

Housing Benefit Speed of Processing – Great Britain statistics Quarter 4 – 2014/15 (January 2015 to March 2015)



Department
for Work &
Pensions

This release contains [official statistics](#) produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Speed of Processing (SoP) of Housing Benefit claimants. They show the average time taken to process new claims and changes of circumstances for Housing Benefit (HB) in calendar days for each local authority, rounded to the nearest day. Statistics covering all four quarters of 2014/15 are also published as part of this release.

Main findings (for Quarter 4 of 2014/15: January 2015 to March 2015):

Average time taken to process new HB claims:

22 calendar days



down 1 day
since quarter 4 of
2013/14

Average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims:

5 calendar days



same number
of days
as quarter 4 of
2013/14

Average time taken to process new HB claims by country:

England: 22 calendar days

Scotland: 23 calendar days

Wales: 20 calendar days

Average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims by country:

England: 5 calendar days

Scotland: 4 calendar days

Wales: 4 calendar days

Contact

Lead Statistician: [Katie Dodd](#)
Data and Analytics

Department for Work and Pensions
Room BP5201, Benton Park
Road, Longbenton,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE98 1YX

Telephone: 0191 2166263

Email:

katie.dodd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Press Office: 0203 267 5129

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Introduction

This release contains the latest Department for Work and Pensions Official Statistics on Speed of Processing (SoP) of Housing Benefit claims for quarter 4 (2014/15).

In this document

Housing Benefit (HB) was introduced on 1st April 1983 and is an income-related benefit designed to help people on low incomes pay for rented accommodation whether in or out-of-work. Speed of processing relates to the average time taken to process new claims and changes of circumstances for this benefit. The average time is measured in calendar days, rounded to the nearest day.

As always with these statistics, genuine variations between months can occur at a Local Authority level. Some of these are caused by time limited issues or localised changes in operational policy. Hence, figures for individual authorities should be interpreted with care.

There are no longer any Council Tax Benefit statistics to produce alongside those for Housing Benefit, as Council Tax Benefit was abolished in April 2013 and replaced by a system of localised support. Therefore the January 2013 to March 2013 publication was the last one to contain Council Tax Benefit.

Speed of processing replaced the old 'right time indicator'. The speed of processing statistics show new claims and changes of circumstances separately and do not include a combined measure. Volumes of claims, changes and the total days to process these are also included in the additional tables.

These statistics were released on 22 July 2015 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority and contain new statistics relating to quarter 4 of 2014/15 (January 2015 to March 2015).

The statistics are released quarterly in April, July, October and January and are primarily sourced from data originally collected via administrative systems (Single Housing Benefit Extract).

These statistics were produced in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and comply with the Code of Practice for [Official Statistics](#).

This means that the statistics:

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

Further information on Speed of Processing data sources and methodology is available at the [Housing Benefit: overview of speed of processing statistics page](#).

Future Releases

The next release is planned to be in October 2015. This will contain data for quarter 1 of 2015/16 (April 2015 to June 2015) and will be the second release following presentational changes.

Supplementary statistics

Further information and detailed tables, including a breakdown by local authority, can be viewed at the [Housing Benefit Speed of Processing Collection Page](#).

The Department for Work and Pensions also publish Housing Benefit caseload National Statistics. The statistics are published quarterly showing monthly figures. Since August 2013, Housing Benefit statistics have been released via [Stat-Xplore](#) alongside a set of summary [Excel tables](#).

In addition, users can find links to DWP additional statistical analyses that have not been included in our standard publications at the [Ad hoc statistical publications list page](#).

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 [Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit: statistics on speed of processing 2012-13](#).

1.1 Official Statistics – Average HB Speed of Processing per Quarter

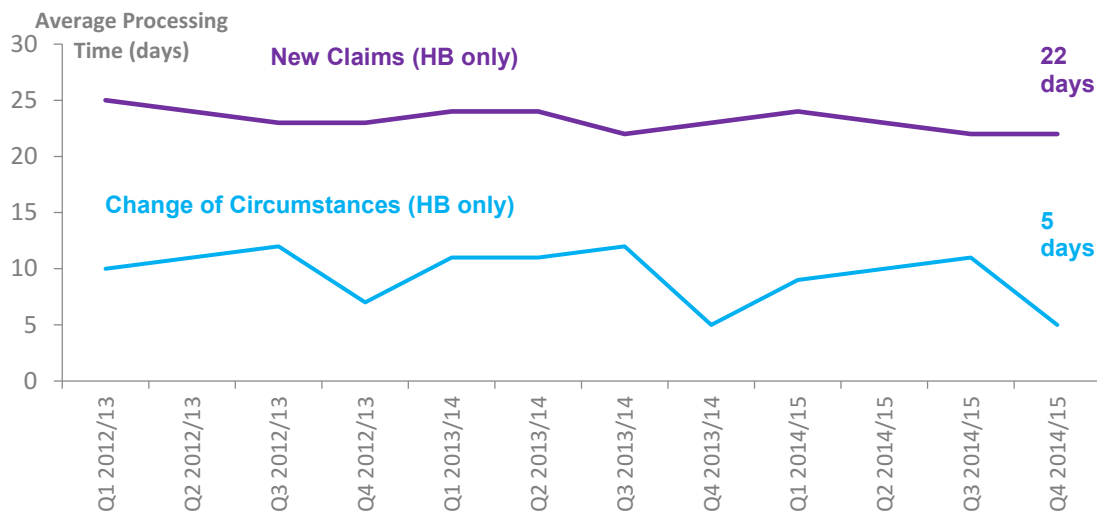
Table 1: Average HB Speed of Processing for quarter 4, 2014/15:
Average number of days to process (Great Britain)

	New Claims	Change of Circumstances
Quarter 4		
January	24	10
February	21	4
March	22	4

Source: Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)

Average Processing Time per Quarter

Average number of days to process (Great Britain): Q1 2012/13 to Q4 2014/15



Main Messages

The average time taken to process new HB claims for quarter 4 of 2014/15 is 22 calendar days. This compares with 23 calendar days for quarter 4 of 2013/14.

For quarter 4 there were just over 350 thousand new HB claims. This represents an increase of 4 thousand (1%) since last quarter and a decrease of 26 thousand (7%) since quarter 4 of 2013/14.

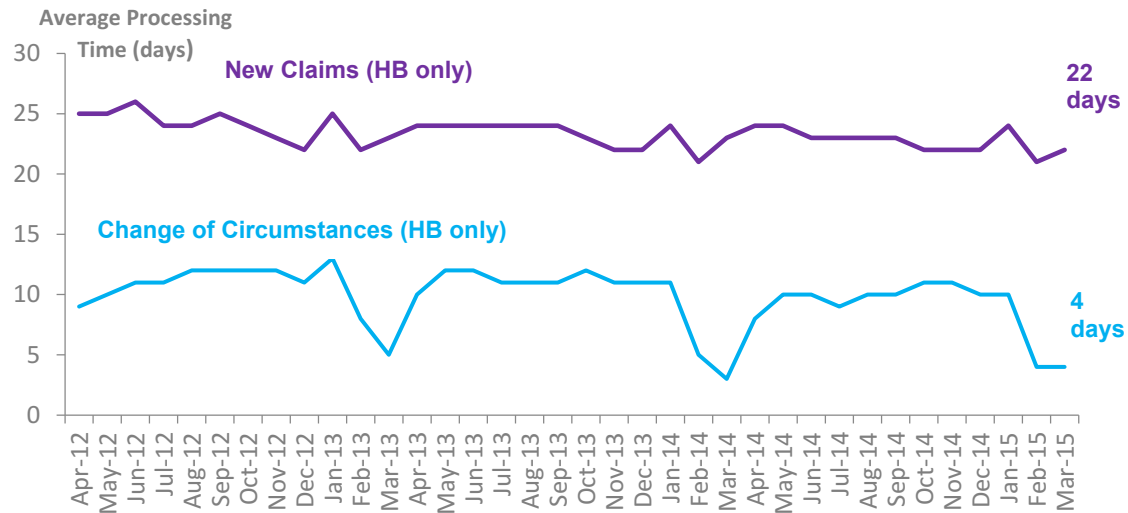
The average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims for quarter 4 of 2014/15 is 5 calendar days. This is the same as for quarter 4 of 2013/14.

For quarter 4 there were 6.87 million change of circumstances to HB claims. This represents an increase of 0.24 million (4%) since quarter 4 of 2013/14.

1.2 Official Statistics – Average HB Speed of Processing per Month

Average Processing Time per Month

Average number of days to process (Great Britain): April 2012 to March 2015



Main Messages

The average time taken to process new HB claims is: 24 calendar days for January; 21 calendar days for February and 22 calendar days for March.

At quarter 4 there were just over 350 thousand new HB claims:

34% (118 thousand) in January
 31% (109 thousand) in February
 35% (124 thousand) in March

The average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims is: 10 calendar days for January; 4 calendar days for February and 4 calendar days for March.

At quarter 4 there were 6.87 million change of circumstances to HB claims:

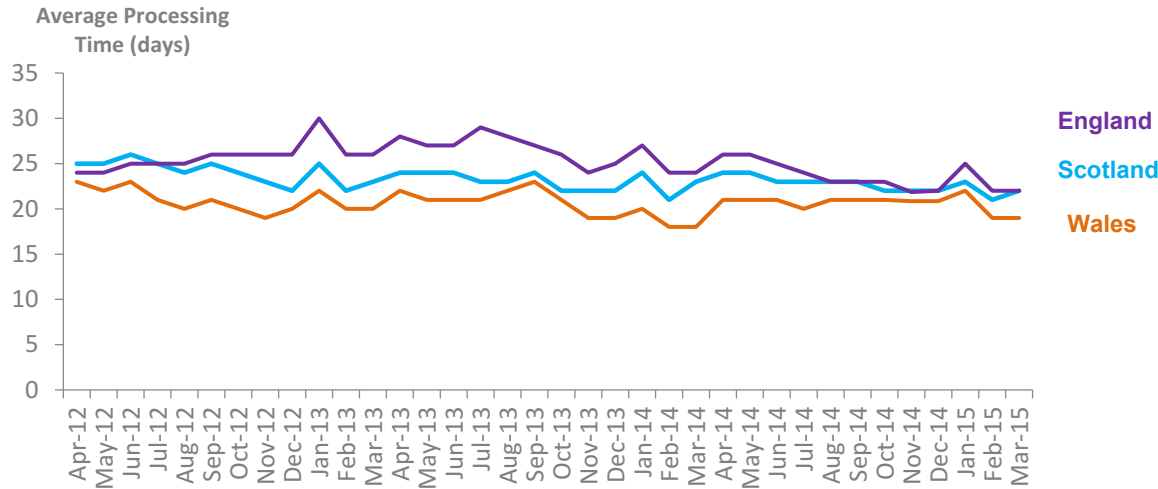
15% (1.04 million) in January
 39% (2.67 million) in February
 46% (3.19 million) in March

The average speed of processing per month, for both new claims and change of circumstances, varies slightly throughout the year, but is fairly consistent over time. The average time taken to process change of circumstances tends to decrease in February and/or March. This may be due to the increase of resources to deal with bulk change of circumstances, and often uprating activity, at the end of the financial year.

1.3 Official Statistics – Average HB Speed of Processing by Country

Average Processing Time by New Claims by Country

Average number of days to process new claims: April 2012 to March 2015



Main Messages

The average time taken to process new HB claims for quarter 4 of 2014/15 by country is:

- England: 22 calendar days
- Scotland: 23 calendar days
- Wales: 20 calendar days

This compares to quarter 4 of 2013/14 where the average taken to process new HB claims by country was: 22 calendar days for England; 25 calendar days for Scotland and 19 calendar days for Wales.

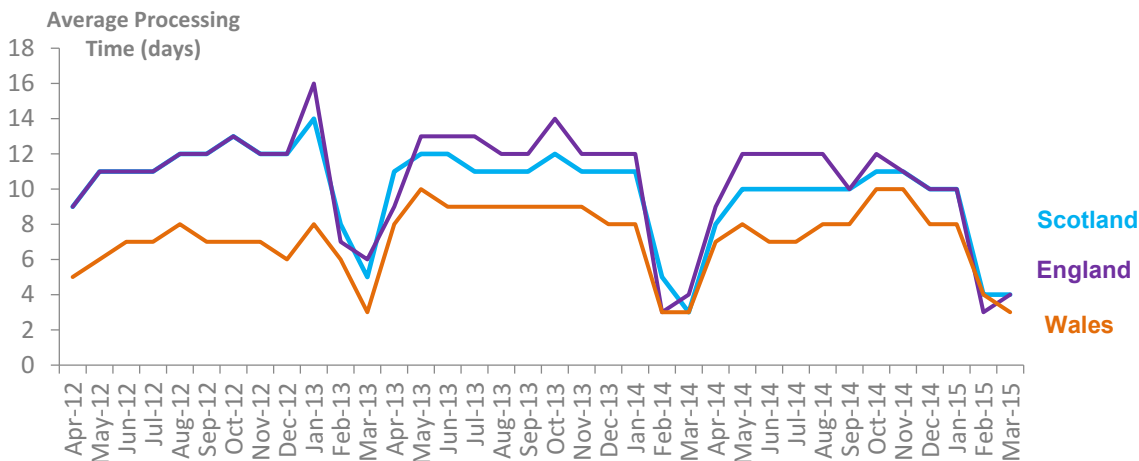
The average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims for quarter 4 of 2014/15 by country is:

- England: 5 calendar days
- Scotland: 4 calendar days
- Wales: 4 calendar days

This compares to quarter 4 of 2013/14 where the average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims by country was: 5 calendar days for England; 5 calendar days for Scotland and 4 calendar days for Wales.

Average Processing Time for Change of Circumstances by Country

Average number of days to process change of circumstances: April 2012 to March 2015



Notes

1. Known Issues, Changes and Revisions

Presentational changes have been made to the release.

Quality assurance processes identified problems with quarter 4 data for 5 local authorities in relation to these statistics. In keeping with UKSA protocols we did not publish data for these local authorities for quarter 4 of 2014/15. Analysis indicates that these omissions should not significantly bias the headline Great Britain estimates for the average speed of processing for new claims and changes of circumstance. However, it may affect the caseload comparisons provided.

2. DWP Benefits Statistics

[Background information](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) on statistics for the average time taken to process Housing Benefit (previously right time indicator statistics).

Policies and procedures on DWP National and Official Statistics, including a [Quality Guideline, Confidentiality and Access Policy Statement, Pre-release Access arrangements and Statement of Administrative Sources](#): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-statistical-summary-policies-and-statements>

3. Other National and Official Statistics

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

- A schedule of statistical releases and a list of the most recent releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>

4. Feedback

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

An ongoing questionnaire, enabling DWP to target future consultations at interested users; shaping the future direction of statistics development to address user needs; and helping ensure value for money, whilst giving users a structured way of expressing their views is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-statistics-on-speed-of-processing-questionnaire>

Completed questionnaires can be returned by e-mail to stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by post to the following address:
Dissemination Team, Data and Analytics, Department for Work and Pensions, Room BP520, Benton Park Road, Longbenton, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE98 1YX

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