



Housing Benefit is an income related benefit that is intended to help meet housing costs for rented accommodation. Speed of processing relates to the average time taken to process new claims and change of circumstances for this benefit. The average time is measured in calendar days, rounded to the nearest day.

Main stories

Due to the seasonal nature of the data, quarterly figures are compared to equivalent figures from the same quarter of the previous year.

- In quarter 4 of the financial year 2018/19, 98% of Housing Benefit claims processed were change of circumstances on existing claims and the remaining 2% were new Housing Benefit claims.
- The average time taken to process a new Housing Benefit claim during quarter 4 of the financial year 2018/19 was 19 calendar days. This is three days lower than in the same quarter of 2017/18.
- The average time taken to process a change of circumstance on an existing Housing Benefit claim during quarter 4 of the financial year 2018/19 was 3 calendar days. This is one day fewer than quarter 4 of 2017/18.

19 days to process new Housing Benefit claims in the fourth quarter of 2018/19.

Average processing time (calendar days) per quarter



The average time taken to process new claims is fairly consistent over time. Processing time in quarter 4 of 2018/19 is three days lower than in quarter 4 of 2017/18.

3 days to process change of circumstance on existing Housing Benefit claims in the fourth quarter of 2018/19.

Average processing time (calendar days) per quarter



The average speed of processing on change of circumstances varies throughout the year, but is fairly consistent over time. Processing time in quarter 4 of 2018/19 was one day fewer than in quarter 4 of 2017/18.

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What you need to know

These statistics were released on 31 July 2019 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This means that the [Official 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.

This release contains Official Statistics on Speed of Processing of Housing Benefit (HB) claims for quarter 4 of 2018/19.

The statistics show speed of processing of new claims and changes of circumstances. Volumes of claims, changes and the total days to process are included in supporting detailed tables.

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

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

Genuine variations between months can occur at a Local Authority (LA) level. For example, some of these are caused by time limited issues or localised changes in operational policy. Hence, figures for individual LAs should be interpreted with care.

Quarterly totals may not be entirely consistent with monthly figures as any Local Authorities that do not have data for every month of the quarter are not included in the quarterly breakdowns.

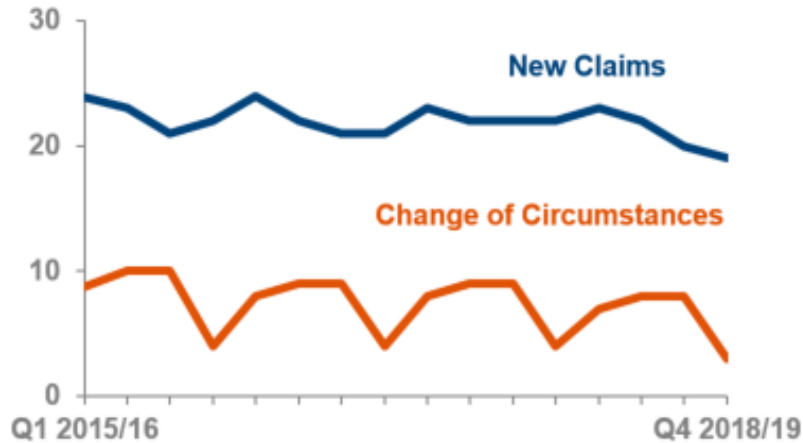
From April 2013, [Universal Credit](#) (UC) was introduced. The process began with single claimants and was expanded to other claimant types via the UC Full Service (UCFS). The UCFS rollout was completed in December 2018 and it is now available in every Jobcentre across the UK. The rollout schedule for Full Service can be found [here](#). UCFS implementation dates for each Local Authority are provided in the supporting tables for this release.

The roll out of UCFS has an impact on figures at LA level; namely that the number of new claims will fall in these areas and the processing days for new claims may change. Due to this, care should be taken when interpreting the data at LA level.

The next release will be on 30 October 2019. This will contain data for quarter 1 of the 2019/20 financial year (April 2019 to June 2019).

Average Housing Benefit Speed of Processing

Average processing time (calendar days) per quarter



The average time taken to process new HB claims in quarter 4 of 2018/19 was 19 calendar days. This is three days lower than it was in quarter 4 of 2017/18.

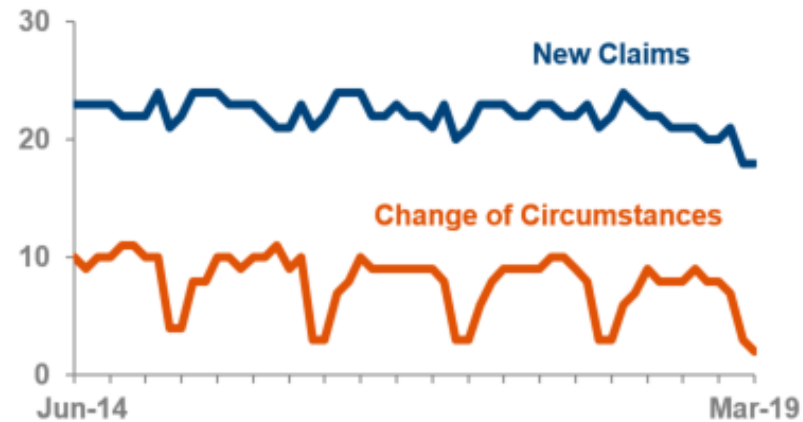
In quarter 4 there were 120 thousand new HB claims. This represents a decrease of 33 thousand (21%) since the last quarter and a decrease of 110 thousand (49%) since quarter 4 of 2017/18.

The average time taken to process change of circumstances to existing HB claims in quarter 4 of 2018/19 was 3 calendar days. This is one day fewer than in quarter 4 of 2017/18.

For quarter 4 there were 5.3 million changes of circumstances to HB claims. This is an increase of 3.4 million (177%) since last quarter and a decrease of 0.8 million (13%) cases since quarter 4 of 2017/18.

There are increases in the number of change of circumstances and decreases in processing time for these in quarter 4 each year. The average time taken to process change of circumstances tends to decrease in February and/or March. Quarter 4 coincides with the end of the financial year, when local authorities tend to allocate extra resources to deal with a higher volume in change of circumstances of tenants and the uprating of their rents, leading to a decrease in the average processing time.

Average processing time (calendar days) per month



There were monthly variations in processed volumes and average processing times for new HB claims and change of circumstances during quarter 4 of 2018/19.

The average time taken to process new HB claims was: 21 calendar days for January, 18 calendar days for February and 18 calendar days for March.

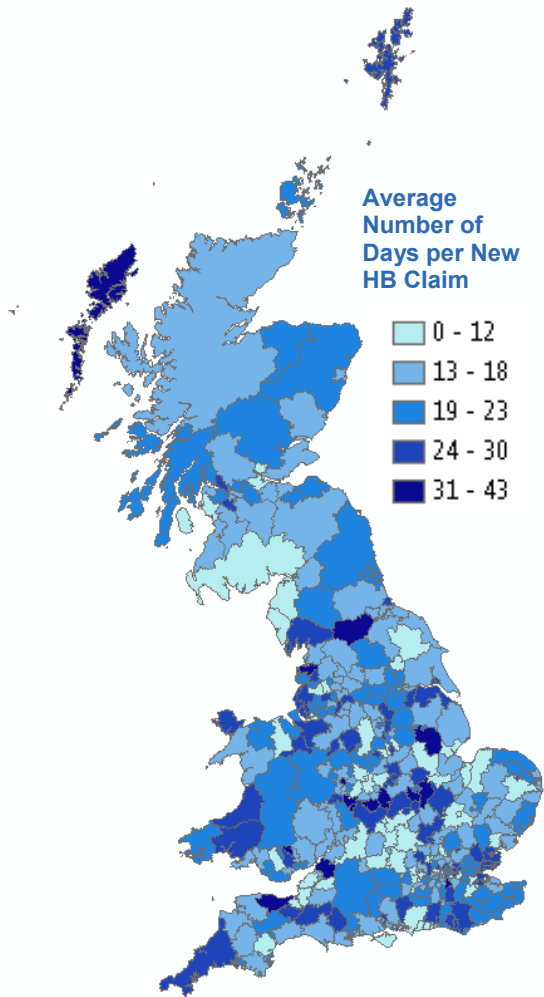
In quarter 4 of 2018/19 there were 120 thousand new HB claims:
 46 thousand in January
 37 thousand in February
 37 thousand in March

The average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims was: 7 calendar days for January, 3 calendar days for February and 2 calendar days for March.

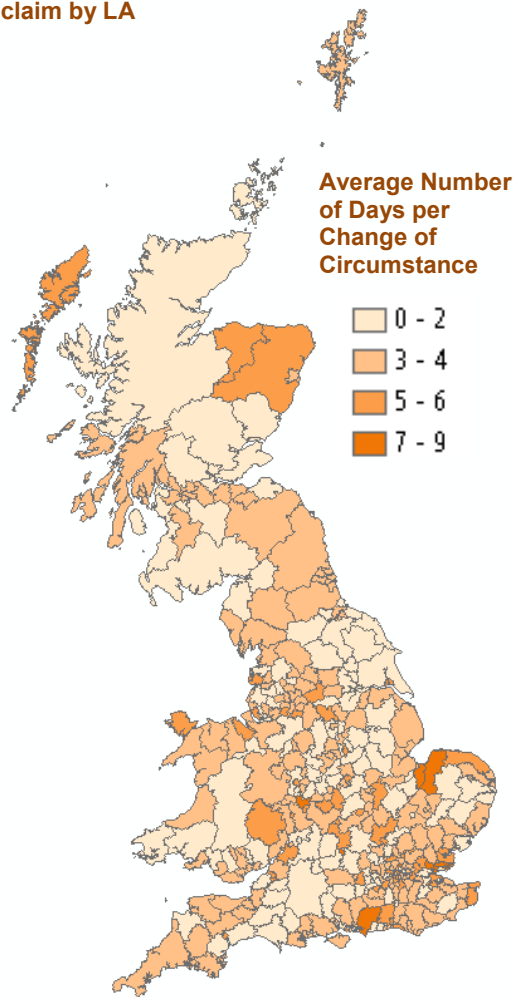
In quarter 4 of 2018/19 there were 5.3 million changes of circumstances to HB claims:
 860 thousand in January
 1.7 million in February
 2.7 million in March

Average Housing Benefit Speed of Processing by Local Authority (LA)

Average number of days to process a New HB Claim by LA



Average number of days to process a Change of Circumstance on an existing HB claim by LA

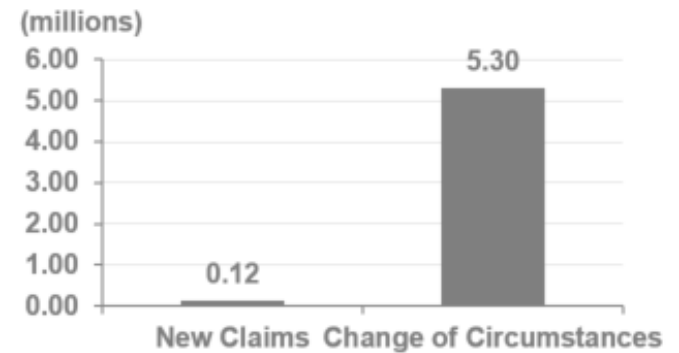


The maps show the average number of days taken to process a HB claim or change of circumstance. The average number of days taken to process either a new claim or a change of circumstance varies widely between LAs, with those LAs that take longer to process a claim or change being represented by a darker colour in the map.

On average a new claim takes longer to process than a change of circumstance. This can be seen in the two maps. The maps also show that there is a greater variation in the average speed of processing for new claims in comparison to the average speed of processing for change of circumstances.

Although there could be different reasons for the variations between the number of days that each LA takes to process a new claim and a change of circumstance, it is worth noting that LAs process on average a much greater number of change of circumstances than they do new claims. This difference is clearly reflected at the national level, as shown in the following bar chart.

New Claims and Change of Circumstances processed in Great Britain (Q4 2018/19)



There were 5.3 million changes of circumstances on existing HB claims and 0.12 million new HB claims processed in Great Britain during quarter 4 of 2018/19.

Find more statistics about HB SoP in your LA on our [interactive map](#). Key statistics for a LA can be viewed by clicking the relevant area of the map.

For further information on supported browsers, please visit the following website: <http://doc.arcgis.com/en/arcgis-online/reference/browsers.htm>

Where to find out more

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 in processing times are available historically, and the new claims processing times are broadly comparable over time. However, a change in definition for change of circumstances between 2007/08 and 2009/10 means that direct comparison of this element with Speed of Processing statistics is not meaningful.

[Background information](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) on statistics for the average time taken to process HB (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>

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>

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

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.gov.uk

An on-going 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.gov.uk or by post to the following address:

Client Statistics Team, Data as Statistics, Department for Work and Pensions, Room BP5201, 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.

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Consultation on the Housing Benefit Speed of Processing statistics

The statistics team in DWP are reviewing the frequency of their publications with a view to reduce the number of releases each year and direct efforts into development of the statistics and the expansion of the scope and content of the publications.

For this release the proposal is to reduce the current quarterly frequency to a publication every six months. The quarterly data would still be available but would only be released every six months.

As user of these statistics, it would be very helpful to understand from you:

Whether you support the reduced frequency of release or reasons why this would impact on you as a user of the statistics. Please be specific in providing your reasons.

What is/are the best month/s to publish. Please let us know if you use the published data as input into any other publication or a decision that happens at a particular point in time in the year.

Please email your feedback to stats-consultation@dwp.gpn.gov.uk, stating 'Publication Frequency' in your subject. **The deadline for contributing to this consultation is 8th October 2019.**

The statistics team really appreciate your input and your collaboration in this review.

Kind regards,

Statistics team