

Freedom of Information request 2014-1031

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Information request

I wonder if you can please help with a query I have. I am conducting research for the Daily Mirror on housing benefit statistics – is there a statistic available on the numbers of housing benefits paid directly to landlord by reason. For example, what percentage is because they are 8 weeks in arrears, what percentage is because they have difficulty managing their affairs and what percentage is because the tenant is unlikely to pay?

DWP response

In response to your query, it is important to highlight that under the current system Housing Benefit (HB) is paid directly to social landlords, rather than tenants. Therefore, any administrative data we currently hold on direct payments to landlords only applies to claimants in the private rented sector.

The latest data (below) shows that the majority of private rented sector tenants receiving HB have their benefit paid directly to them. In some cases HB is paid directly to private landlords to support vulnerable tenants who may need extra help. To safeguard both tenants and landlords against arrears, landlords can request direct payments if arrears build up to two month's rent.

The latest available information on HB paid to landlords / property agent in the private rented sector as at May 2014 can be found in the table below.

Please note that the figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

Number of Housing Benefit recipients in the private rented sector, by Reason for Payment to Landlord/ Property Agent, Great Britain: May 2014

Reason for Payment to Landlord/Property Agent	Total	Percentage of total caseload
Claimant choice	77,230	5%
Claimant interest (will support the claimant in securing or retaining a tenancy)	11,548	1%
Claimant has consistently failed to pay the rent on past occasions without good reason	51,266	3%
Claimant has rent arrears equivalent to less than 8 weeks – discretionary under 8 week rule ⁴	17,788	1%
Claimant has rent arrears equivalent to 8 weeks or more – mandatory under the 8 week rule ⁴	109,622	7%
Claimant likely to have difficulty in relation to the management of their financial affairs	134,354	8%
Paid to landlord to enable the claimant to secure or retain a tenancy in the private rented sector	37,087	2%
Unknown	40,756	2%

71% of total recipients (1,646,269 people) in the Private Rented Sector manage their rent payments without safeguards required.

Source: Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE).

Notes:

1. Statistical disclosure control has been applied to protect against the identification of individual claimants. Components may not sum to totals due to the independent application of disclosure control.
2. Recipients are as at second Thursday of the month.
3. This analysis is restricted to the private rented sector only.
4. Further information on the 8 week rule can be found in section 4.060 of this guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/324708/lha-guidance-manual.pdf
5. Please note that the figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.