



Use of Discretionary Housing Payments Great Britain

Analysis of Mid Year Returns from Local Authorities April 2015 - September 2015

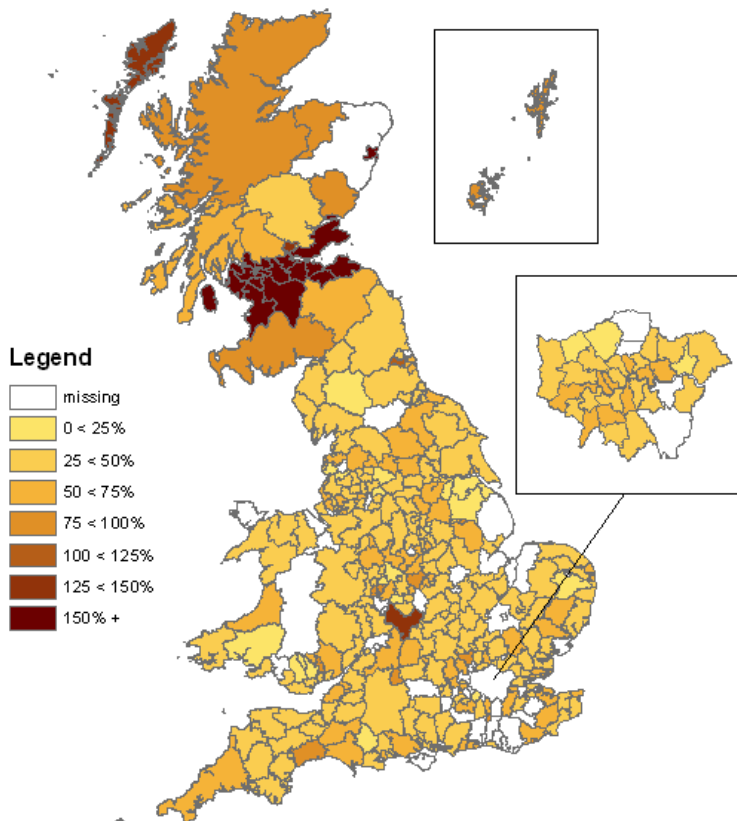
This statistical release presents a summary of Local Authorities' (LA) expenditure on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) for the first six months of 2015/16. The analysis uses the voluntary monitoring returns from LAs that have been collected twice yearly since 2013/14. To reflect the different rules that apply to DHPs in Scotland, analysis has been conducted for both Great Britain (GB) and GB excluding Scotland.

Main findings:

- In 2015/16, the central government contributed £125 million to DHP funding.
- The majority of LAs reported spending less than **50** per cent of their central government allocation of DHP funding (GB: **65** per cent of LAs, GB excl. Scotland: **72** per cent).
- Total spending on DHPs in GB excluding Scotland (including additional funding provided by some LAs) was **46** per cent of the total central government allocation. When Scottish LAs are included, spending was **63** per cent of the total allocation.

Map 1: Local Authorities in Great Britain: Percentage of central government DHP allocation spent.

April 2015 - September 2015



Source: DHP Monitoring returns April to September 2015

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Introduction

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is a discretionary scheme that allows local authorities (LAs) to make monetary awards to people experiencing financial difficulty with housing costs who qualify for Housing Benefit (HB) or the housing costs element of Universal Credit (UC).

As part of the welfare reforms package introduced from 2011, the government has significantly increased its contribution towards DHPs to help LAs support those affected by some of the key changes to HB, namely:

- the introduction of the benefit cap, which is administered through HB;
- the removal of the spare room subsidy (RSRS) in the social rental sector; and,
- the local housing allowance (LHA) reforms.

DHPs are awarded at the discretion of each LA and can provide help with ongoing housing costs or one-off expenses (e.g. moving costs).

Reflecting the need for additional accountability following the large increase in funds for DHPs, from 2013/14, LAs were requested to provide details of their use of DHP funds. This monitoring information is being collected twice yearly; in the middle and at the end of the financial year. These returns are collated as management information to help inform policy development of the administration of DHP and the allocation of funds in subsequent years. They also provide information on how LAs are using DHP funding to support those affected by the different welfare reforms.

Due to the high profile and public nature of DHP usage, and in line with the Official Statistics guidance, the financial and monitoring returns from LAs have been published as an on-going Official Statistic since December 2014.

This Official Statistic is released biannually with both yearly releases covering information collected through the monitoring return, and the end of year release also including information from the financial returns. The next release in this series will be the analysis of the end of year monitoring and financial returns, April 2015 to March 2016.

The current statistical release presents a summary of the monitoring returns, including a further breakdown by reform and intended purpose of DHP from these returns, covering the financial year from April to September 2015.

These statistics have not been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority, and have not been designated as National Statistics.

Previous releases of this series are provided at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/discretionary-housing-payments-statistics>

Background

The government first introduced DHP funding in 2001, allocating £15 million to support HB claimants in need of further financial assistance towards housing costs. This core amount was increased and maintained at £20 million from 2002 to 2011, when a series of welfare reforms were introduced. Since the recent welfare reforms, central government has increased its contribution towards DHPs to provide transitional support to households affected by the reforms. In total in 2015/16, central government allocated £125 million of DHP funding to be distributed amongst LAs.

Table 1: DHP central government funding for Great Britain (£ million)

Reform	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Core	20	20	20	20	15
Local Housing Allowance	10	40	40	40	25
RSRS	-	-	55	60	60
Benefit cap	-	-	65	45	25
Total	30	60	180	165	125
Additional over Core	10	40	160	145	110

Source: Housing Benefit subsidy circulars available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-benefit-for-local-authorities-subsidy-circulars>

The allocation methodology of the central government contribution towards DHPs to each LA in 2015/16 was shared with the LA Associations for England, Scotland and Wales. Although DHP funding was notionally allocated for each reform, LAs have discretion about how they actually use the funding.

In addition to the central government contribution, English and Welsh LAs are able to top up DHP funding up to a maximum of two and a half times this figure using their own funds (for instance, a local authority receiving £100,000 as DHP central government funding could top up this amount with up to £150,000 of their own funds, giving them a maximum possible total expenditure of £250,000).

Scotland

In 2015/16, the Scottish Government has made an extra £35 million available to fund DHPs above the £13.3 million contribution from central government; bringing the total funding for Scottish LAs to £48.3 million. The additional funding from the Scottish Government was made available with the explicit intention of being used to fully mitigate the removal of the spare room subsidy policy.

In November 2014, the power to determine the limit of LA expenditure on DHP was devolved. Following this, the Scottish Government laid the DHP (Limit on Total Expenditure) Revocation (Scotland) Order (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2014/298/contents/made>) to remove the upper limit on DHP expenditure in Scotland. As a result, the limit of two and a half times the central government contribution no longer applies in Scotland.

As the funding position in Scotland is different from that in the rest of GB, this publication reports results which exclude Scottish LAs (GB excluding Scotland) as well as results for GB as a whole. The analysis makes no further specific reference to the additional funding stream provided by the Scottish Government, and it is not included in the central government DHP allocation presented. The Scottish Government releases a series of publications providing detail on its overall DHP use, which are available using the following link:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/dhp>

Results

DHP Monitoring Returns

The figures presented below are based on the monitoring returns received from LAs (327 out of 380 at the time of publication). These returns contain information on actual expenditure from April to September 2015 (mid-financial year). The underlying LA data is available on the DWP website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/use-of-discretionary-housing-payments-april-to-september-2015>

Table 2 compares the reported DHP expenditure in the mid-financial year 2015/16 with the overall DHP central government allocation for 2015/16 by country.

Table 2: DHP expenditure compared with full year allocation

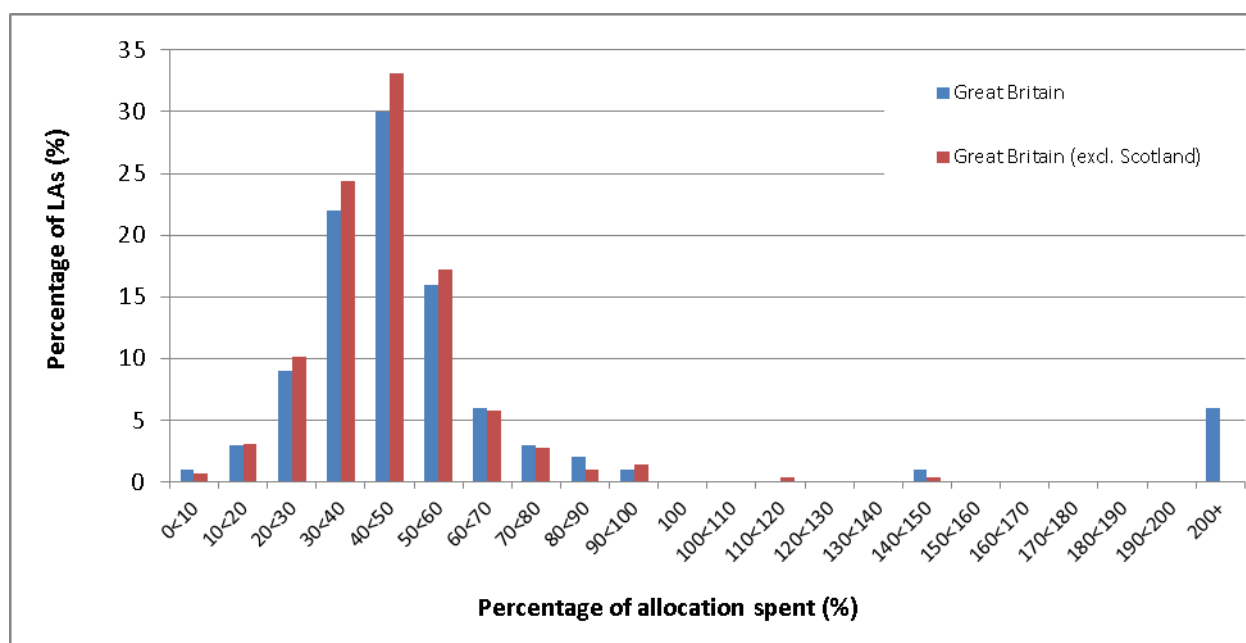
	DHP spend (Apr 2015 - September 2015) (£)	DHP allocation 2015/16 (£)	Spend as percentage of allocation
England	43,550,186	92,761,695	47%
Scotland	24,612,222	12,853,461	191%
Wales	2,013,697	5,242,378	38%
Great Britain	70,176,104	110,857,534	63%
Great Britain (excl Scotland)	45,563,882	98,004,073	46%

Source: DHP monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Notes: The DHP allocations are included for only those LAs who have provided returns, and hence are lower than the total allocations.

Chart 1 and **tables 3a** and **3b** below show the distribution of DHP expenditure as a percentage of full-year allocation for both Great Britain, and Great Britain excluding Scotland. The majority (65 per cent) of LAs in Great Britain have spent less than the half of their full-year allocation.

Chart 1: DHP expenditure distribution for both Great Britain, and Great Britain excluding Scotland



Source: DHP monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Table 3a: DHP expenditure distribution for Great Britain

Percentage of allocation spent (%)	Number of LAs	Cumulative Number LAs	Percentage of LAs	Cumulative percentage of LAs
0<10	2	2	1%	1%
10<20	9	11	3%	3%
20<30	30	41	9%	13%
30<40	72	113	22%	35%
40<50	99	212	30%	65%
50<60	51	263	16%	81%
60<70	20	283	6%	87%
70<80	10	293	3%	90%
80<90	7	300	2%	92%
90<100	4	304	1%	93%
100	0	304	0%	93%
100<110	0	304	0%	93%
110<120	1	305	<0.5%	93%
120<130	0	305	0%	93%
130<140	1	306	<0.5%	94%
140<150	2	308	1%	94%
150<160	0	308	0%	94%
160<170	0	308	0%	94%
170<180	1	309	<0.5%	94%
180<190	0	309	0%	94%
190<200	0	309	0%	94%
200+	18	327	6%	100%

Source: DHP monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table 3b: DHP expenditure distribution for Great Britain excluding Scotland

Percentage of allocation spent (%)	Number of LAs	Cumulative Number LAs	Percentage of LAs	Cumulative percentage of LAs
0<10	2	2	1%	1%
10<20	9	11	3%	4%
20<30	30	41	10%	14%
30<40	72	113	25%	39%
40<50	98	211	33%	72%
50<60	51	262	17%	89%
60<70	17	279	5%	94%
70<80	8	287	3%	97%
80<90	3	290	1%	98%
90<100	4	294	1%	99%
100	0	294	0%	99%
100<110	0	294	0%	99%
110<120	1	295	<0.5%	100%
120<130	0	295	0%	100%
130<140	0	295	0%	100%
140<150	1	296	<0.5%	100%
150<160	0	296	0%	100%
160<170	0	296	0%	100%
170<180	0	296	0%	100%
180<190	0	296	0%	100%
190<200	0	296	0%	100%
200+	0	296	0%	100%

Source: DHP monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table 4 shows the amount spent and the percentage of total spend attributed to each welfare reform measure.

Table 4: Percentage of DHP expenditure on each welfare reform for both Great Britain and Great Britain excluding Scotland

Welfare Reforms for which DHP was awarded	Amount spent (£)		Percentage of total spent	
	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)
Benefit Cap	7,801,052	7,355,716	11%	16%
RSRS	43,789,397	21,697,624	62%	48%
LHA	6,761,040	5,925,998	10%	13%
Combination of welfare reforms	611,804	541,870	1%	1%
Award not for welfare reforms	11,212,812	10,042,675	16%	22%
Total	70,176,104	45,563,882	100%	100%

Source: DHP Monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table 5 compares the levels of DHP expenditure attributed to each main welfare reform measure with the overall amounts nominally allocated to each reform measure from the overall DHP funding allocation for 2015/16.

Table 5: DHP expenditure compared with DHP allocation by reform measure for both Great Britain, and Great Britain excluding Scotland

Welfare Reforms for which DHP was awarded	Amount spent (£)		Amount allocated (£)		Spent as percentage of allocation	
	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)
Benefit Cap	7,801,052	7,355,716	22,023,934	20,731,359	35%	35%
RSRS	43,789,397	21,697,624	53,254,745	43,816,278	82%	50%
LHA	6,761,040	5,925,998	22,293,209	21,271,373	30%	28%

Source: DHP Monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Note: The DHP allocations are included for only those LAs who have provided returns, and hence are lower than the total allocations.

Table 6 shows the percentage of total spend by country attributed to each purpose of DHP category.

Table 6: DHP percentage expenditure with a breakdown of purpose

	To help secure and move to alternative accommodation (e.g. rent deposit) (%)	To help with short term rental costs while the claimant secures and moves to alternative accommodation (%)	To help with short term rental costs while the claimant seeks employment (%)	To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation (%)	To help with on-going rental costs for a foster carer (%)	To help with on-going rental costs for any other reason (%)	Number and percentage of local authorities providing a monitoring return with a breakdown of purpose
England	12	25	14	6	0	43	230 (71%)
Scotland	2	21	5	1	0	71	30 (94%)
Wales	6	21	12	3	0	57	11 (50%)
Great Britain	9	23	11	4	0	53	271 (71%)
Great Britain (excl Scotland)	12	24	14	6	0	43	241 (69%)

Source: DHP Monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Note: The DHP allocations shown here are for those LAs who have submitted monitoring returns and completed the breakdown of expenditure on each reform by purpose of DHP. Percentages may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table 7 shows the percentage of expenditure attributed to each purpose of DHP category, by reform measure, for Great Britain and Great Britain excluding Scotland.

Table 7: Percentage of DHP expenditure on each purpose for DHP category, by reform measure, for both Great Britain, and Great Britain excluding Scotland.

Welfare Reforms for which DHP was awarded	To help secure and move to alternative accommodation (e.g. rent deposit) (%)		To help with short term rental costs while the claimant secures and moves to alternative accommodation (%)		To help with short term rental costs while the claimant seeks employment (%)		To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation (%)		To help with on-going rental costs for a foster carer (%)		To help with on-going rental costs for any other reason (%)	
	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)
Benefit cap	4	4	22	22	48	48	0	0	0	0	25	25
RSRS	5	8	26	31	5	6	6	10	0	0	58	44
LHA	7	8	30	29	13	14	4	4	0	0	46	45

Source: DHP Monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Note: The DHP allocations shown here are for those LAs who have submitted monitoring returns, and completed the breakdown of expenditure on each reform by purpose of DHP. Percentages may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Methodology

The monitoring returns are voluntary returns provided by LAs that contain details on the amount spent from April 2015 to the end of September 2015. Because the returns are voluntary, information is not always provided by all LAs.

The figures presented are based on, nationally, 327 LAs who responded by 18 November 2015. This represents 86 per cent of all LAs in Great Britain. Further to this, the LAs that did submit monitoring returns are a representative spread of each country in Great Britain; England, Wales and Scotland all having a greater than 75 per cent return rate.

Table 8: Percentage of LAs providing a monitoring return

	England	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)
Percentage of local authorities providing a monitoring return (%)	86	77	97	86	85

Source: DHP Monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

The analysis of the monitoring returns focuses on comparing total spend (including other funding streams) against the central government allocations.

As noted in the end of year publication in June 2015, in 2014/15 the monitoring return template was changed to request information on actual expenditure rather than committed expenditure to take account of differing DHP funding allocation policies.

Also, for the end of year position, it was requested that LAs, alongside overall actual spend, replace the awards volumes by purpose with actual spend by purpose.

This additional financial information about the intended purpose of the DHP award was provided by 271 LAs across Great Britain, this is equivalent to 71 per cent.

Because of the different changes in the method of recording; the difference in the central government allocation; and also, because the LAs who provide returns vary each year, we are unable to make meaningful comparisons of expenditure with previous years.

Table 9: Percentage of LAs providing a monitoring return with a breakdown of purpose

	England	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain	Great Britain (excl Scotland)
Percentage of local authorities providing a monitoring return with a breakdown of purpose (%)	71	50	94	71	69

Source: DHP Monitoring returns for the period April 2015 to September 2015

Individual LAs are free to choose how they record and collate the information; however a template spreadsheet was provided to guide the process. This template can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424525/a6-2015.pdf

DHP awards were classified using the following housing welfare reform categories:

- benefit cap;
- removal of the spare room subsidy in the social rental sector;
- local housing allowance reforms;
- combination of reforms;
- other (non-welfare reform).

The intended outcomes of the successful DHP claim were classified using the following categories:

- to help secure a move to alternative accommodation (e.g. rent deposit);
- to help with short-term rental costs until the claimant is able to move to alternative accommodation;
- to help with short-term rental costs while the claimant seeks employment;
- to help with on-going rental costs for disabled persons in adapted accommodation;
- to help with on-going rental costs for foster carers;
- to help with short-term rental costs for any other reason.

DWP did not require details of individual claims, only requesting the total amount spent under each category and under each outcome.

This data cannot be used to make reliable projections of future spending. The amounts spent in the next financial year will be dependent on the level of future claims for DHPs and LAs' decisions on the management of the available DHP funding.

Data Quality

This publication reports the data as provided by LAs, without detailed verification. However during the quality assurance process, any discrepancies observed were reviewed in discussion with local authorities where possible. Any resubmissions of corrected returns received by 18 November 2015 were accepted and included in the analysis. No results were altered without the explicit consent of the submitting local authority.

There are two other sources of information that could be used to help understand the quality of the data collected:

- the previous years' official statistic and ad hoc publications:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/discretionary-housing-payments-statistics>
- and the Scottish Government's official statistic on use of DHPs in Scotland:
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/dhp/30Sep2015>

Definitions

Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy (RSRS)

In April 2013 the removal of the spare room subsidy came into effect. This policy applied to working age social rented sector housing benefit claimants (pensioner households are exempt). Where claimants are deemed to occupy more bedrooms than they need, as defined by the social sector size criteria, they are subject to a reduction in their housing benefit.

Benefit Cap

Rolled out from April 2013 and fully implemented from September 2013, the benefit cap is a limit on the total amount of benefit that most working age households can get to £500 for couples and households with children and to £350 for single person households.

LHA reforms

Tenants who rent from a private landlord and receive housing benefit generally have their claim assessed under the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rules. These determine the maximum amount payable in a given area depending on the household characteristics of the claimant. Reforms to the LHA system since April 2011 have generally restricted the eligible rent that can be met through housing benefit.

Actual and Committed Expenditure

Actual expenditure is the amount actually paid during the period in question. Committed expenditure is both the actual amount paid during the period, and any payments promised for future periods. For example, a £600, six-month award made in August 2015, would be reported as £200 actual spend, or £600 committed expenditure.

Local Authority Associations

The Local Authority Associations Steering Group is the main forum for DWP to consult with local authority associations. It considers significant strategic issues on the design and administration of Housing Benefit and other DWP issues that affect these.

Practitioners Operational Group (POG)

The Practitioners Operational Group is a forum for DWP to consult with local authorities on all operational issues relating to Housing Benefit. POG are responsible for considering all operational issues relating to Housing Benefit administration.

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Information on Official Statistics is available via the UK Statistics Authority website:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

Information about statistics at DWP is available via the Department's website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>