	South
East Midlands	East of England
North East	London
North West	South East
West Midlands	South West
Yorkshire & the Humber	

Questionnaire

INTRODUCTORY TEXT

The following set of questions asks about your local authority's experiences in implementing the Housing Benefit changes for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers, which were introduced from 1 April 2014. Further details can be found in Circular A6/2014.

The Government has recently implemented a number of measures to limit access to United Kingdom (UK) means-tested benefits for EEA nationals. Since 1 January 2014, EEA nationals entering the UK to seek work have been unable to claim income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)) until they can demonstrate that have been resident here for three months. This measure applies to anyone making a claim for JSA (IB), including UK nationals and Irish citizens coming or returning to the UK from outside the Common Travel Area (CTA). Other measures have included the introduction of a Minimum Earnings Threshold and time-limiting an EEA national's entitlement to JSA(IB) to 6 months, with limited extensions where a claimant can demonstrate a genuine prospect of work.

Most recently, an EEA jobseeker making a new claim will not be able to access Housing Benefit (HB), even if they are entitled to JSA(IB) – and it is this particular change that we would like to find out more about.

ASK ALL. SINGLE CODE 1-6, MULTICODE 7

- In your LA, how many of the following groups are affected by the removal of access to Housing Benefit (HB) for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers, which was introduced on 1 April? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate and tick the box indicating that this is an approximation.**

		A Affected EEA jobseekers	B Families of affected EEA jobseekers (with children)	C Other vulnerable/ difficult cases
1	None (0)			
2	1-10			
3	11-20			
4	21 – 50			
5	51 - 100			
6	101 +			

7	Tick this box if your answer is an estimation			
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ASK ALL. SINGLE CODE.

2. How useful, or not, was the Circular (HB A6/2014) sent to your LA regarding the HB changes for EEA jobseekers? Tick one only.

Very helpful	
Fairly helpful	
Not very helpful	
Not at all helpful	
Don't know	

ASK ALL. MULTICODE.

3. What, if anything, has your LA done already, or is planning to do, to prepare staff and systems for the removal of access to HB for EEA jobseekers? Tick all that apply in both columns.

		Already Done	Planning to do
1	Training courses aimed at improving general awareness		
2	Specific training in implementing		
3	Sending generic information		
4	Sending tailored guidance		
5	Meeting/updating voluntary groups		
6	Attending workshops		
7	Forming a working group		
8	Holding meetings		
9	Other (<i>please specify under the relevant column</i>) [Open response box in each column (100 characters)]		
10	Nothing (SINGLE CODE)		
11	Do not have any affected cases (SINGLE CODE)		
12	Don't know (SINGLE CODE)		

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SAID THEY HAVE AFFECTED EEA JOBSEEKERS. MULTICODE.

4. What, if anything, is your LA doing already with A) all affected EEA jobseekers, B) affected families with children, C) vulnerable/ difficult cases? Please tick all that apply in all columns.

		A All affected EEA jobseekers	B Families of affected EEA jobseekers (with children)	C Other vulnerable/ difficult cases
1	Sending a letter/ leaflet			
2	Making phone call(s)			
3	Providing one-to-one guidance/advice on budgeting in person			
4	Providing group guidance/ advice on budgeting			
5	Commissioning 3 rd party providers to provide guidance/advice on budgeting			
6	Developing information on own website			
7	Directing claimants to Money Advice website			
8	Directing claimants to DWP website			
9	Signposting claimants to other websites for information (Please specify) [Open response box in each column (100 characters)]			
10	Mapping local free digital service			
11	Organising local service delivery projects			
12	Employing statutory duty of care under the Children Act and National Assistance Act (<i>NB applies to families with children only</i>)			
13	Other (please tick box and specify under the relevant column) [Open response box in each column (100 characters)]			
14	Nothing (SINGLE CODE)			
15	Don't know (SINGLE CODE)			

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SAID THEY HAVE FAMILIES OF AFFECTED EEA JOBSEEKERS AND/OR OTHER VULNERABLE/ DIFFICULT CASES. SINGLE CODE.

5. **DWP is keen to learn more about your particular experience of implementing the HB changes for affected EEA jobseekers where there have been vulnerable or difficult cases as well as affected families with children. Have you had any experience of implementing the changes with vulnerable or difficult cases that you could tell us about? If yes, please write in below.**

Yes: [\[Open response box \(2000 characters\)\]](#)

Too early to say

No

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SAID THEY HAVE AFFECTED EEA JOBSEEKERS. SINGLE CODE.

6. **How easy or difficult has your LA found implementing the HB changes for EEA jobseekers?**

Very easy	
Fairly easy	
Neither easy nor difficult	
Fairly difficult	
Very difficult	

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SAID THEY HAVE AFFECTED EEA JOBSEEKERS. MULTICODE.

7. **What, if any, have some of the barriers to implementation been?**

Resourcing/ amount of work	
Software inadequate	
Don't have/ hold the correct information	
IT issues	
Poor data	
Obtaining the right information from DWP	
Volume/ number of cases	
Other (please specify) [Open response box (100 characters)]	
We have not experienced any barriers to implementation (SINGLE CODE)	

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SAID THEY HAVE AFFECTED EEA JOBSEEKERS. SINGLE CODE

8. **DWP is keen to find out more about the general experiences of LAs in implementing the full package of benefit changes for EEA migrants (i.e. the 3 month residence requirement for Jobseeker's Allowance, the new guidance on the minimum earnings threshold, and the removal of access to HB for EEA jobseekers).**

Have you had any experiences in implementation and lessons learned so far that you could to tell us about? If yes, please write in below.

Yes: [\[Open response box \(2000 characters\)\]](#)

Too early to say

No

ASK ALL. MULTICODE.

9. What, if any, further assistance would your LA like with implementing the HB changes for EEA jobseekers?

We have affected claimants but no further assistance is needed	
We have not had any affected claimants yet and do not need further assistance	
Further circulars	
Information or tools online	
Forums	
Other (please specify) [Open response box (100 characters)]	

ASK ALL. SINGLE CODE.

10. Ipsos MORI will pass responses from the survey back to DWP on an anonymised basis. However, to help improve the advice and support it offers to LAs, DWP would like to be able to see the responses you have given linked to you and your LA.

Would you be willing for us to pass your responses back to DWP in this way?

Yes	
No	

ASK ALL. SINGLE CODE.

11. DWP may want to contact you again in relation to this survey to pick up on some of the issues you have raised and/or to offer advice or support where appropriate. Would you be willing for the DWP to contact you about this survey in the future?

Yes	
No	

ASK ALL. SINGLE CODE.

12. Finally, if you would like to update your contact details, or if you would like to provide details for a more appropriate person to be contacted by us and/or the DWP in future, please complete the form below.

If you have already provided updated contact details to us, please tick the box below to confirm that you are happy for us to inform DWP of this change.

Please enter new contact details (name, title, postal address, email address and telephone number) here: [Open response box (2000 characters)]

I have provided updated contact details and I am happy for these to be sent to DWP