

Freedom of Information request 2471/2011

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Information request

I would like to know the average housing benefit award for each constituency. The national average is £87.46 but I'd like to compare that geographically.

DWP response

The Department published Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit caseloads at Parliamentary constituency level for January 2011 on its website at:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/hb_ctb_parlc_jan11.xls .

This table was a one-off release of Parliamentary Constituency breakdowns pending the outcome of the geographical information consultation at:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/HBCTB_Geogbreakdowns_cons.pdf

The information that you have requested is provided in the attached Excel table.

Note that in April 2011, changes were introduced to the calculation of Housing Benefit awards in the Private Rented Sector. The changes affect the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) scheme, which currently represents a quarter of all Housing Benefit claimants. Prior to the changes, the Local Housing Allowance rates, which determine the maximum amount that can be claimed by those assessed under the scheme, were set at the median of local (non-Housing Benefit) market rents.

The changes mean that LHA rates for new claimants are set at the 30th percentile of market levels. Moreover, the maximum number of bedrooms that can be claimed for reduced from 5 to 4 and caps were introduced to restrict Local Housing Allowance rates to: £250 for the shared accommodation rate and the one-bedroom rate; £290 for the two-bedroom rate; £340 for the three-bedroom rate; and £400 for the four-bedroom rate. Moreover, the up-to £15 excess was abolished and deductions for non-dependants are increasing each year over the spending review period. Finally, from April this year, disabled people with overnight care needs may be able to claim for an additional bedroom for a non-resident carer.

Customers who were receiving Housing Benefit according to Local Housing Allowance rules before 1 April 2011 will receive up to nine months transitional protection from the date their claim is reviewed by the local authority, allowing them time to adjust to the changes.

Further information on changes to Housing Benefit is published on DirectGov at: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_192415 .

Finally, you may also be interested to be aware that the Department regularly publishes Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit National Statistics at Great Britain (GB), Region and Local Authority level on its website at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbctb> . The latest available information is at May 2011. In addition, information released under the Freedom of Information Act is published on the Department's website showing Housing Benefit Average Weekly Award by Local Authority at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/information-released-under/aug-2010.shtml> .