



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

July 2013

Research Report No 847

A report of research carried out by GfK NOP on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

© Crown copyright 2013.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence.

To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This document/publication is also available on our website at:
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp>

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please email:
Socialresearch@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

First published 2013.

ISBN 978 1 909532 49 6

Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Work and Pensions or any other Government Department.

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements | 9 |
| The Authors | 10 |
| Abbreviations..... | 11 |
| 1 Discretionary Housing Payments | 12 |
| 1.1 Introduction and summary..... | 12 |
| 1.2 Main findings | 14 |
| 2 Housing Benefit advice | 26 |
| 2.1 Introduction and summary..... | 26 |
| 2.2 Main findings | 27 |
| 3 Impact of the LHA changes on homelessness and the movement of PRS claimants | 32 |
| 3.1 Introduction and summary..... | 32 |
| 3.2 Main findings | 34 |
| 4 Arrears and safeguards | 49 |
| 4.1 Introduction and summary | 49 |
| 4.2 Main findings | 50 |
| 5 Risk-based verification | 53 |
| 5.1 Introduction and summary..... | 53 |
| 5.2 Main findings | 54 |
| 6 Removal of the spare room subsidy and introduction of the benefit cap..... | 60 |
| 6.1 Introduction and summary..... | 60 |
| 6.2 Main findings | 62 |
| 7 Supported ‘exempt’ accommodation | 78 |
| 7.1 Introduction and summary..... | 78 |
| 7.2 Main findings | 80 |
| Appendix A Changes to Housing Benefit | 88 |
| Appendix B The survey | 89 |
| Appendix C Questionnaire..... | 96 |

List of tables

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Table 1.1 | In what situation does your LA currently award a DHP?: Additional responses..... | 15 |
| Table 1.2 | What approximate percentage does each situation make up of total DHPs?..... | 17 |
| Table 3.1 | Please indicate the approximate percentage that each type of household makes up of all those that have moved into your LA..... | 41 |
| Table 3.2 | Please indicate the approximate percentage that each type of household makes up of all those that have moved out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation..... | 44 |
| Table 3.3 | Indicate the approximate percentage each type of household makes up of all those that have moved within your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation..... | 47 |
| Table 4.1 | Comparative proportions of claims using safeguards | 52 |
| Table 7.1 | Please write in what percentage of cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation are living in each of the following types of accommodation? | 84 |
| Table 7.2 | Percentage of cases in supported exempt accommodation in communal/ shared units and self-contained units..... | 85 |
| Table B.1 | Data analysis variables | 91 |
| Table B.2 | Wave 24 sampling error | 92 |
| Table B.3 | Response rates by LA type | 94 |
| Table B.4 | Sample profile | 95 |

List of figures

| | | |
|------------|--|----|
| Figure 1.1 | In what situations does your LA currently award a DHP? | 14 |
| Figure 1.2 | What are the three most common reasons for currently awarding a DHP in your LA? | 16 |
| Figure 1.3 | Since the new regulations has your LA been more likely to use DHPs for any of the following groups of claimants? | 18 |
| Figure 1.4 | Would you say that since the TP began to end, the number of DHPs awarded for periods of three months or less has increased, decreased or stayed the same?..... | 19 |
| Figure 1.5 | What are the reasons for offering a short-term (short-term meaning three months or less) DHP award? | 20 |
| Figure 1.6 | What are the three most important reasons for offering a short-term (short-term meaning three months or less) DHP award?..... | 21 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|----|
| Figure 1.7 | Would you say that since the TP began to end, the number of DHPs awarded for periods of more than three months has increased, decreased or stayed the same? What is the maximum period that DHPs have been awarded for? | 21 |
| Figure 1.8 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 your LA has been more or less likely to use DHPs for existing tenants (i.e. those who had been tenants prior to April 2011 and were not affected by the change in LHA regulations) or has there been no change? | 22 |
| Figure 1.9 | In January 2012 the LHA regulations for shared accommodation changed so that, unless they are in an exempt category, all single persons under 35 are now only eligible for the shared accommodation rate. Has your LA reviewed your DHP allocation criteria in response to these changes to LHA regulations from January 2012? | 23 |
| Figure 1.10 | What changes, if any, has your LA made to your DHP allocation criteria in response to these changes to LHA regulations from January 2012? | 24 |
| Figure 1.11 | Does your LA expect to spend/commit your full 'additional' DHP allocation in this financial year or not? | 25 |
| Figure 2.1 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the overall level of need for advice by HB claimants has increased, decreased or stayed the same? | 27 |
| Figure 2.2 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the demand for your LA to support tenants in rent negotiation with landlords has increased, decreased or stayed the same? | 28 |
| Figure 2.3 | For what proportion of the total number of LHA tenants in your LA has your LA been involved in rent negotiations with landlords? What proportion of these rent negotiations that your LA has been involved in have been successful?..... | 29 |
| Figure 2.4 | In general, would you say that, as a result of the regulation changes in April 2011, your LA's HB Advisers have been able to offer the same level of service (i.e. claim times, processing etc) to tenants or have they had to cut back any of their services? | 31 |
| Figure 3.1 | Have the April 2011 regulations caused landlords to leave the HB sub-market in your area, i.e. have any stopped renting to HB claimants, or not, compared with 18 months ago? | 34 |
| Figure 3.2 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of landlords in your area who are letting properties as shared housing/HMO that were previously let to families or as self-contained accommodation has increased, decreased (a lot or a little) or stayed the same? | 35 |
| Figure 3.3 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of people who would normally be housed in the Private Rented Sector presenting to your LA as homeless has increased, decreased or stayed the same? | 36 |

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

| | | |
|-------------|---|----|
| Figure 3.4 | What are the three main reasons for homelessness in your LA amongst those who would normally be housed in the Private Rented Sector? | 37 |
| Figure 3.5 | Numbers of claimants moving into the area | 38 |
| Figure 3.6 | Thinking about the claimants that have moved into your LA area since the regulations changed in April 2011, from where have these claimants moved? | 39 |
| Figure 3.7 | How would you describe the types of households that have moved into your LA area since the new regulations in April 2011?..... | 40 |
| Figure 3.8 | Numbers of claimants moving out of the area..... | 42 |
| Figure 3.9 | How would you describe the types of households that have moved out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation since the regulations changed in April 2011? | 43 |
| Figure 3.10 | Numbers of claimants moving within the area | 45 |
| Figure 3.11 | How would you describe the types of households that have moved within your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation? | 46 |
| Figure 3.12 | Would you say that since the new regulations in April 2011 the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing has increased, decreased or stayed the same? | 48 |
| Figure 4.1 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 requests for direct payments by landlords on grounds of arrears has increased, decreased or stayed the same? | 50 |
| Figure 4.2 | Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 requests by landlords for direct payments on grounds of claimants being unlikely to pay has increased, decreased or stayed the same?..... | 51 |
| Figure 4.3 | Since the regulations changed in April 2011 has your LA made use of the new safeguard that allows LHA to be paid direct to the landlord in order to help claimants secure or maintain a tenancy provided the landlord reduces the rent? | 52 |
| Figure 5.1 | Is your LA currently applying RBV on HB/CTB claims? | 54 |
| Figure 5.2 | Which of the following approaches has your LA adopted to risk profile your HB/CTB claimants? | 55 |
| Figure 5.3 | How satisfied are you with the approach you are currently using to risk profile HB/CTB claimants? | 56 |
| Figure 5.4 | Overall, how effective would you say that RBV has been in terms of each of the following: Reducing fraud and error? | 57 |
| Figure 5.5 | Overall, how effective would you say that RBV has been in terms of each of the following: Improving processing times? | 58 |
| Figure 5.6 | When your LA identifies high risk claims, what increased verification is carried out? | 59 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|----|
| Figure 6.1 | LAs are currently in the process of identifying cases affected by the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy. How is your LA finding this process?..... | 62 |
| Figure 6.2 | Why do you say that the process of identifying cases affected by the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy is not easy? | 63 |
| Figure 6.3 | For the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy, under-occupation will be calculated from bedroom entitlement based on household composition information already held by local authorities and property size information to be received from landlords. | 64 |
| Figure 6.4 | Do you currently hold information which allows you to easily identify HB claimants in Supported ‘Exempt’ Housing?..... | 65 |
| Figure 6.5 | How do you intend to identify those HB claimants in ‘Exempt’ Supported Housing who will be excluded from the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy but you don’t currently hold information on? | 66 |
| Figure 6.6 | What work, if any, is your LA doing to alert current claimants of the upcoming Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy rules? (main answers) | 67 |
| Figure 6.7 | What work, if any, is your LA doing to alert current claimants of the upcoming Benefit Cap? (main answers) | 68 |
| Figure 6.8 | Has your LA already reviewed, or does your LA intend to review, your DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of Size Criteria rules? | 69 |
| Figure 6.9 | Has your LA already reviewed, or does your LA intend to review, your DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of the Benefit Cap?..... | 70 |
| Figure 6.10 | How useful were the Circulars sent to your LA regarding the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy? | 71 |
| Figure 6.11 | How useful were the Circulars sent to your LA regarding the Benefit Cap? | 71 |
| Figure 6.12 | Do you think that your LA needs further support to implement the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy?..... | 72 |
| Figure 6.13 | Do you think that your LA needs further support to implement the Benefit Cap? | 73 |
| Figure 6.14 | Which of these types of additional support would you like? Please tick the box for the type of additional support you would like for the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy as appropriate and specify (on the dotted lines) what topics you would like it to cover | 74 |
| Figure 6.15 | Which of these types of additional support would you like? Please tick the box for the type of additional support you would like for the Benefit Cap as appropriate and specify (on the dotted lines) what topics you would like it to cover | 75 |
| Figure 6.16 | Is your LA producing anything to help support the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy that might be of value/use to other LAs? | 76 |

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

| | | |
|-------------|--|----|
| Figure 6.17 | Is your LA producing anything to help support the delivery of Benefit Cap changes that might be of value/use to other LAs? | 77 |
| Figure 7.1 | How many cases do you currently have in supported housing that meet the above definition of ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association..... | 80 |
| Figure 7.2 | How many cases do you currently have in supported housing that meet the above definition of ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation | 81 |
| Figure 7.3 | For HB cases in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association, what proportion of cases are referred to a rent officer? | 82 |
| Figure 7.4 | Thinking of HB cases in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association, that are not referred to a rent officer, what are the reasons for not referring? | 83 |
| Figure 7.5 | Average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for caseload in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association | 86 |
| Figure 7.6 | Average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for caseloads in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation, where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation | 87 |
| Figure B.1 | Response rates, by LA type | 93 |

Acknowledgements

This report is based on research commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

GfK NOP would like to thank Andy Brittan, Zoe Uren, Rachel Tsang and their colleagues at DWP for the advice and support given during the research and in the drafting of this report. We would also like to thank all the local authority officers who spared the time to take part in the survey.

The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department or any other government department.

The Authors

Claire Durrant has been jointly responsible for managing the Local Authority Omnibus Survey with her colleague Elaine Winter since Wave 6 in 2001. She joined GfK NOP in 1996, having previously worked for MORI, where she worked for seven years in the Social Research Unit, and before that, the Gallup Organisation. At GfK NOP she has worked on a wide variety of studies for central government, as well as local authorities and academics. This includes the British Household Panel Study and the Home On-Line Study, both run by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, based at the University of Essex, as well as other studies for the Department for Work and Pensions, including the Maternity Rights and Benefits Survey among employers and parents. She has also co-managed projects for Jobcentre Plus in recent years.

Elaine Winter joined NOP as a graduate trainee in 1988, having gained a degree in Geography from the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. She has worked on a wide variety of studies but has specialised in managing longitudinal and employment/benefit policy surveys. Her experience includes managing a seven-year cohort study of the effects of benefit policy change on lone parents for the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and a panel survey with the unemployed and those on low incomes researching the introduction of the Earnings-Top-Up benefit, also for PSI. In addition to these surveys Elaine works regularly for local government clients and co-managed projects for Jobcentre Plus.

Elaine and Claire were assisted with the management of the LA Omnibus Survey by their colleague, Darren Yaxley.

Darren Yaxley (Research Manager) joined GfK NOP in 2004 from the National Centre for Social Research having graduated from The University of Birmingham with a Bachelor of Arts degree (with honours) in Political Science in July 2003. Since joining GfK NOP's Social Research team Darren has worked extensively for various public sector organisations, including both central and local government clients, using a variety of data collection methods. Darren has worked on 12 waves of the Local Authority Omnibus Survey since joining. Darren is a full member the Market Research Society and a member of the Social Research Association.

Abbreviations

| | |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| CTB | Council Tax Benefit |
| DHP | Discretionary Housing Payment |
| DWP | Department for Work and Pensions |
| HB | Housing Benefit |
| HMO | House in multiple occupation |
| LA | Local authority |
| LHA | Local Housing Allowance |
| PRS | Private rented sector |
| PSI | Policy Studies Institute |
| RBV | Risk Based Verification |
| TP | Transitional protection |
| UK | United Kingdom |

1 Discretionary Housing Payments

1.1 Introduction and summary

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) provide claimants with further financial assistance when a local authority (LA) considers that help with housing costs is needed. The 2001 Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations cover DHPs and specify the criteria for what can be considered and what is excluded. LAs exercise a significant amount of discretion over DHPs and decisions on how to administer DHPs are largely employed at the discretion of LAs.

A number of changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the introduction of the benefit cap and the removal of the spare room subsidy, which were not all in place at the time of the survey, are expected to lead to an increase in demand for DHPs and the Government has increased its funding to LAs in anticipation of a greater demand on their budgets. From April 2011 until the end of the spending review period in March 2015, in total an extra £360 million of funding is being provided to LAs for the award of DHPs. The main aim of this section was to find out whether and how LAs uses of DHPs have changed since April 2011.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. When possible, comparisons are made with the findings from the previous wave of the survey which was conducted in the autumn of 2011. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'other' categories, or multiple answers.

LAs were asked to identify the full range of situations where a DHP was currently¹ awarded. The most frequent use mentioned was where the rent could not be met in full, either due to the LHA rate or the Rent Officers' determination² (97 per cent). In 2011, a change in family circumstances which meant that rent could not be paid was the second most frequently selected situation. However, at this wave of the survey, nine in ten LAs also said that they awarded DHPs to assist under 35s on a temporary basis to give them time to move home. The other major year-on-year difference in the findings was the increase in the proportion of LAs saying that they awarded DHPs because the tenant was in rent arrears (52 per cent compared with just one per cent in 2011) and to provide rent in advance/rent deposit (45 per cent compared with 28 per cent in 2011).

When LAs were also asked to list just the three most common reasons where a DHP was awarded, the most frequently mentioned situation remained where the rent could not be met in full either due to the LHA rate or the rent officer determination (89 per cent). It was followed by providing assistance to people under 35 (64 per cent), a change in family circumstances (41 per cent) and rent arrears (25 per cent).

¹ 'Currently' was used in the question wording and applies to the period during interviewing for this survey which ran from 22 October to 14 December 2012.

² Rent officers determine the LHA rate for every LA in England.

LAs were also asked to indicate approximately what percentage each situation accounted for out of the total DHP allocation: on average, 41 per cent of all DHPs were awarded when rent could not be met in full because of the LHA rate or rent officer determination, 16 per cent were awarded to provide assistance to people aged under 35 and a further 10 per cent when there had been a change in family circumstances.

In terms of the increased likelihood of awarding DHPs to specific groups since the new regulations, there has been a very clear change in priority at this wave of the survey to single people aged 25-34 (75 per cent of LAs said they were more likely to have awarded them to this group since the new regulations).

Almost half of LAs (48 per cent) said that the number of DHPs awarded for short periods of three months or less had increased since transitional protection (TP) began to end;³ in contrast to last year where 28 per cent said that this had increased since the new regulations. When LAs were asked to rate the three most important reasons for offering a short-term DHP award, 82 per cent said that it was to support a tenant until the end of a tenancy, 38 per cent also said that they offered them because longer-term awards were not affordable, and one in three offered them as a short-term payment to landlords as part of rent and/or tenancy negotiation (35 per cent) or because the tenant was in rent arrears (32 per cent)

Over half (55 per cent) of LAs said that the number of DHPs awarded for periods of more than three months since TP began to end had increased. When a follow-up question was asked about the maximum periods for which DHPs had been awarded, half said 52 weeks and more than a quarter said 26 weeks.

LAs were also asked about changes to the patterns of awarding DHPs to existing tenants (i.e., those who had been tenants prior to April 2011 and were not affected by the change in LHA regulations) since the new regulations. More than a third (36 per cent) said they were more likely to award DHPs to existing tenants compared with 17 per cent at the previous wave which is a significant increase.

Changes to the Shared Accommodation Rate were introduced January 2012: unless they are in an exempt category, single childless people under the age of 35 are now only eligible for the shared accommodation rate. In this context, two in three LAs (65 per cent) had already reviewed their allocation criteria for under 35s and one in three (34 per cent) had not; at the previous wave of the survey in 2011, just 43 per cent had already undertaken a review but a further 37 per cent intended to review. Amongst those LAs that had already reviewed their allocation criteria for under 35s, the most frequently cited changes were to extend/use those currently used for 16–24-year-olds (67 per cent) and represents an increase on 2011 when 53 per cent said that they had either already made this change or were planning to make it.

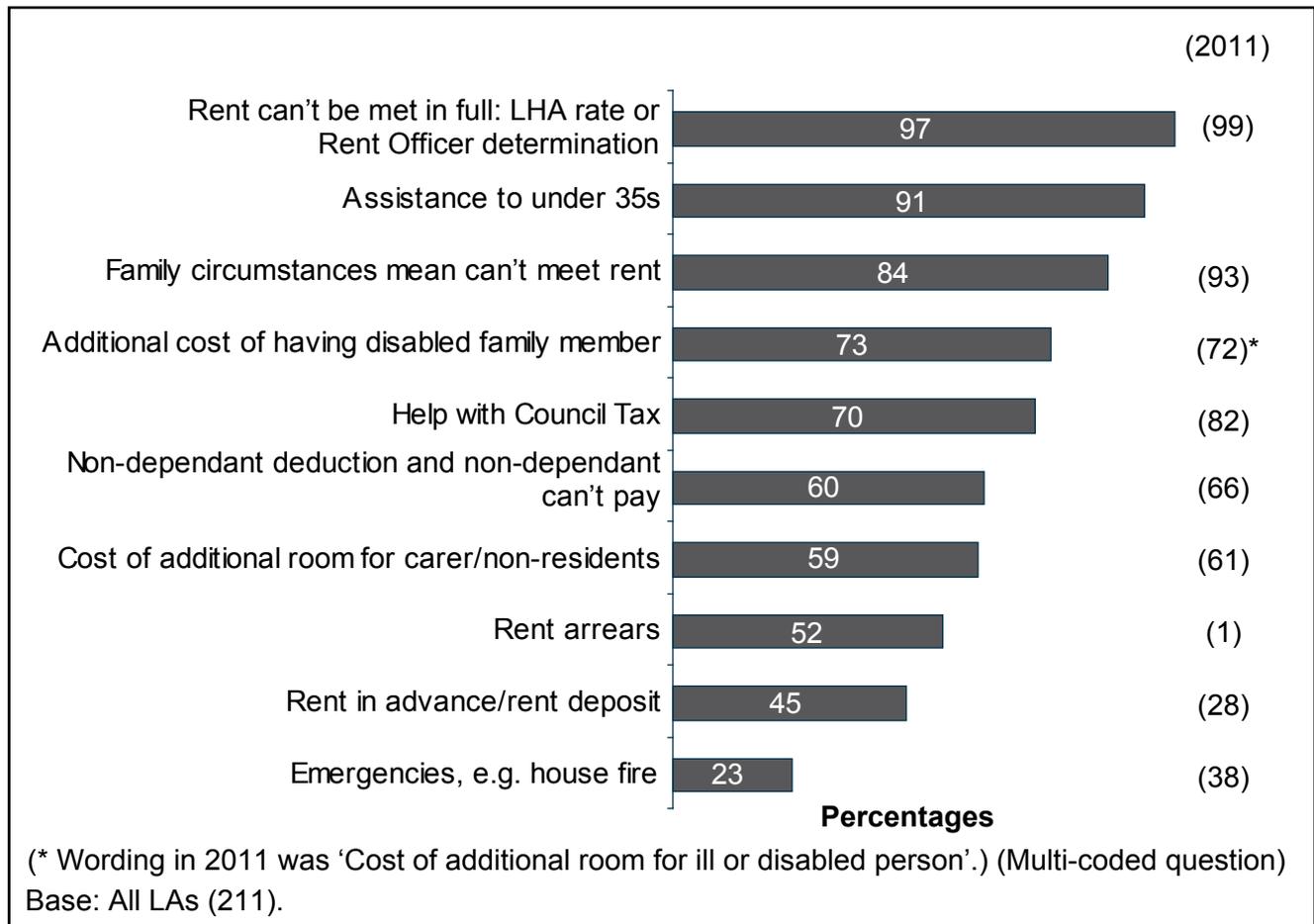
LAs were asked if they expected to spend/commit to their full 'additional' DHP allocation in the financial year and two thirds (66 per cent) said that they did, as opposed to a fifth (19 per cent) that said they did not expect to spend/commit to the full amount.

³ Following the changes to LHA from April 2011, a period of TP was introduced to give existing claimants time to look for alternative accommodation or adjust to their revised award of HB.

1.2 Main findings

This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 1.1 In what situations does your LA currently⁴ award a DHP?



LAs were asked to identify situations where a DHP was currently awarded from a pre-scripted list of responses, which also contained an option for the respondent to write in reasons in addition to those already listed. As in 2011, almost all LAs awarded DHPs where rent could not be met in full either because of the LHA rate or the rent officer determination (97 per cent and 99 per cent in 2011). In 2011 the second most frequently cited situation was family circumstances; however, this was no longer the case in 2012 when nine in ten LAs said that they awarded DHPs to assist under 35s on a temporary basis to give them time to move home (91 per cent). Even though fewer LAs at this wave of the survey said that they awarded DHPs when family circumstances meant claimants could not afford the rent, it was still selected by 84 per cent (93 per cent in 2011). Around one in seven also mentioned the additional cost of having a disabled family member (73 per cent, which is virtually the same as in 2011) and help with Council Tax (70 per cent, down from 82 per cent in 2011).

⁴ 'Currently' was October – December 2012.

Non-dependent deductions and emergencies were selected by fewer LAs than last year (60 per cent and 23 per cent respectively) while the cost of an additional room for a carer/ non-residents was mentioned by the same (59 per cent). However, there has been a large increase in the proportion of LAs saying that they awarded DHPs because the tenant was in rent arrears (52 per cent, compared with just one per cent in 2011) and to provide rent in advance/rent deposit (45 per cent, compared with 28 per cent in 2011).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the main answers to this question but in addition to those charted, the following responses were recorded:

Table 1.1 In what situation does your LA currently award a DHP?: Additional responses

| | Percentages |
|---|-------------|
| Pregnancy/expecting a baby/imminent birth of baby/single, under 25 and pregnant | 6 |
| Help with mortgage payments in certain circumstances | 3 |
| Reduction in income/income shortfall/financial hardship/financial pressures | 3 |
| Debt/growing debt | 3 |
| Low income/poverty | 2 |
| Shortfall in rent (reason unspecified) | 2 |
| When moving to larger accommodation/more suitable accommodation | 1 |
| Personal crisis | 1 |
| Other ⁵ | 9 |

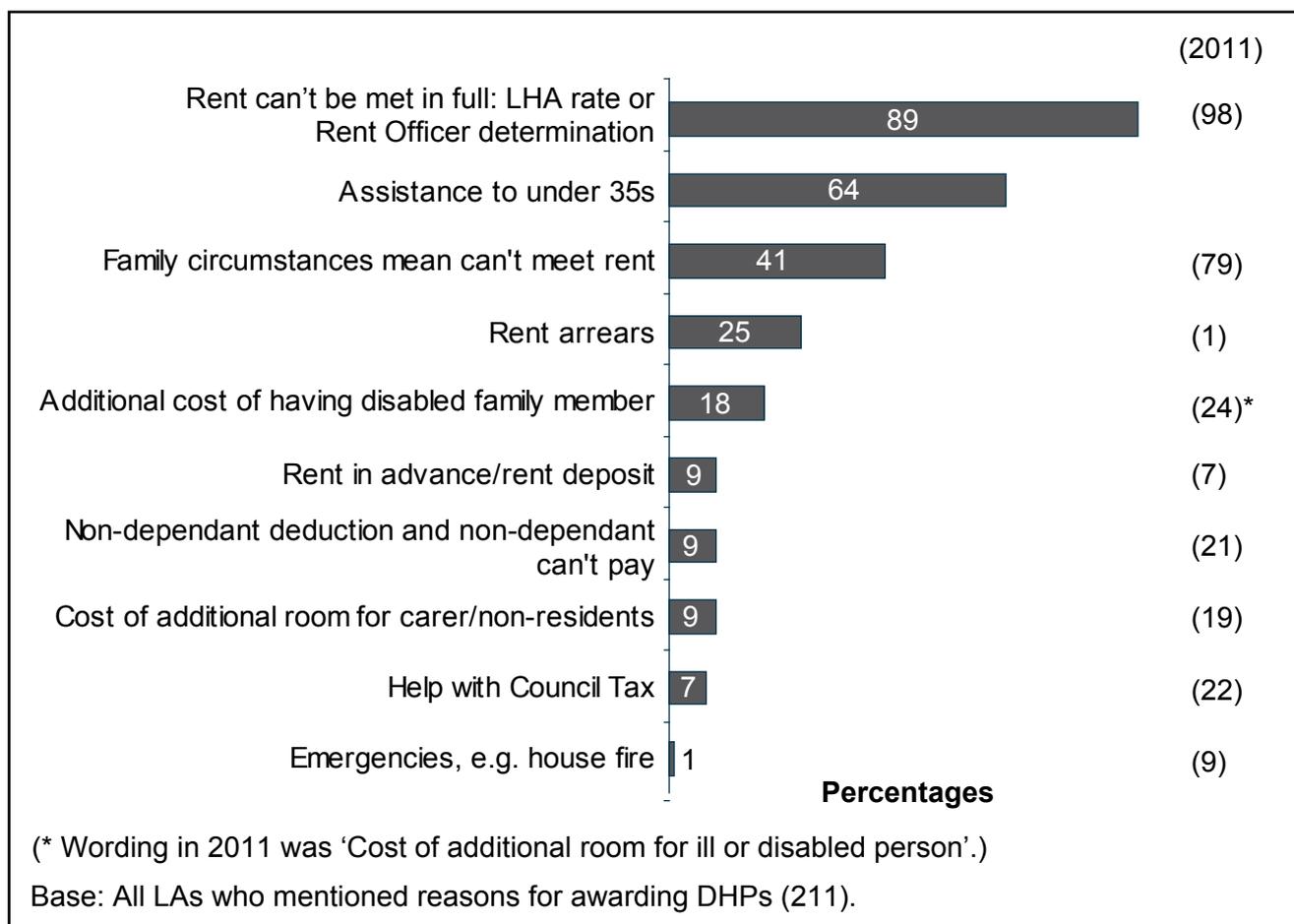
There were some interesting significant differences by LA type. English Metropolitan Districts and London Boroughs were significantly more likely than Scottish LAs and English Districts to say they have used DHPs for tenants in rent arrears (71 per cent and 68 per cent compared with 35 per cent and 48 per cent). In addition, London Boroughs were significantly more likely than English Unitary authorities and English Districts to have given assistance to people under 35 (100 per cent versus 88 per cent and 87 per cent respectively).

⁵ This included awaiting court case to gain custody of children; assisting with potential benefit cap; joint tenant vacates; elderly and vulnerable and substance misuse under 35; improving financial status; removal costs were subject to LHA restriction; claimant previously homeless; claimant advised incorrectly of LHA rate; escaping domestic violence; moving home; covering additional bedroom where the occupier is single pregnant female; end of transitional protection; temporarily meet full rent where landlord agrees to give a new tenancy at LHA level; combination of several factors rather than just one of the above shown; meet shortfall prior to a projected increase in entitlement; bereavement; restricted single room rate; 13-week protections extended; levels of poor budgeting.

Perhaps not surprisingly, LAs with a high caseload⁶ were generally more likely than those with a low caseload to have awarded DHPs for most of the situations in Figure 1.1. In addition, they were also more likely than medium caseload authorities to award DHPs:

- where there was a non-dependant deduction and the non dependant couldn't pay;
- to meet additional costs because a family member was ill/disabled; and
- where there was a change in family circumstances.

Figure 1.2 What are the three most common reasons for currently⁷ awarding a DHP in your LA?



When LAs were also asked to list just the three most common reasons where a DHP was currently awarded, the most frequently mentioned situation remained where the rent could not be met in full either due to LHA rate or the rent officer's determination. While still cited by 89 per cent of LAs, this represents a decrease from the 2011 responses (98 per cent). The key change on last year's findings was that in 2012 nearly two-thirds of LAs (64 per cent) said that providing assistance to people under 35 was one of their top three most common reasons for awarding DHPs (no LAs had mentioned this in 2011). This was selected by a high percentage of English Metropolitan Districts (86 per cent) and LAs with a medium Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit caseload (77 per cent).

⁶ High caseload = over 20,000.

⁷ 'Currently' was October – December 2012.

There has also been a large increase in the proportion of LAs mentioning rent arrears in 2012 (25 per cent versus one per cent in 2011) and this increased to 41 per cent of London Boroughs (zero per cent in 2011), 39 per cent of LAs that had contracted-out administration (three per cent in 2011) and 33 per cent of LAs with a high caseload (one per cent in 2011).

When LAs were asked to list all of the reasons for awarding a DHP, rent in advance/rent deposit showed a big year-on-year increase (from 28 per cent in 2011 to 45 per cent in 2012); however, when they were asked about the three most common reasons, just nine per cent mentioned it (seven per cent last year).

There has been a relatively large overall decrease since 2011 in the proportion of LAs mentioning family circumstances (to 41 per cent), non-dependant deductions and non-dependant can't pay (nine per cent) and cost of additional room for carer/non-resident (nine per cent), help with Council Tax (seven per cent) and emergencies (one per cent).

Table 1.2 What approximate percentage does each situation make up of total DHPs?

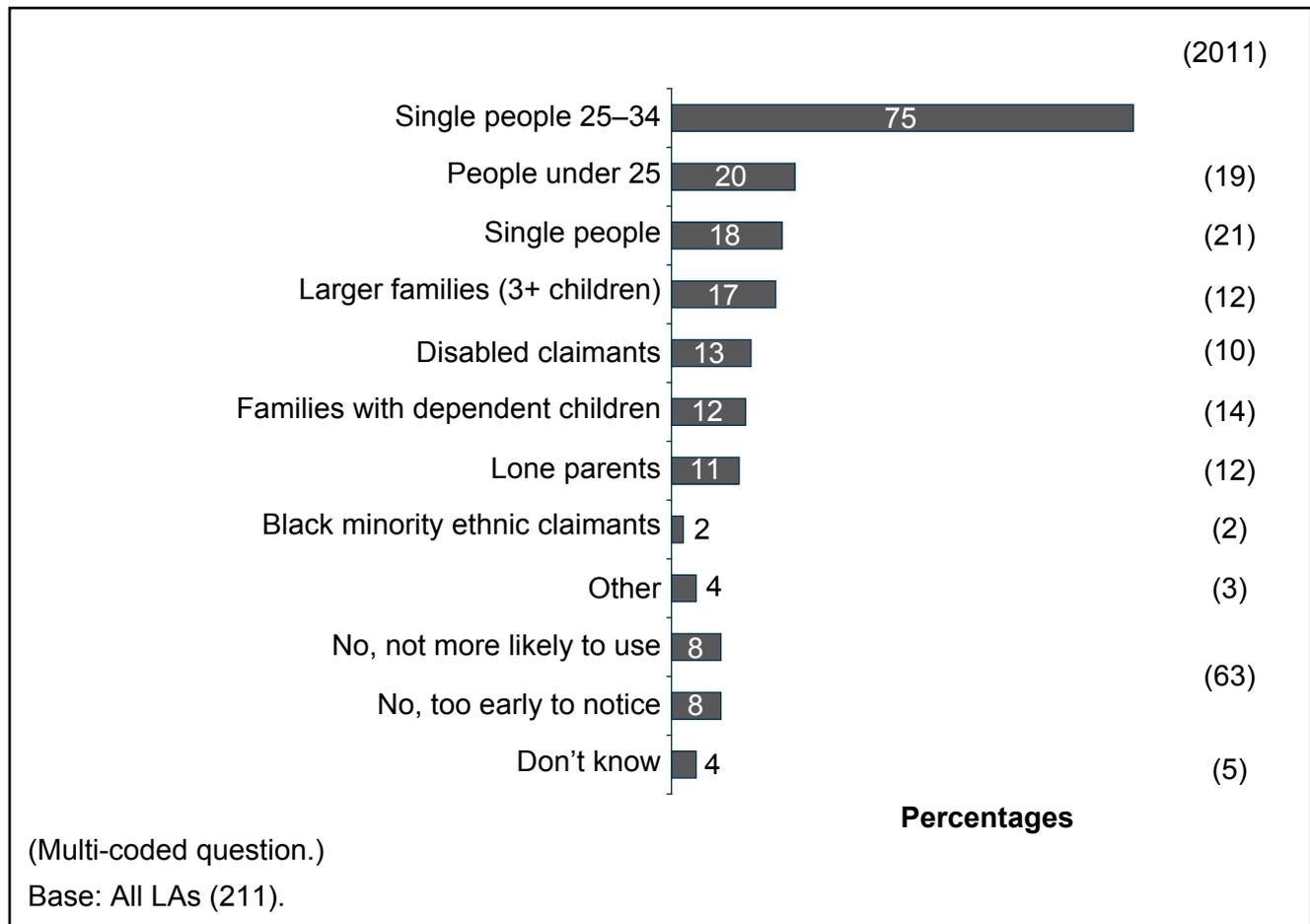
| | Mean (percentages) |
|---|-----------------------|
| Rent can't be met in full because of LHA rate or rent officer determination | 41 |
| Assistance to under 35s | 16 |
| Change in family circumstances meant can't meet rent | 10 |
| Meet additional cost because family member is ill/disabled | 7 |
| Tenant in rent arrears | 6 |
| Non-dependant deduction and non-dependant can't pay | 4 |
| Help with Council Tax | 4 |
| Rent in advance/rent deposit | 3 |
| Cost of additional room for carer/other non-resident | 3 |
| Emergencies | 1 |
| Help with mortgages | 0.5 |
| Other | 4 |

Base: All LAs except those saying 'don't know' or 'not stated' at A1 ('In what situations does your LA currently award a DHP?') (208).

For each of the situations where DHPs were awarded, LAs were asked to indicate approximately what percentage each of these situations accounted for out of the total DHP allocation. LAs were told that their answer could be based on their general perception if they had not kept a record and 74 per cent said that they had given an estimate.

The percentage that each LA gave for each situation was then averaged out across all authorities and is presented in Table 1.2. Although LAs said that on average 41 per cent of all of the DHPs awarded were when rent could not be met in full because of the LHA rate or rent officer determination overall, they also said that on average one in six (16 per cent) were awarded to provide assistance to people aged under 35 and a further one in ten (10 per cent) when family circumstances meant that rent could not be met. The other situations each made up less than 10 per cent of total DHPs.

Figure 1.3 Since the new regulations has your LA been more likely to use DHPs for any of the following groups of claimants?

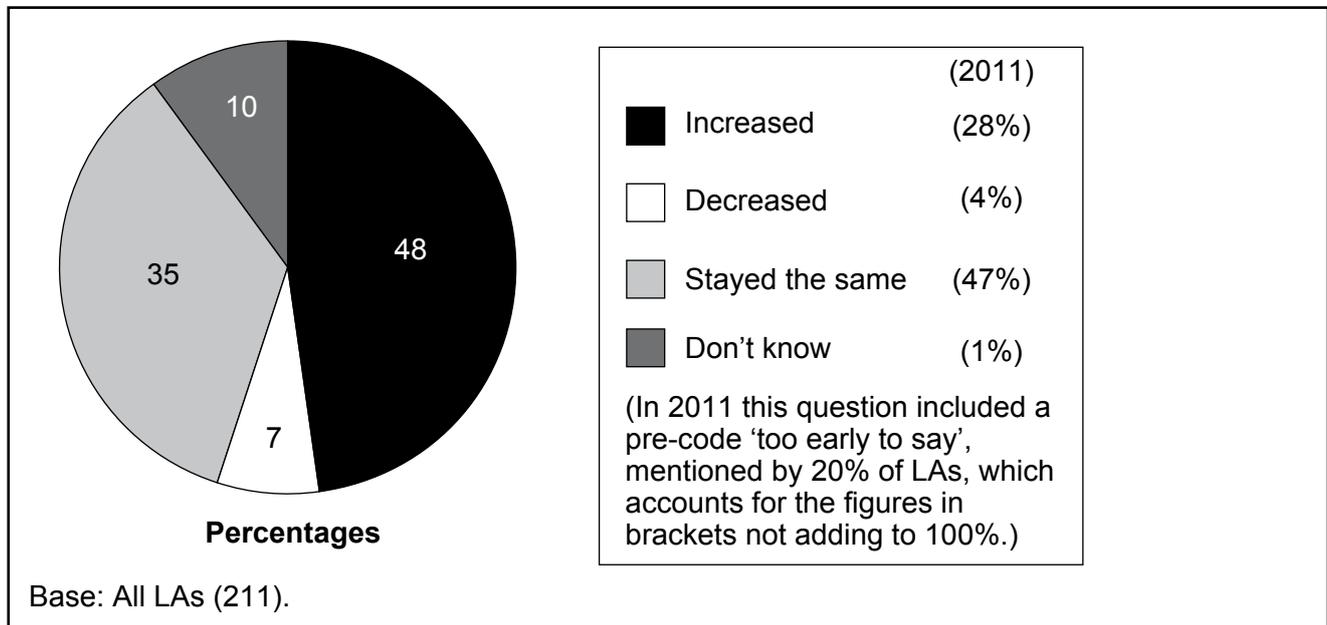


LAs were asked if there had been an increased likelihood of awarding DHPs to specific groups since the new regulations had been implemented. There has been a very clear change in priority at this wave of the survey to single people aged 25-34 (75 per cent said they were more likely to have awarded them to this group). However, this rises to 95 per cent among English Metropolitan Districts. Interestingly, Scottish LAs were the least likely to have seen an increase in the use of DHPs for single people aged 25-34 (53 per cent).

Other findings are similar to the last wave, although there has been a slight increase in the proportion of LAs mentioning larger families with three or more children (17 per cent in 2012 compared with 12 per cent in 2011). London Boroughs were particularly likely to have seen an increase in the use of DHPs for larger families (45 per cent).

It is worth noting that London Boroughs were particularly likely to highlight an increase in the use of DHPs for almost all of the different groups of claimants shown above, for example 32 per cent mentioned families with dependent children, 27 per cent lone parents and 14 per cent black and minority ethnic claimants.

Figure 1.4 Would you say that since the TP began to end, the number of DHPs awarded for periods of three months or less has increased, decreased or stayed the same?



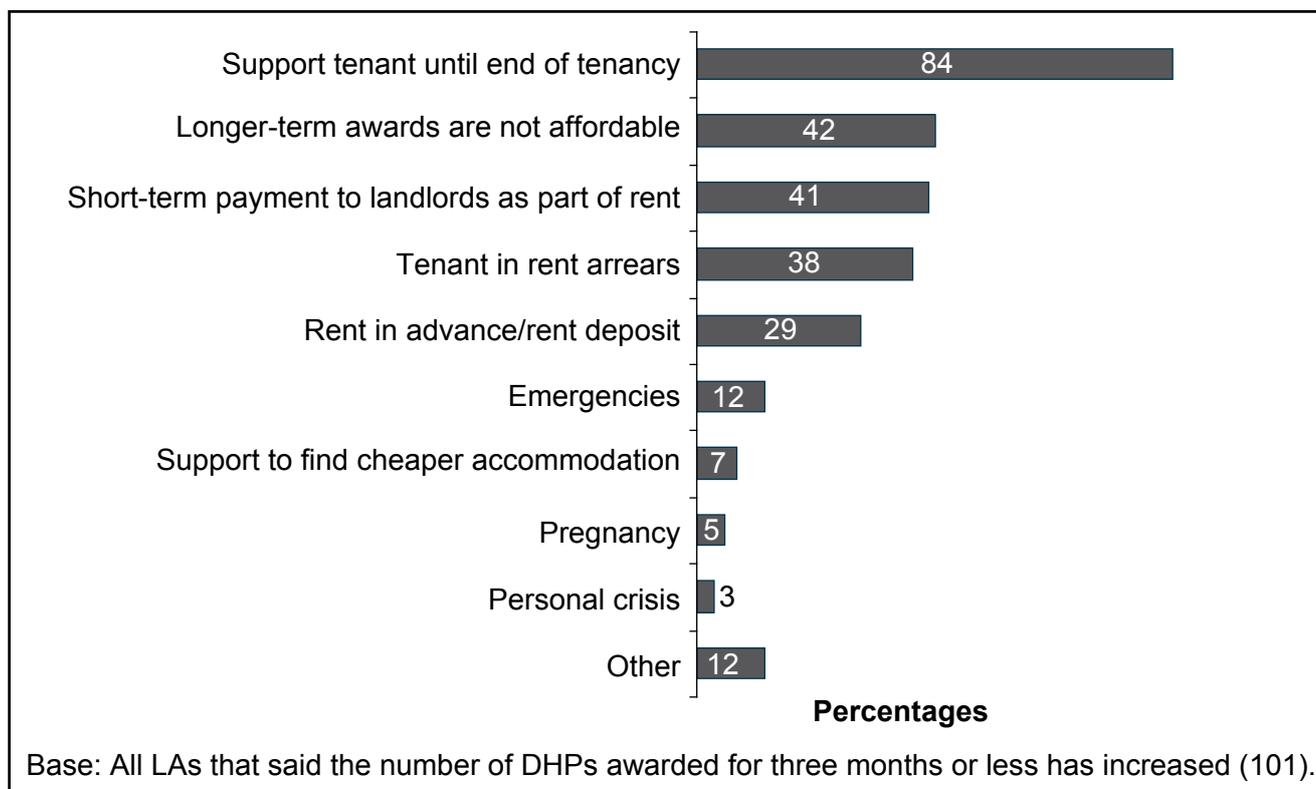
Almost half of LAs (48 per cent) said that the number of DHPs awarded for short periods of three months or less had increased since TP began to end⁸, compared with last year when 28 per cent said that it had increased since the new regulations.

Compared with the previous wave of the survey, fewer said the number of DHPs awarded had remained the same (35 per cent) and slightly more said that it had decreased (seven per cent).

Findings are consistent across all sub-groups, although there is a significantly high percentage of LAs in Yorkshire and Humberside saying that the number had decreased – three LAs out of 12 (or 25 per cent).

⁸ Following the changes to LHA from April 2011, a period of TP was introduced to give existing claimants time to look for alternative accommodation or adjust to their revised award of HB.

Figure 1.5 What are the reasons for offering a short-term (short-term meaning three months or less) DHP award?

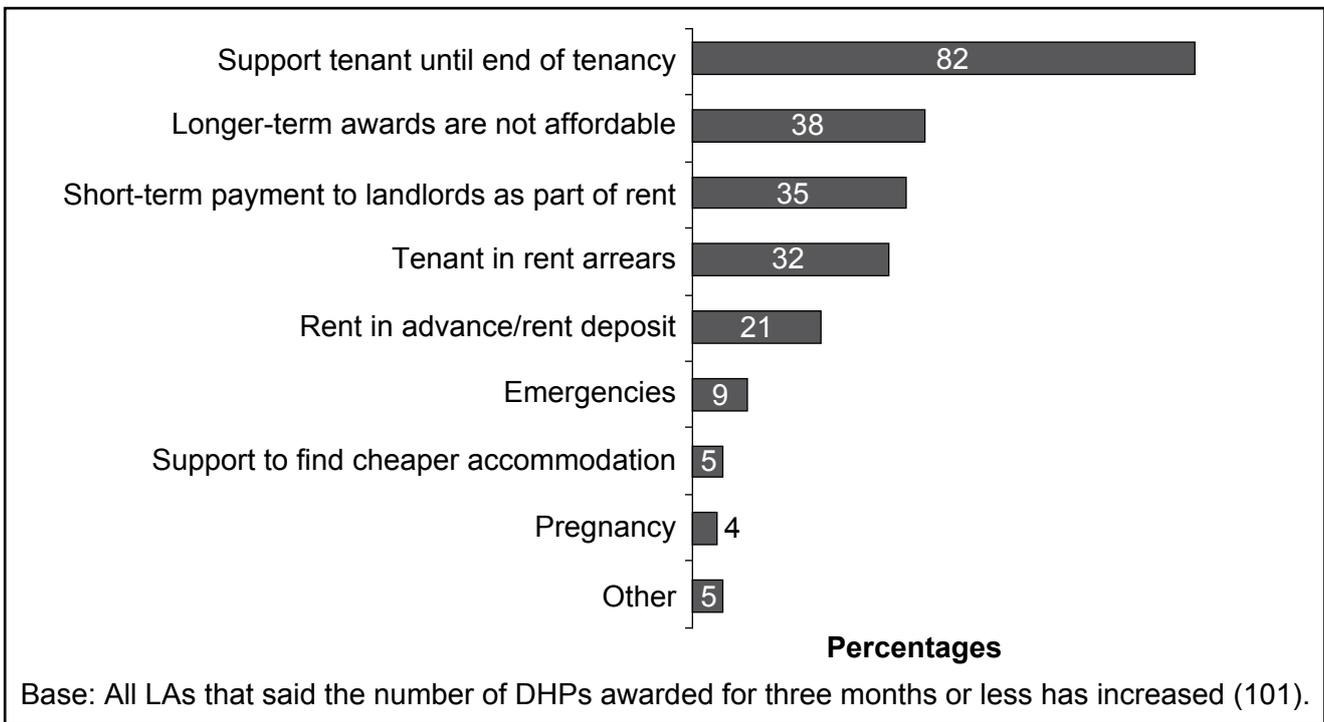


Those LAs that said the number of short-term awards had increased were asked what the main reasons were for LAs offering a short-term DHP award. By far the most frequently mentioned reason was to support the tenant until the end of a tenancy (84 per cent).

Two in five also said that they offered them because longer-term awards were not affordable, as a short term payment to landlords as part of rent and/or tenancy negotiation or because the tenant was in rent arrears (42 per cent, 41 per cent and 38 per cent respectively). Three in ten also cited rent in advance/rent deposit (29 per cent).

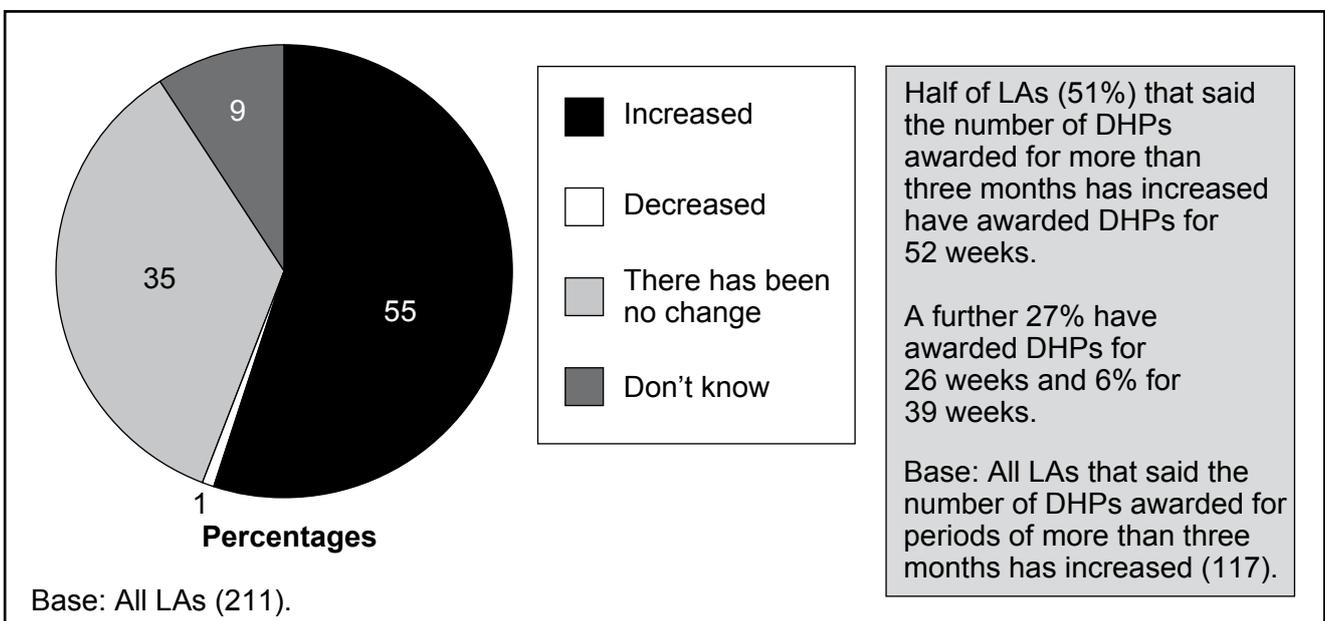
There are some differences in the findings according to LA type. London Boroughs were particularly likely to have offered a short-term DHP award because longer-term awards were not affordable (77 per cent) and as a short-term payment to landlords as part of rent and/or tenancy negotiation (62 per cent). English Metropolitan Districts and high caseload authorities were also particularly likely to have offered a short-term DHP award as a short-term payment to landlords as part of rent and/or tenancy negotiation (89 per cent and 62 per cent respectively), while high caseload LAs were also significantly more likely than low and medium caseload authorities to use short-term awards for emergencies (28 per cent).

Figure 1.6 What are the three most important reasons for offering a short-term (short-term meaning three months or less) DHP award?



When LAs were asked to rate the three most important reasons for offering a short-term DHP award, 82 per cent mentioned supporting a tenant until the end of a tenancy. As Figure 1.6 indicates, the relative importance of the reasons very much reflects the answers at the previous question. Once again, a high proportion of London Boroughs used short-term DHP awards because longer-term awards were not affordable (77 per cent).

Figure 1.7 Would you say that since the TP began to end, the number of DHPs awarded for periods of more than three months has increased, decreased or stayed the same? What is the maximum period that DHPs have been awarded for?

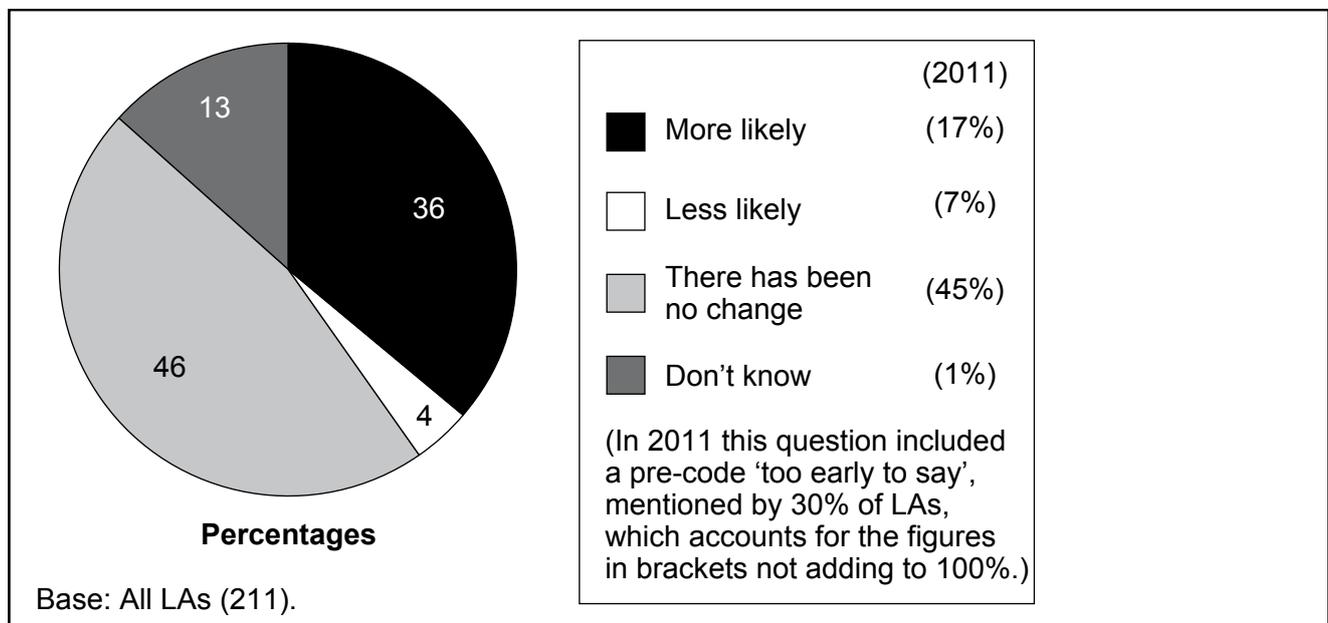


Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

With regard to changes in the number of DHPs awarded for periods of more than three months since TP began to end, over half of LAs said that the number had increased (55 per cent), with this rising to 81 per cent of English Metropolitan Districts. On the other hand, 35 per cent said there has been no change and just one per cent noted a decrease.

When a follow-up question was asked about the maximum periods for which DHPs had been awarded, half (51 per cent) said 52 weeks. More than a quarter (27 per cent) said 26 weeks and six per cent said 39 weeks. LAs with a high caseload and London Boroughs were particularly likely to have awarded a DHP for 52 weeks (65 per cent and 83 per cent respectively).

Figure 1.8 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 your LA has been more or less likely to use DHPs for existing tenants (i.e. those who had been tenants prior to April 2011 and were not affected by the change in LHA regulations) or has there been no change?

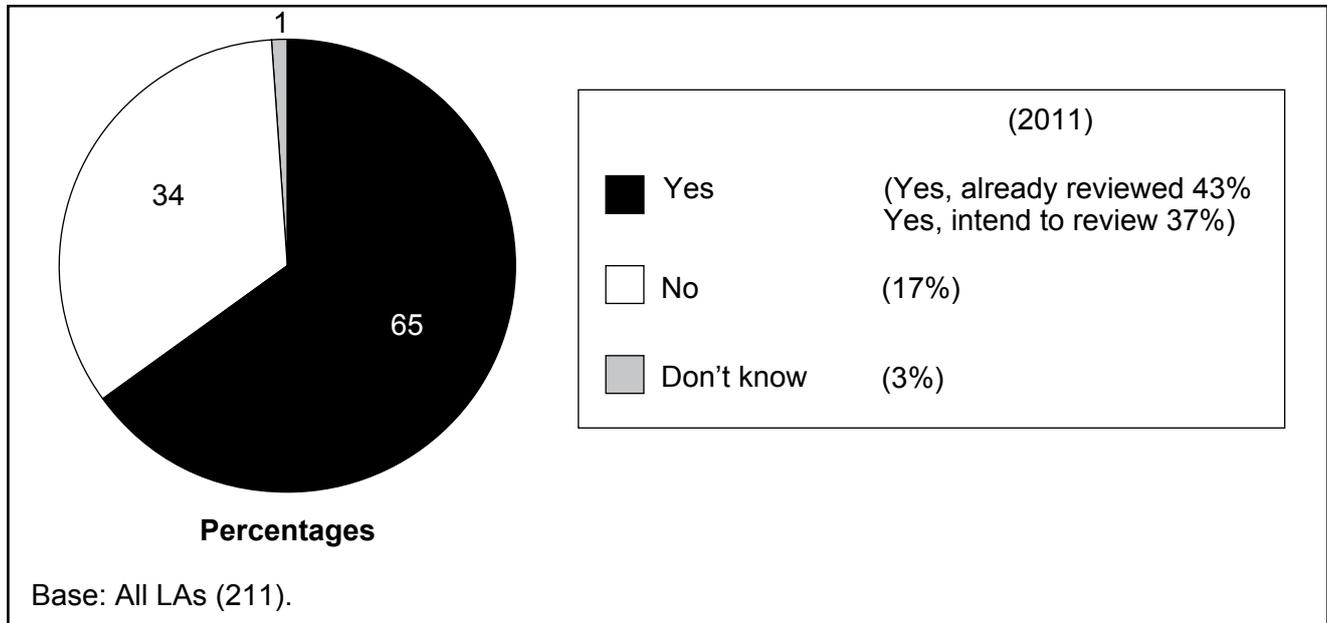


LAs were also asked about changes to the patterns of awarding DHPs for existing tenants since the new regulations. More than a third (36 per cent) said they were more likely to award DHPs to existing tenants compared with 17 per cent at the previous wave which is a significant increase.

Just under half said there had been no change (46 per cent) and four per cent said they had been less likely to award DHPs for existing tenants since the new regulations.

Findings were very consistent across all sub-groups, although a significantly higher percentage of LAs that had contracted-out administration said they were more likely to have awarded DHPs to existing tenants (57 per cent versus 33 per cent of LAs without contracted-out administration). In addition, Scottish LAs were particularly likely to have said that there had been no change (71 per cent).

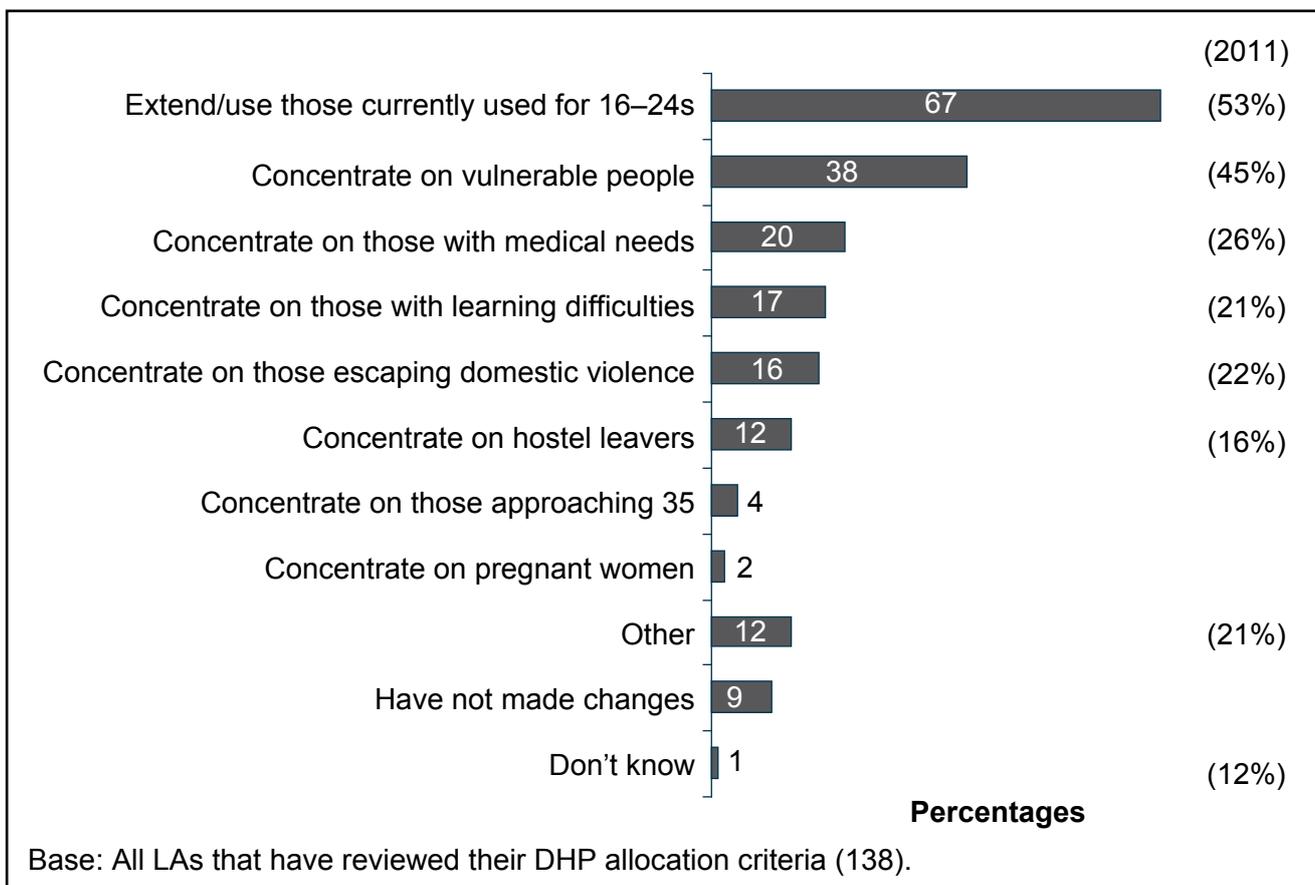
Figure 1.9 In January 2012 the LHA regulations for shared accommodation changed so that, unless they are in an exempt category, all single persons under 35 are now only eligible for the shared accommodation rate. Has your LA reviewed your DHP allocation criteria in response to these changes to LHA regulations from January 2012?



Changes to the LHA introduced in January 2012 mean that single childless people under the age of 35 are now only eligible for the shared accommodation rate (unless they are in an exempt category). In this context, two in three LAs (65 per cent) have already reviewed their allocation criteria for under 35s; at the previous wave of the survey in 2011, just 43 per cent had already undertaken a review but a further 37 per cent intended to review.

One in three LAs (34 per cent) had not already undertaken a review in 2012 with this rising to 53 per cent of Scottish LAs and 43 per cent of LAs with a low caseload. Conversely, high and medium caseload authorities were particularly likely to have already undertaken a review (both 73 per cent).

Figure 1.10 What changes, if any, has your LA made to your DHP allocation criteria in response to these changes to LHA regulations from January 2012?

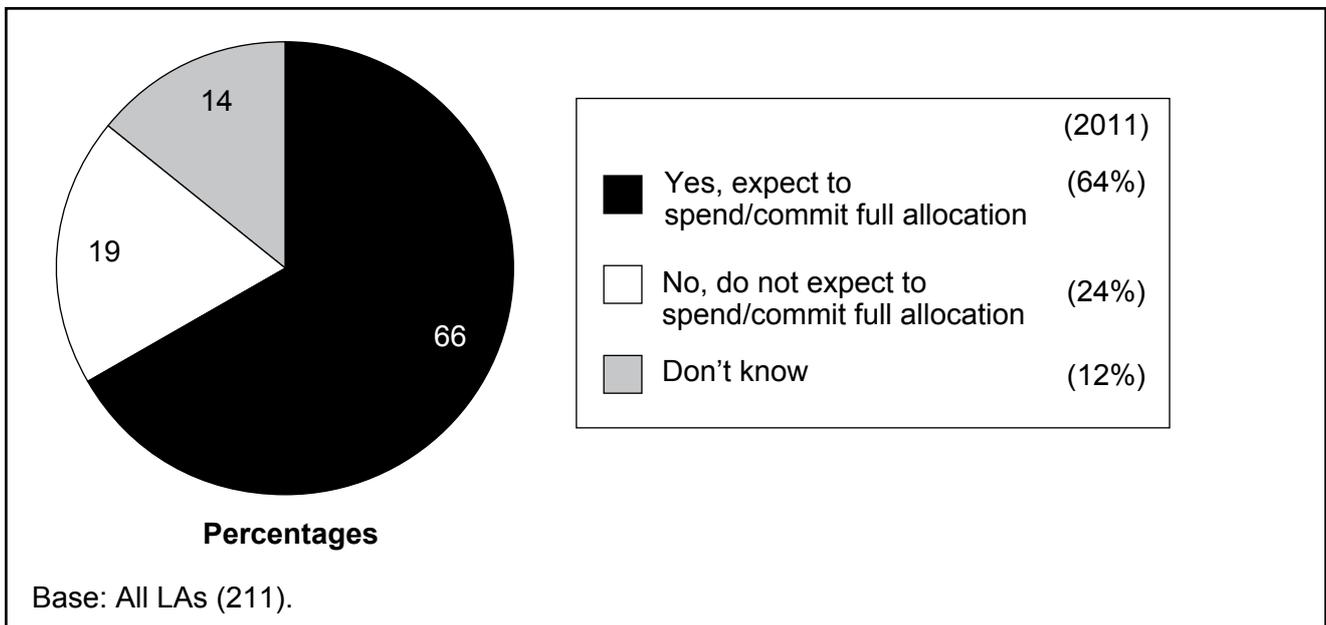


Amongst the LAs that had already reviewed their allocation criteria for under 35s, the most frequently cited changes were to extend/use those currently used for 16–24-year-olds which was mentioned by 67 per cent and represents an increase on 2011 when 53 per cent said that they had either made this change or were planning to make it.

Every other criteria shown on the chart above was selected by fewer LAs than in 2011, although still nearly two in five (38 per cent) said that they concentrated on vulnerable people and one in five said that they were concentrating on those with medical needs (20 per cent).

London Boroughs were more likely than English Districts to have mentioned many of the criteria in Figure 1.10; however, English Districts were significantly more likely to have said that they had extended or used the criteria currently used for 16–24-year-olds (74 per cent versus 47 per cent). LAs with a high caseload were also significantly more likely than low caseload LAs to have mentioned that they were concentrating on those with learning difficulties, those with medical needs, those escaping domestic violence, vulnerable people and hostel leavers.

Figure 1.11 Does your LA expect to spend/commit your full ‘additional’ DHP allocation in this financial year or not?



LAs were asked if they expected to spend/commit to their full ‘additional’ DHP allocation in this financial year and two thirds (66 per cent) said that they did, as opposed to a fifth (19 per cent) that said they did not expect to spend/commit to the full amount. Overall, LAs were slightly more likely to have said that they would spend/commit to their full ‘additional’ allocation than in the previous year but the difference is not significant.

LAs in Scotland and English Metropolitan Districts were much more likely than English Districts to have said that they expected to spend their allocation (82 per cent, 81 per cent and 61 per cent respectively).

2 Housing Benefit advice

2.1 Introduction and summary

This section of the survey aimed to assess whether the changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) system of Housing Benefit (HB) that were introduced in April 2011 have had an effect on the need for advice by HB claimants.

The changes to HB announced in the June 2010 Budget and the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 included:

- changing the basis for setting LHA) rates from the median (50th percentile) to the 30th percentile of local market rents;
- capping LHA rates by property size in 2012:
 - £250 per week for one bed;
 - £290 per week for two bed;
 - £340 for three bed;
 - £400 for four bed or more – thereby scrapping the five-bed rate;
- uprating HB rates annually from April 2013 at the 30th percentile of market rents, or, if lower, the September 2012 Consumer Price Index rate;
- capping the annual increases in most working-age benefits at one per cent in cash terms in 2014–15 and 2015–16, in addition to the one per cent cap on increases already confirmed for 2013–14.

These changes applied to new claimants from April 2011; however, existing claimants were given a transition period and would only come under the new regulations between January and December 2012, on the anniversary of their claim. A non-dependant deduction to HB and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was also implemented in stages from April 2011 onwards⁹.

Two further measures were announced in October 2010. The first of these measures involved raising the age at which the Shared Accommodation Rate (formerly the Single Room Rate) applied from 25 to 35. This was introduced in January 2012. For existing claimants, it will apply on their next review after January 2012 or, if they are covered by the transitional protection period, when this period ends. The second measure concerned capping household benefits at £500 per week (with a lower rate for single people), to be introduced in four London Boroughs from April 2013, and more widely from autumn 2013.

The key findings based on all local authorities (LAs) answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. When possible, comparisons are made with the

⁹ When there is an existing HB/CTB claim and the customer or the customer's partner has attained the age of 65, a non-dependant moves into the customer's home or an existing non-dependant has an increase in income, that would increase the non-dependant deduction, the deduction or increase in the existing deduction will not take effect until 26 weeks after the change happened.

findings from the previous wave of the survey which was conducted in the autumn of 2011. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of ‘don’t know’ or ‘other’ categories, or multiple answers.

Respondents were asked whether or not they thought there had been a change in the overall level of need for advice from HB claimants since the new regulations in April 2011. A high of 94 per cent of LAs said that the level of need had increased – 51 per cent said a lot and 43 per cent a little. This is a significant increase on last year when a similar question was asked and 57 per cent said there had been an increase.

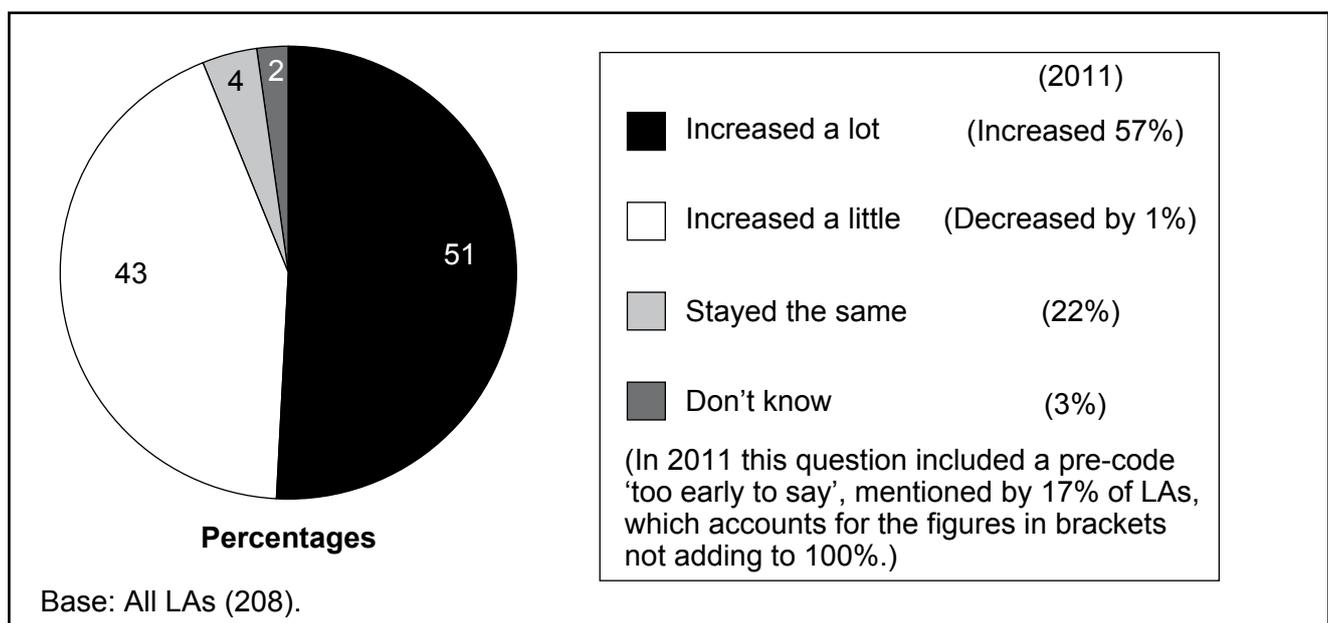
There has also been a significant increase in the proportion of LAs supporting tenants in rent negotiation; from 49 per cent in 2011 to 65 per cent in 2012. All those LAs that said demand for them to support tenants in rent negotiation had increased were asked what proportion of LHA tenants had been involved in rent negotiation. Overall this group of LAs said that an average of 18 per cent of tenants had been supported in rent negotiations and an average of 25 per cent of rent negotiations had been successful (note, however, that around half of LAs were unable to answer this question).

Finally in this section on HB advice, LAs were asked if they had noticed any change in the level of service offered by HB Advisers, for example in terms of claim times and processing. Nearly two in three LAs (63 per cent) said that they had been able to offer the same level of service, which is virtually the same proportion as in 2011. However, 31 per cent said that they have had to cut back some of their services and this represents a significant increase from 24 per cent in 2011.

2.2 Main findings

The following details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting key sub-group differences.

Figure 2.1 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the overall level of need for advice by HB claimants has increased, decreased or stayed the same?



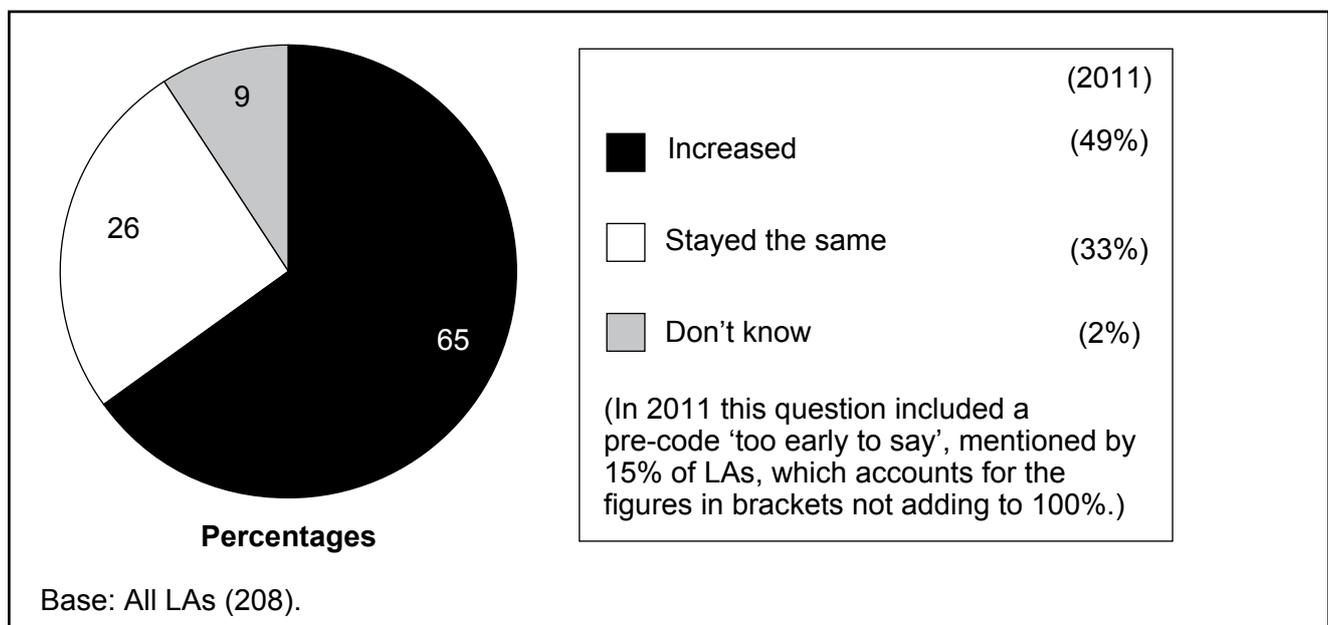
Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Respondents were asked whether or not they thought there had been a change in the overall level of need for advice from HB claimants since the new regulations in April 2011.

Almost all LAs (94 per cent) said that the level of need had increased – 51 per cent said a lot and 43 per cent a little. This is a significant increase on last year when a similar question was asked specifically about the need for advice from HB Advisers and 57 per cent said that there had been an increase. Just four per cent (eight LAs) said the level of need had stayed the same, (two English Unitary authorities, five English Districts and one London Borough, with half in the South East), although this level was higher among LAs in the South East at 12 per cent (in comparison to none of the LAs in the East of England). Just one English Unitary authority said it had decreased.

Scottish LAs were the only authority type that were more likely to have said that the level of need had increased a little (76 per cent) rather than a lot (18 per cent). Four in five (81 per cent) English Metropolitan authorities said the level of need has increased a lot which, along with the equivalent findings for Wales (67 per cent), London Boroughs (62 per cent), English Districts (50 per cent) and English Unitary authorities (44 per cent), contrasts to the equivalent finding for Scottish LAs (18 per cent). There were also some significant differences by region with higher levels of LAs saying that the need for advice had increased a lot in the West Midlands (83 per cent), the North West (79 per cent), Yorkshire and Humberside (75 per cent), the North East (71 per cent), Wales (67 per cent), London (62 per cent), in contrast to lower levels in Scotland (18 per cent) and the East of England (31 per cent).

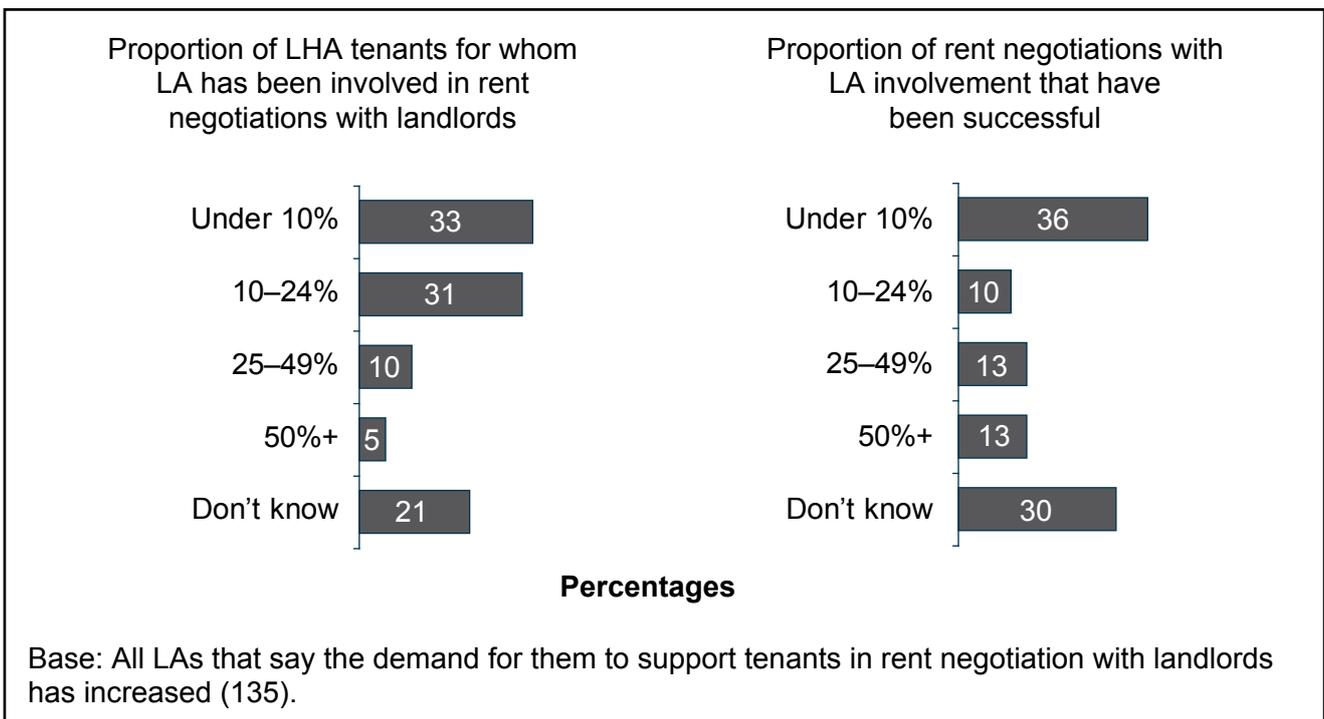
Figure 2.2 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the demand for your LA to support tenants in rent negotiation with landlords has increased, decreased or stayed the same?



There has been a significant increase in the proportion of LAs supporting tenants in rent negotiation from 49 per cent in 2011 to 65 per cent in 2012. Once again, no LAs said that there had been a decrease and roughly a quarter (26 per cent) said it had stayed the same (33 per cent at the previous wave).

London Boroughs were particularly likely to have seen an increase in the need for them to participate in rent negotiation (95 per cent) which is significantly higher than Scottish LAs, English Unitary authorities and English Districts (41 per cent, 69 per cent and 57 per cent respectively). High and medium caseload authorities were also much more likely than low caseload authorities to have been involved in rent negotiations (78 per cent, 70 per cent and 52 per cent respectively).

Figure 2.3 For what proportion of the total number of LHA tenants in your LA has your LA been involved in rent negotiations with landlords? What proportion of these rent negotiations that your LA has been involved in have been successful?



All of the LAs that had said that demand for them to support tenants in rent negotiation had increased were asked what proportion of LHA tenants had been involved in rent negotiation (left-hand side of Figure 2.3). It is important to note that one in five (21 per cent) were not able to give an answer and half (53 per cent) of those that gave an answer had to give an estimate. A third of this group of LAs said that under 10 per cent of LHA tenants had been supported, three in ten said between 10 per cent and 24 per cent, and one in ten said between 25 per cent and 49 per cent. Just five per cent said 50 per cent and over had been supported.

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Overall, LAs where the demand to support tenants in rent negotiation had increased said that they had supported an average of 18 per cent of LHA tenants¹⁰, with this rising to an average of 24 per cent in London Boroughs and 21 per cent in English Districts (significantly higher than English Unitary authorities and English Metropolitan Districts, both with an average of 11 per cent). Interestingly, the proportion of LHA tenants that negotiated over rent with the support of the LA was higher in low caseload authorities than it was in high caseload authorities (averages of 22 per cent and 15 per cent respectively). There was a similarly high average percentage of LHA tenants involved in rent negotiations with authorities in the East of England (32 per cent).

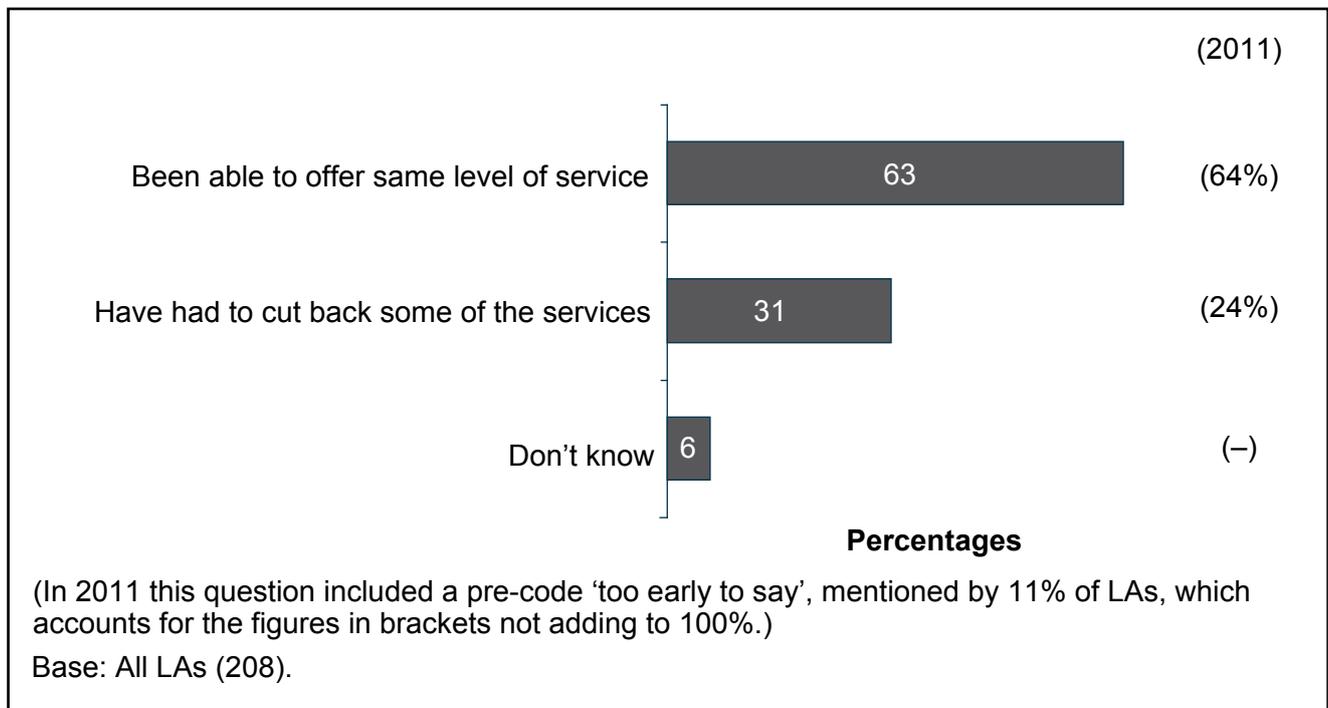
The right-hand side of Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of rent negotiations where the LA was involved that had been successful.¹¹ In the majority of LAs fewer than half were successful, with more than a third saying that fewer than 10 per cent of negotiations were successful. Again half (51 per cent) estimated their answer.

Overall, LAs said that an average of 25 per cent of their rent negotiations had been successful, with some variation by sub-group. Those with a low caseload said that on average 36 per cent of rent negotiations had been successful compared with 19 per cent of high and medium caseload authorities. The overall average for successful negotiations was also higher for LAs without contracted-out administration (27 per cent) compared with 11 per cent for LAs that had contracted-out administration).

¹⁰ Note that this is out of LHA tenants in LAs where the demand to support tenants in rent negotiation had increased and doesn't provide an indication of negotiation without LA support.

¹¹ It does not provide an indication of the success of negotiation without LA support.

Figure 2.4 In general, would you say that, as a result of the regulation changes in April 2011, your LA’s HB Advisers have been able to offer the same level of service (i.e. claim times, processing etc) to tenants or have they had to cut back any of their services?



Finally in this section on HB advice, we asked if LAs had noticed any change in the level of service offered by HB Advisers, for example in terms of claim times and processing.

Nearly two in three LAs (63 per cent) said that they had been able to offer the same level of service, which is virtually the same figure as in 2011. However, 31 per cent said that they have had to cut back some of their services and this is significantly up from 24 per cent in 2011.

Findings were consistent across the different sub-groups of the sample.

3 Impact of the LHA changes on homelessness and the movement of PRS claimants

3.1 Introduction and summary

The changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) announced in the June 2010 Budget and the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 included:

- changing the basis for setting LHA) rates from the median (50th percentile) to the 30th percentile of local market rents;
- capping LHA rates by property size in 2012:
 - £250 per week for one bed;
 - £290 per week for two bed;
 - £340 for three bed;
 - £400 for four bed or more – thereby scrapping the five-bed rate;
- uprating HB rates annually from April 2013 at the 30th percentile of market rents, or, if lower, the September 2012 Consumer Price Index rate;
- capping the annual increases in most working-age benefits at one per cent in cash terms in 2014–15 and 2015–16, in addition to the one per cent cap on increases already confirmed for 2013–14.

These changes applied to new claimants from April 2011, however, existing claimants were given a transition period and would only come under the new regulations between January and December 2012, on the anniversary of their claim.

The Department was interested in finding out if there had been any early indications of the changes in LHA having an impact on homelessness and the movement of private rental sector tenants into, out of, and within the local authority (LA) area.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. When possible, comparisons are made with the findings from the previous wave of the survey which was conducted in the autumn of 2011. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'other' categories, or multiple answers.

It is important to note that LAs were told to answer questions in this section based on their general perception if they did not keep records of the information required. The result of this is that some findings may be based on anecdotal evidence.

Half of LAs said that the April 2011 regulations had caused landlords to leave the Housing Benefit (HB) sub-market in their area, which is significantly higher than last year (27 per cent). When this group of LAs were asked roughly what proportion had withdrawn, they said that on average 20 per cent of landlords had left the HB sub-market.

Three in ten LAs had seen an increase in the number of landlords letting properties as shared housing/houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) that were previously let to families or as self-contained accommodation, which is significantly higher than in 2011 (eight per cent). The group of LAs that had seen an increase were also asked what they believed to have been the effects of these changes in letting patterns and two-thirds commented on the increase in demand on council services; and just under two in five said that they perceived that their area had become more transient or that there had been increased neighbour problems and anti-social behaviour.

More than half of LAs (57 per cent) thought that there had been an increase in homelessness among private rented sector (PRS) tenants since the new regulations, which is significantly higher than in 2011 (42 per cent). It is important to note that although there had been a perceived increase in homelessness since the new regulations this is not necessarily as a result of them. When this group of LAs were asked what they perceived to be the three main reasons for homelessness for PRS claimants three in five LAs mentioned loss of accommodation due to rent arrears and relationship breakdown (both 60 per cent).

A third of LAs (33 per cent) have noticed an increase in the number of claimants moving into their area compared with just 21 per cent that said this last year, which is a significant difference. Over half of LAs that had seen an increase (55 per cent) said the incoming claimants had come from neighbouring LA areas, while around three in ten mentioned Greater London areas or the same region (nearby LA but not neighbouring). The main types of household moving into LAs' areas were once again families with dependent children (27 per cent), although this is significantly down on last year when 44 per cent mentioned this type of household, and in 2012 LAs were almost as likely (i.e. 25 per cent) to have mentioned single people (25 per cent). Overall, LAs said that on average nearly two in five of all of the households that had moved into their area were single people or families with dependent children (both 19 per cent).

Over half of LAs (54 per cent) said that there had been no change in the number of claimants moving out of their area to find cheaper accommodation. However, one in five (20 per cent) had seen an increase which is significantly higher than last year (four per cent).¹² The main types of household moving out of the LA area were families with dependent children (33 per cent), single people aged 25-34 (29 per cent), single people and people under 25 (both 26 per cent). Overall LAs said that on average one in four of all of the households that had moved out of their area were families with dependent children, and one in five were single people aged 25-34.

Almost half of LAs (47 per cent) noted an increase in the proportion of claimants moving within the LA area to find cheaper accommodation which is a significant increase on last year (25 per cent in 2011).¹³ In terms of the types of households moving within the LA area there has been a significant change in the findings compared with last year, with nearly half of LAs saying that single people aged 25-34 (49 per cent) had moved within their LA area to

¹² It should be pointed out that the words 'in order to find cheaper accommodation' were added at 2012.

¹³ *ibid.*

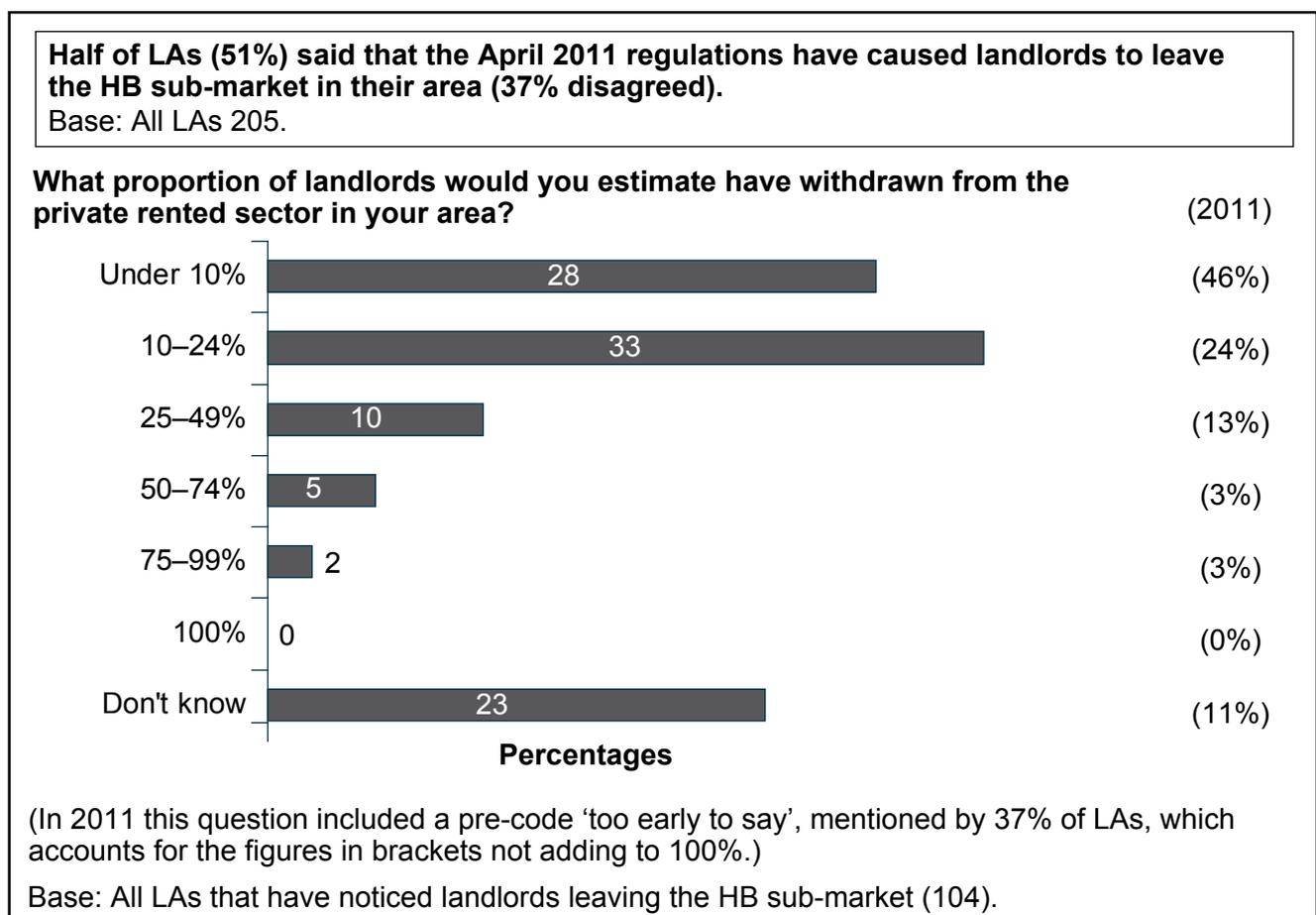
find cheaper accommodation. Two in five (41 per cent) also mentioned families with children and three in ten single people (31 per cent) and lone parents (29 per cent). Overall LAs said that on average three in ten households (31 per cent) that had moved within their area were single people aged 25-34 and 18 per cent were families with dependent children.

All LAs were asked whether, in their opinion, the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing had increased, decreased or stayed the same since the new regulations in April 2011. Nearly two in five LAs (39 per cent) said that there had been no change, however, more than one in three (35 per cent) said that there had been an increase, which represents a significant change on last year when 15 per cent of LAs noted an increase.

3.2 Main findings

This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 3.1 Have the April 2011 regulations caused landlords to leave the HB sub-market in your area, i.e. have any stopped renting to HB claimants, or not, compared with 18 months ago?



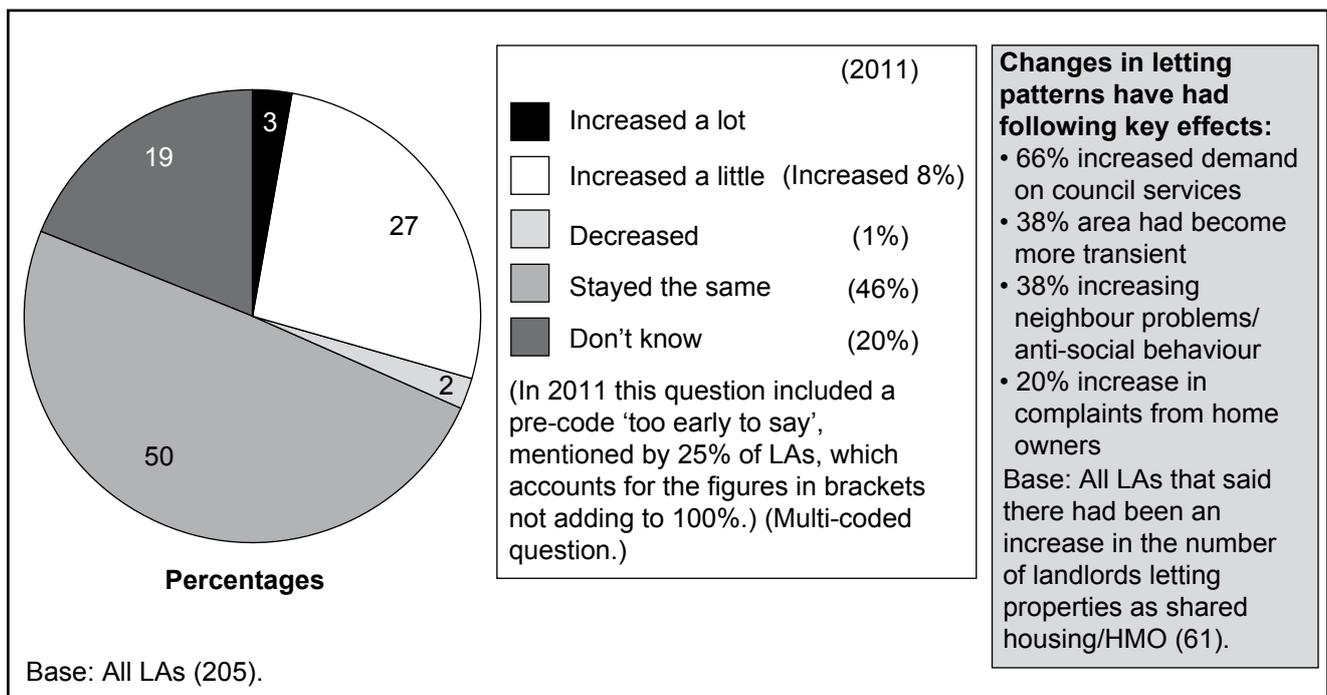
Half of LAs (51 per cent) said that the April 2011 regulations had caused landlords to leave the HB sub-market in their area. This compares to just 27 per cent at the last wave which is a significant increase. The proportion disagreeing has also gone up from 26 per cent at the last wave to 37 per cent in 2012.

The percentage of London Boroughs and English Districts saying that the April 2011 regulations have caused landlords to leave the HB sub-market in their area was particularly high (71 per cent and 60 per cent respectively) and has increased since 2011, particularly in English Districts (63 per cent and 27 per cent respectively). It would seem to be LAs in the South East and East of England where this is occurring the most (72 per cent and 69 per cent respectively).

The 104 LAs that said the regulations had caused landlords to leave the HB sub-market were asked roughly what proportion had withdrawn. Although 23 per cent did not know and more than half (52 per cent) gave an estimate, 28 per cent of LAs said that under 10 per cent of landlords had left; a third said between 10 and 24 per cent; 10 per cent said between 25 and 49 per cent and seven per cent thought more than 50 per cent had withdrawn for this reason. Overall, LAs said that on average 20 per cent of landlords had left the HB sub-market which is the same as in 2011.

London Boroughs said that overall on average 34 per cent of landlords had left the HB sub-market which is significantly higher than English Unitary authorities and English Districts (13 per cent and 18 per cent respectively). LAs with high caseloads recorded a higher average (26 per cent) of landlords that they estimate have withdrawn from the PRS in comparison to the equivalent measure recorded among LAs with low caseloads (18 per cent).

Figure 3.2 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of landlords in your area who are letting properties as shared housing/HMO that were previously let to families or as self-contained accommodation has increased, decreased (a lot or a little) or stayed the same?



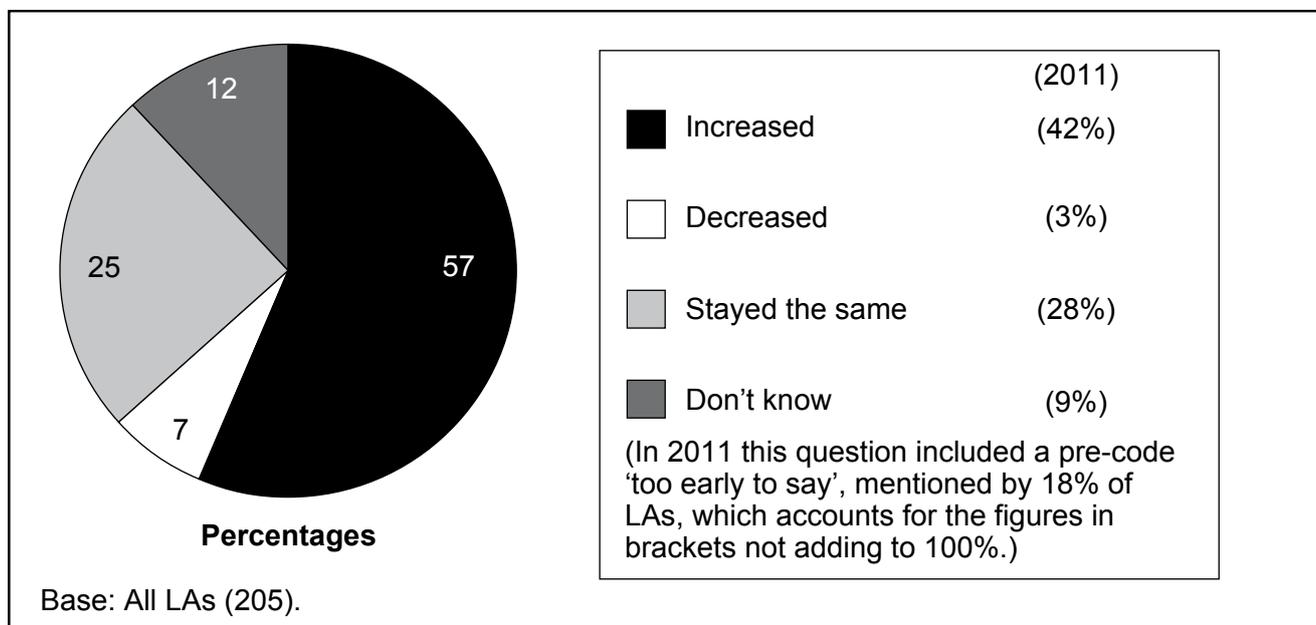
Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Local authorities were also asked whether or not there has been a change in the number of landlords letting properties as shared housing/HMOs that were previously let to families or as self-contained accommodation. Three in ten LAs (30 per cent) had seen an increase which is significantly higher than in 2011 (eight per cent). Twenty-seven per cent described it as a little increase and three per cent as a big increase. Respondents were not given any guidance on what constituted 'a lot' and 'a little' and therefore used their own judgement. Half said there has been no change, and 19 per cent of LAs did not know.

London Boroughs and English Metropolitan Districts were most likely to have seen an increase (48 per cent and 52 per cent respectively). In addition, LAs with a high or medium caseload were also significantly more likely than those with a low caseload to have noted an increase (41 per cent, 35 per cent and 19 per cent respectively).

The group of LAs that had seen an increase were also asked about the effects of these changes in letting patterns. Two-thirds (66 per cent) commented on the increase in demand on council services and 38 per cent said that their area had become more transient and there had been increased neighbour problems and anti-social behaviour. One in five (20 per cent) mentioned an increase in complaints from home owners. All of these show an increase on last year but as the base in 2011 was very small (18 LAs) these differences should be treated with caution.

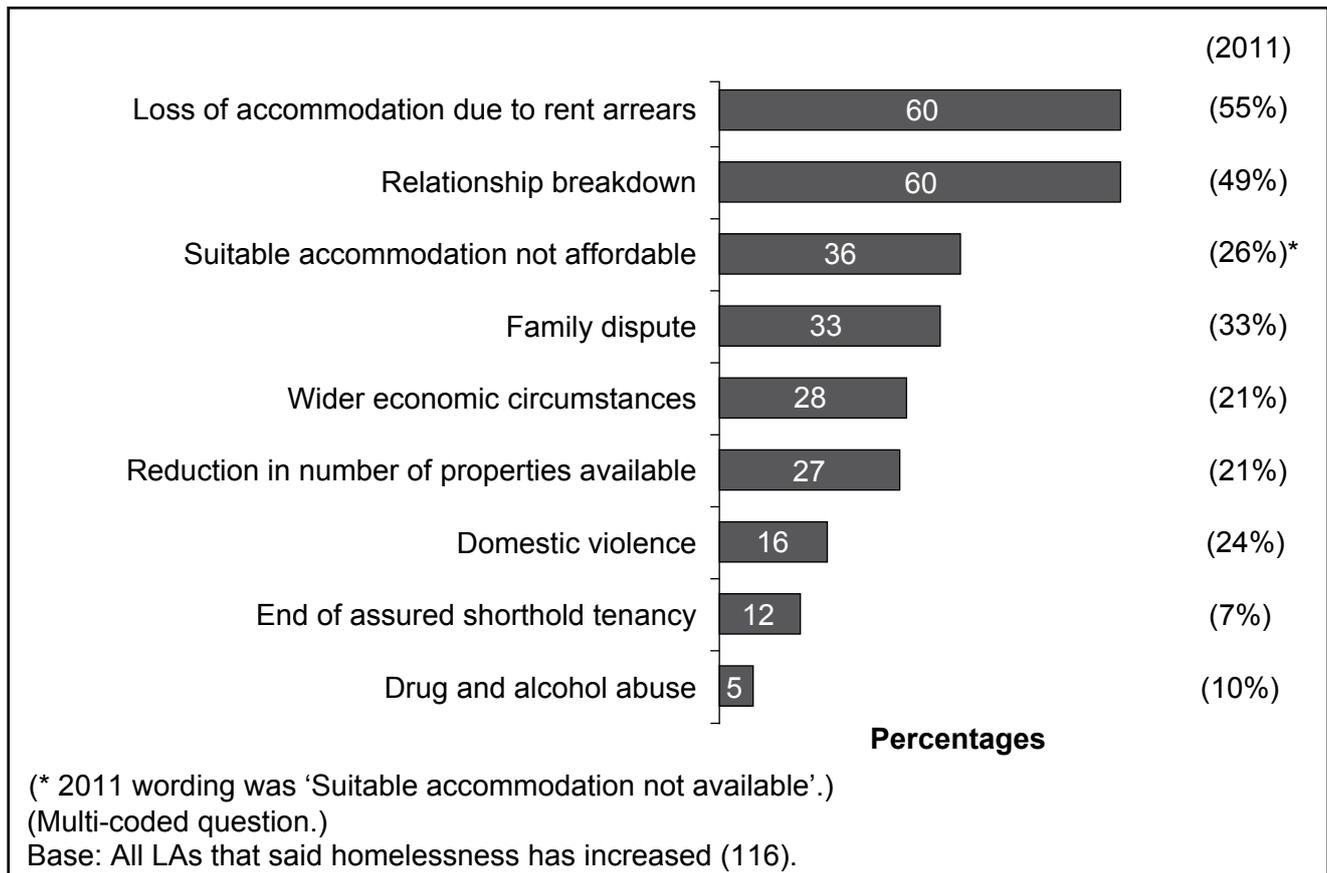
Figure 3.3 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of people who would normally be housed in the Private Rented Sector presenting to your LA as homeless has increased, decreased or stayed the same?



With regard to homelessness among PRS tenants and whether there has been a change since the new regulations, more than half (57 per cent) thought that there had been an increase which is significantly higher than in 2011 (42 per cent). A quarter (25 per cent) said it had stayed the same and 12 per cent did not know.

London Boroughs, English Districts and English Metropolitan Districts were most likely to have noticed an increase in homelessness in their area (67 per cent, 64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively).

Figure 3.4 What are the three main reasons for homelessness in your LA amongst those who would normally be housed in the Private Rented Sector?

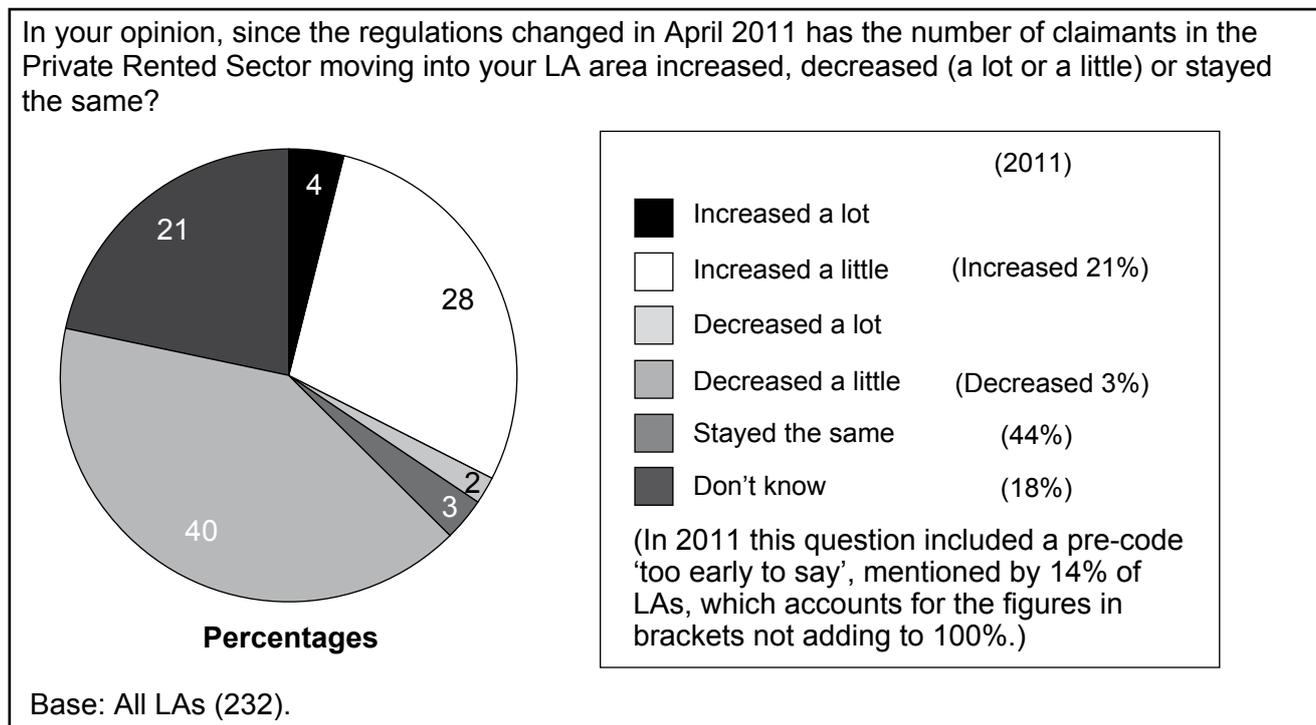


LAs that had said that homelessness had increased since the new regulations were asked to name the three main reasons for homelessness for PRS claimants. Three in five LAs cited loss of accommodation due to rent arrears and relationship breakdown (both 60 per cent). Authorities were more likely to have mentioned both of these than in 2011, although the differences are not significant.

Around a third also mentioned accommodation not being affordable and family dispute (36 per cent and 33 per cent respectively) and more than a quarter cited wider economic circumstances (28 per cent) and a reduction in the number of properties available in the PRS (27 per cent respectively, increasing to 50 per cent in London Boroughs).

Other than the reasons shown in Figure 3.4, two per cent of LAs mentioned the end of support for mortgage interest and one per cent attributed this to the landlord requiring possession of property.

Figure 3.5 Numbers of claimants moving into the area



A third of LAs (33 per cent) had noticed an increase in the number of claimants moving into their area since April 2011 compared with just 21 per cent that said this last year. This represents a significant increase. Most of the third of LAs that had seen an increase said that it had been a small (28 per cent) rather than a large (four per cent) increase¹⁴.

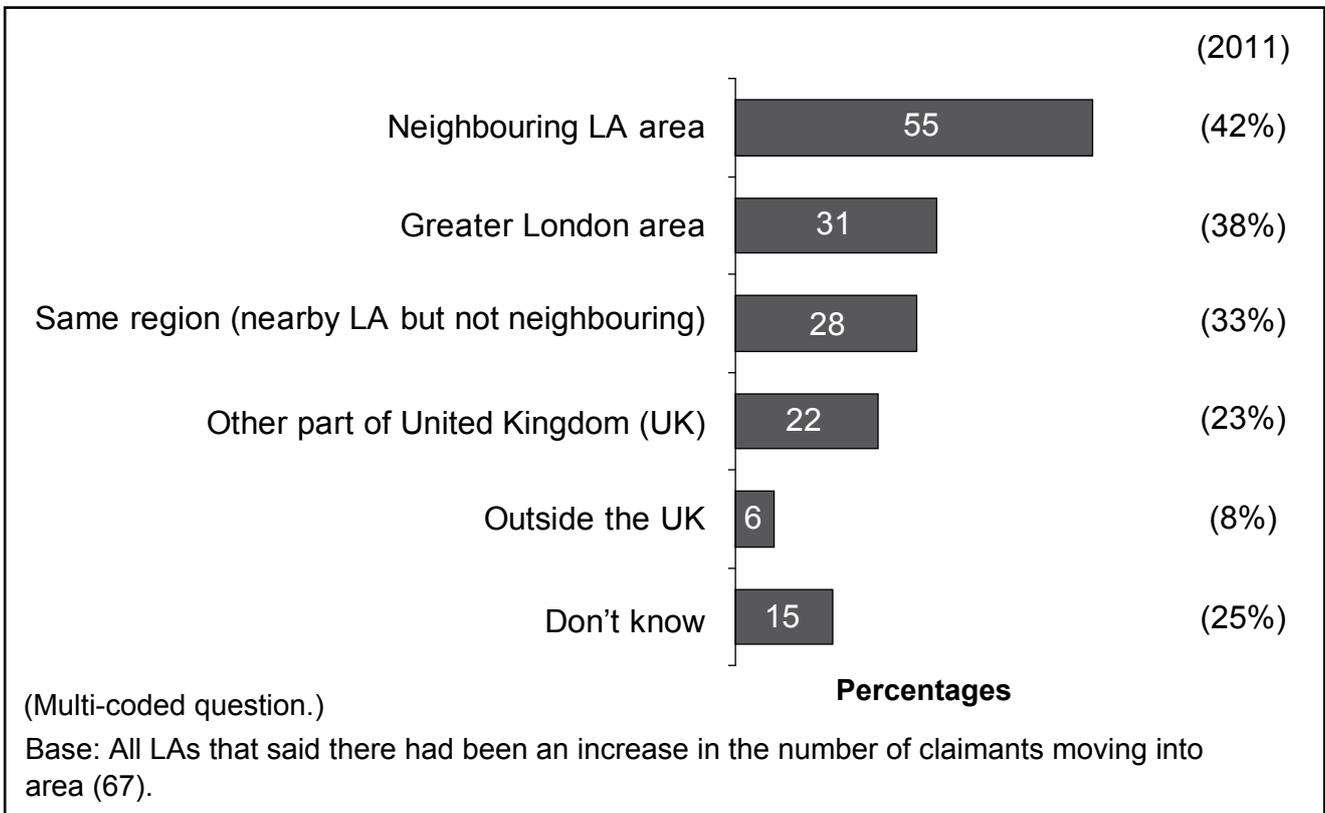
Just six per cent said that there had been a decrease¹⁵, while 21 per cent did not know.

Findings are fairly consistent across sub-groups, although London Boroughs were significantly more likely than English Unitary authorities and English Districts to have seen a decrease in the number of claimants moving into their area (19 per cent, zero and five per cent respectively).

¹⁴ The combined figure for 'small' plus 'large' increase is 33 per cent because it is calculated on the raw data rather than percentages.

¹⁵ The combined figure for 'small' plus 'large' decrease is six per cent because it is calculated on the raw data rather than percentages.

Figure 3.6 Thinking about the claimants that have moved into your LA area since the regulations changed in April 2011, from where have these claimants moved?

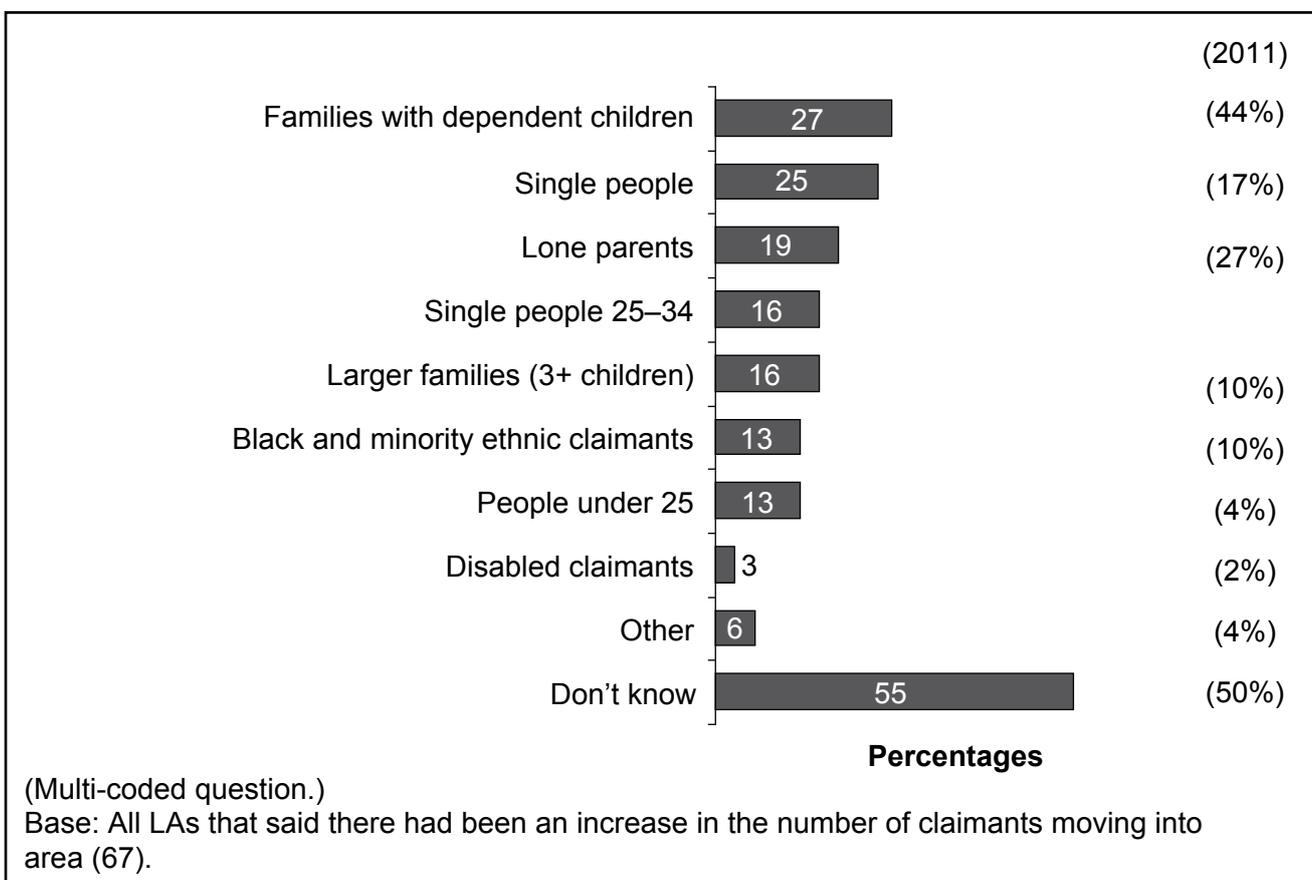


Looking now at where these incoming claimants have moved from, over half of the LAs that had seen an increase (55 per cent) said that they had come from neighbouring LA areas which is a slight, but not significant, increase on 2011 when 42 per cent selected neighbouring areas. Around three in ten mentioned Greater London areas or the same region (nearby LA but not neighbouring) which represents a slight, but again not significant, decrease on last year.

Other findings have remained the same, with a fifth (22 per cent) saying that incoming claimants have come from other parts of the UK and six per cent saying that they have come from abroad.

Although the findings for this question are based on just 67 LAs, it is worth noting that a significantly higher proportion of LAs in the South East said that claimants moving into their area were coming from Greater London (nine out of 13, or 69 per cent).

Figure 3.7 How would you describe the types of households that have moved into your LA area since the new regulations in April 2011?



The main types of household moving into LAs’ areas were once again families with dependent children (27 per cent). However, this is significantly down on last year when 44 per cent cited this type of household. In 2012, LAs were almost as likely to have mentioned single people (25 per cent) as families with dependent children, although the increase in the proportion of LAs mentioning single people is not significant when compared with last year’s findings (17 per cent).

One in five (19 per cent) said that lone parents were moving into their LA area; however, the biggest change in the findings is that one in six LAs that had seen an increase in the number of claimants moving into their area said that the increase had come from single people aged 25-34 (16 per cent). There have also been slight (but not significant) increases in the percentage of LAs mentioning larger families (16 per cent), black and minority ethnic claimants (13 per cent) and people under 25 (13 per cent).

It is important to note when interpreting the findings of this question that more than half of LAs (55 per cent) did not know what type of households had accounted for the increase in claimants moving into the area.

Given the small base sizes there were no significant differences between any of the sub-groups.

Table 3.1 Please indicate the approximate percentage that each type of household makes up of all those that have moved into your LA

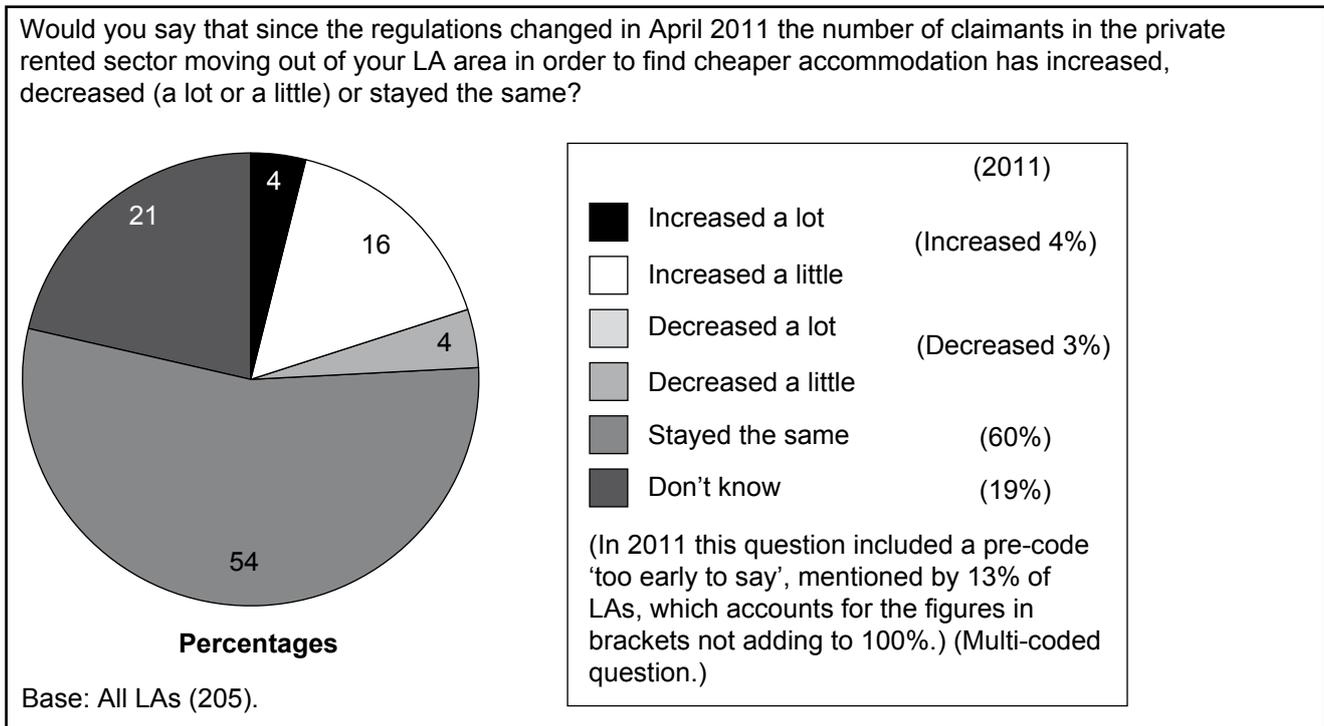
| | Mean (percentages) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Single people | 19 |
| Families with dependent children | 19 |
| Lone parents | 14 |
| Black and minority ethnic claimants | 12 |
| People under 25 | 9 |
| Single people aged 25–34 | 9 |
| Larger families | 9 |
| Disabled claimants | 0.5 |
| Other | 8 |

Base: All LAs except 'don't know' or 'no answer' at C7 ('How would you describe the types of households that have moved into your LA area since the regulations changed in April 2011?') (29)

For each of the types of households that LAs said had moved into their LA area they were asked to indicate what approximate percentage each one made up of the total (i.e. all households that had moved into the area). LAs were told that their answer could be based on their general perception if they had not kept a record and 80 per cent said that they had given an estimate.

The percentage that each LA gave for each type of household was then averaged out across all authorities and is presented in Table 3.1. Overall LAs said that on average nearly two in five of all of the households that had moved into their area were single people or families with dependent children (both 19 per cent). However, they also said that on average 14 per cent were lone parents and 12 per cent black and minority ethnic claimants. The other household types each made up less than 10 per cent of all of the incoming households.

Figure 3.8 Number of claimants moving out of the area

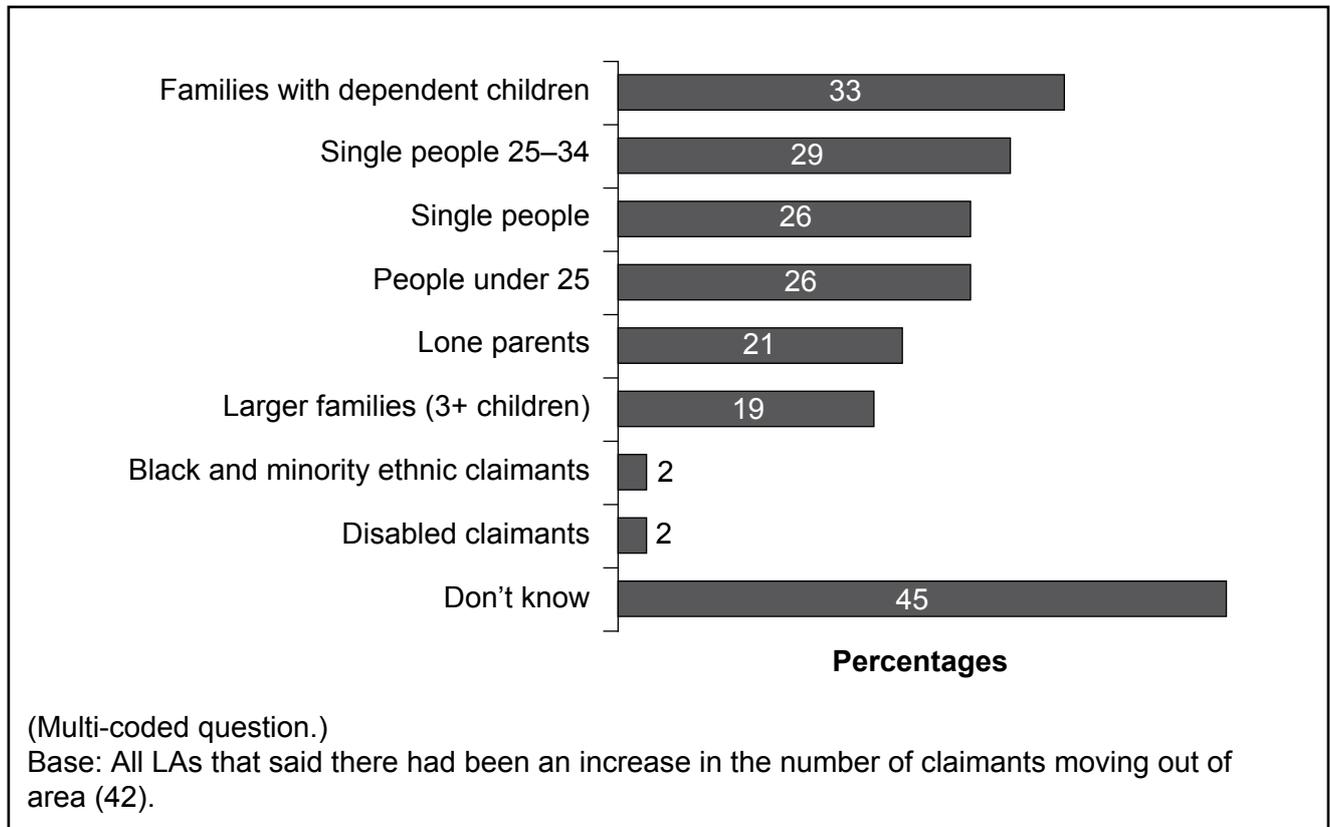


Over half of LAs (54 per cent) said that there had been no change in the number of claimants moving out of their area. However, one in five (20 per cent) had seen an increase (rising to 38 per cent among London Boroughs) which is significantly higher than last year (four per cent), although it should be pointed out that the words 'in order to find cheaper accommodation' were added at 2012.

Most of those LAs that had seen an increase said that it had been a little (16 per cent) rather than a large (four per cent) increase.

It should also be noted that nearly one in five LAs (21 per cent) were unable to answer the question.

Figure 3.9 How would you describe the types of households that have moved out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation since the regulations changed in April 2011?



The main types of household moving out of the LA area were families with dependent children (33 per cent) and single people aged 25-34 (29 per cent). A further one in four mentioned single people and people under 25 (both 26 per cent) and one in five said that lone parents and larger families with three or more children had moved out of their area (21 per cent and 19 per cent respectively).

We have not made comparisons with the previous wave of the survey as the base was so small 2011 (just ten LAs).

Table 3.2 Please indicate the approximate percentage that each type of household makes up of all those that have moved out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation

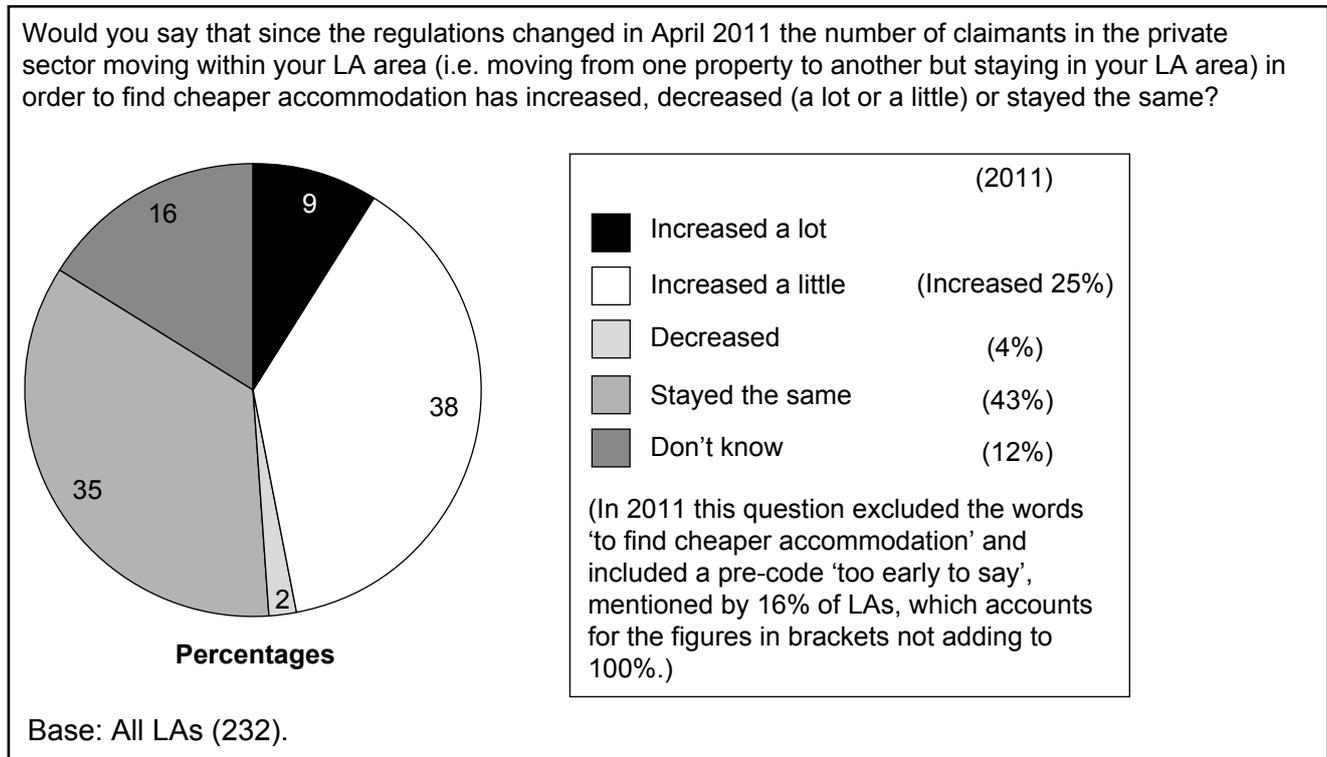
| | Mean (percentages) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Families with dependent children | 25 |
| Single people aged 25–34 | 19 |
| Single people | 16 |
| Larger families | 15 |
| People under 25 | 14 |
| Lone parents | 9 |
| Black and minority ethnic claimants | 1 |
| Disabled claimants | 0.5 |

Base: All LAs except ‘don’t know’ or ‘no answer’ at C9 (‘How would you describe the types of households that have moved out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation since the regulations changed in April 2011?’) (23).

LAs were asked to indicate for each of the household types that had moved into their area what approximate percentage they made up of the total (i.e. all households that had moved out of the area). LAs were told that their answer could be based on their general perception if they had not kept a record and 78 per cent said that they had given an estimate.

The percentage that each LA gave for each type of household was then averaged out across all authorities and is presented in Table 3.2. Overall LAs said that on average one in four of all of the households that had moved out of their area were families with dependent children and one in five (19 per cent) were single people aged 25-34. However, they also said that 16 per cent were single people, 15 per cent were larger families with three or more children and 14 per cent were people under 25. The other household types each made up less than 10 per cent of all of the incoming households.

Figure 3.10 Numbers of claimants moving within the area

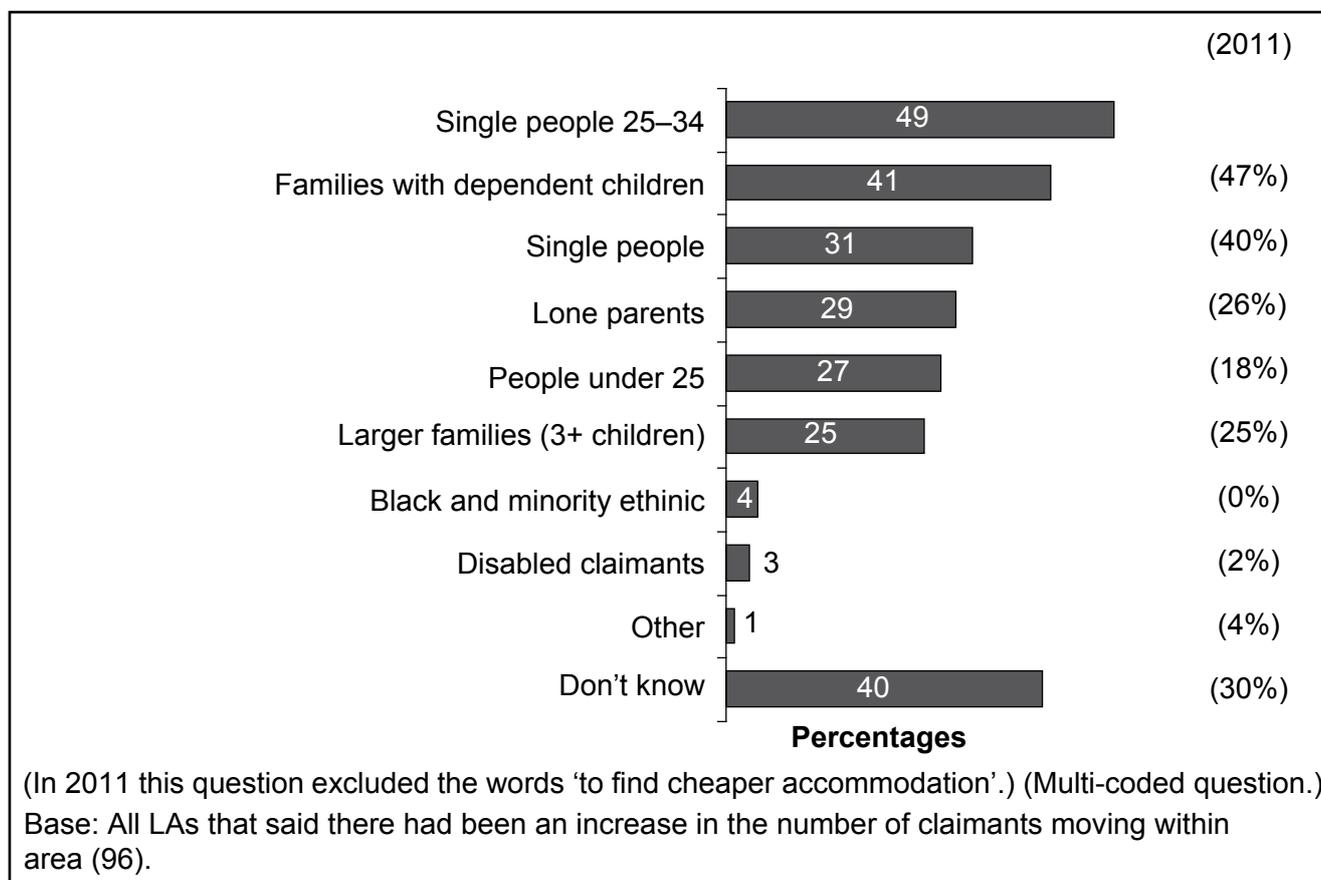


Almost half of LAs (47 per cent) noted an increase in the proportion of households moving within the LA area to find cheaper accommodation – nine per cent said a lot and 38 per cent a little. This compares to 25 per cent of LAs at the previous wave of the survey that said the number of households moving within their area had increased. This is a significant increase on last year, although it should be pointed out that the words 'in order to find cheaper accommodation' were added at 2012.

More than a third (35 per cent) said that there had been no change in the number of claimants moving within their area to find cheaper accommodation. One in six (16 per cent) was unable to give an answer.

There were no significant differences by any sub-groups.

Figure 3.11 How would you describe the types of households that have moved within your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation?



There has been a significant change in the findings compared with last year with nearly half of LAs saying that single people aged 25-34 (49 per cent) had moved within their LA area to find cheaper accommodation (no LAs mentioned this group of people in 2011). Within the context of this and the other findings discussed below, however, it should be borne in mind that in 2012 the words 'in order to find cheaper accommodation' were added to the question.

Two in five (41 per cent) mentioned families with children and three in ten single people and lone parents (31 per cent and 29 per cent respectively). Around one in four said that people under 25 and larger families with three or more children (27 per cent and 25 per cent respectively) had moved within the area to find cheaper accommodation. Although these findings differ to last year, none of the differences are significant.

There were some significant differences between regions. LAs in Yorkshire and Humberside (67 per cent) and the South West (55 per cent) were more likely to have said that lone parents were the kinds of households that have moved within their LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation than were LAs in Scotland (none of the LAs there mentioned lone parents), LAs in the East Midlands (13 per cent) and LAs in the West Midlands (11 per cent).

LAs in the following regions were more likely to report families with dependent children being affected: the South East (71 per cent), the North East (67 per cent), Yorkshire and Humberside (67 per cent) and the South West (64 per cent) in comparison to none of the LAs in Scotland or the East Midlands reporting these types of households as needing to move to find cheaper accommodation.

LAs in the South West were more likely to say that single people had moved within their LA area to find cheaper accommodation (64 per cent) in comparison to lower numbers of LAs stating that single people had moved in the following regions: East Midlands (13 per cent), West Midlands (22 per cent), London (ten per cent) and the East of England (21 per cent).

Single people under 25 were mentioned with more frequency on this measure by LAs in the North West (54 per cent) in comparison to LAs in the East Midlands (13 per cent), the South East (14 per cent), London (ten per cent) and the East of England (21 per cent).

Single people aged 25-34 were mentioned with more frequency on this measure by LAs in the North East (100 per cent), the North West (69 per cent) and the South West (64 per cent) than was the case for LAs in the following regions: East Midlands (25 per cent), London (30 per cent) and East of England (29 per cent).

It is important to note that 40 per cent did not know what type of households had accounted for the increase in claimants moving within the area. The levels of LAs that said that they don't know what type of households had accounted for the increase was significantly higher within the East Midlands region (75 per cent) and also in the East of England (57 per cent) in comparison to lower levels of 'don't knows' in the North West (23 per cent) and South East (21 per cent).

Table 3.3 Indicate the approximate percentage each type of household makes up of all those that have moved within your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation

| | Mean (percentages) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Single people aged 25–34 | 31 |
| Families with dependent children | 18 |
| Lone parents | 14 |
| People under 25 | 12 |
| Single people | 12 |
| Larger families | 10 |
| Black and minority ethnic claimants | 1 |
| Disabled claimants | 0.5 |

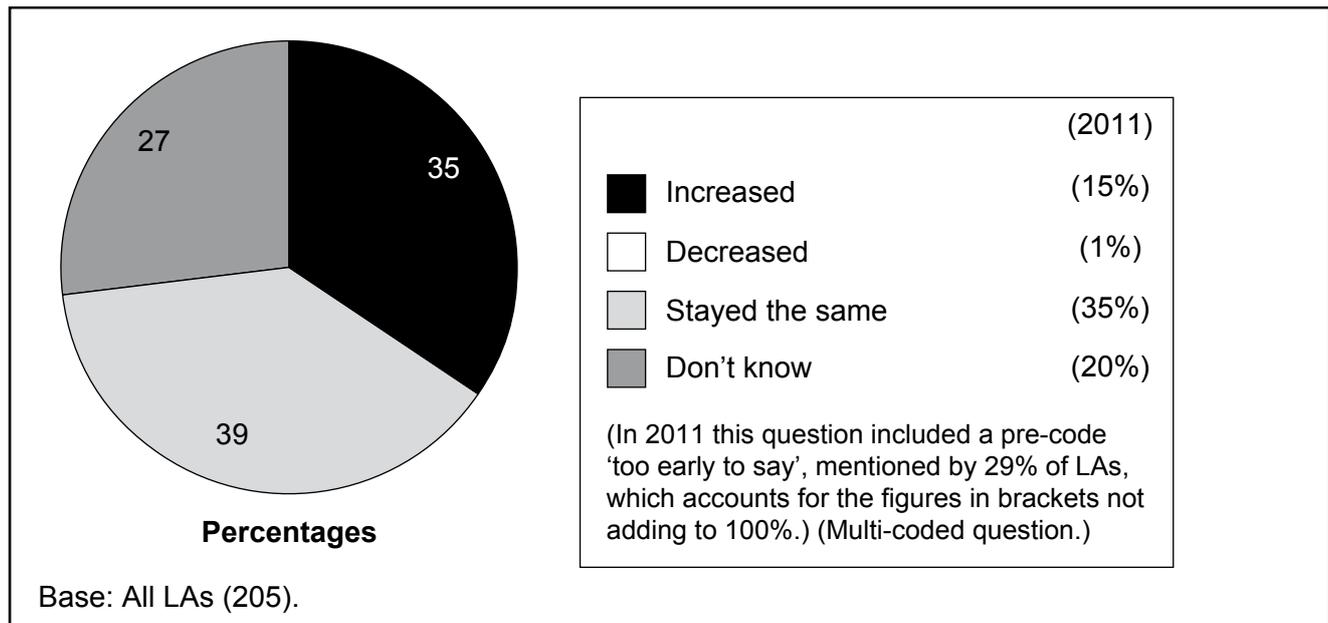
Base: All LAs except 'don't know' or 'no answer' at C11 ('How would you describe the types of households that have moved within your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation?') (58)

For each of the types of households that LAs said had moved within their LA area they were asked to indicate what approximate percentage each one made up of the total (i.e. all households that had moved within the area to find cheaper accommodation). LAs were told that their answer could be based on their general perception if they had not kept a record and 83 per cent said that they had given an estimate.

The percentage that each LA gave for each type of household was then averaged out across all authorities and is presented in Table 3.3. Overall LAs said that on average three in ten households that had moved within their area were single people aged 25-34 (31 per cent).

However, they also said that 18 per cent were families with dependent children, 14 per cent were lone parents and one in eight said they were either people under 25 or single people (both 12 per cent). Authorities said that a further one in ten were larger families with three or more children.

Figure 3.12 Would you say that since the new regulations in April 2011 the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing has increased, decreased or stayed the same?



All LAs were asked whether, in their opinion, the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing had increased, decreased or stayed the same since the new regulations in April 2011.

Nearly two in five LAs (39 per cent) said that there had been no change in the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing since April 2011, which is similar to last year's finding. More than one in three (35 per cent) said that there had been an increase, compared to 15 per cent at the last wave, which represents a significant change.

It is important to note that more than a quarter of LAs (27 per cent) were unable to answer the question.

LAs in Wales and the East of England were particularly likely to say that the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing had stayed the same (67 per cent and 65 per cent respectively), while those in the South West were most likely to say that the number had increased (57 per cent).

4 Arrears and safeguards

4.1 Introduction and summary

In April 2011 the Department for Work and Pensions introduced a new temporary safeguard provision which was included in the Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulations 2010. Subsequent to these changes, local authorities (LAs) have been able to make payments direct to the landlord where they have considered that it would assist the claimant in securing or retaining a tenancy. This section reports on the findings of LAs' experience of arrears and safeguards since the introduction of this provision.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. When possible, comparisons are made with the findings from the previous wave of the survey which was conducted in the autumn of 2011. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'other' categories, or multiple answers.

There has been a significant rise between autumn 2011 (60 per cent) and autumn 2012 (67 per cent) in the percentage of LAs that have seen an increase in the number of requests for direct payments by landlords on the grounds of arrears. Among the 140 LAs that had seen an increase in such requests, four in five (80 per cent) said they were more likely to approve these requests following the change to regulations in April 2011.

There has also been an increase in the number of LAs that have observed an increase in requests for direct payment on grounds of claimants being unlikely to pay (47 per cent in autumn 2011 and 52 per cent in autumn 2012). Among the 109 LAs that said they had observed an increase in requests of this nature, approximately four in five (79 per cent) said that they were more likely to approve these requests subsequent to the changes to regulations in April 2011.

The majority (87 per cent) of LAs have made use of the safeguard that allows LHA to be paid direct to the landlord in order to help claimants secure or maintain a tenancy provided the landlord reduces the rent, representing a rise of 11 per cent on the previous year's findings.

4.2 Main findings

This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 4.1 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 requests for direct payments by landlords on grounds of arrears has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

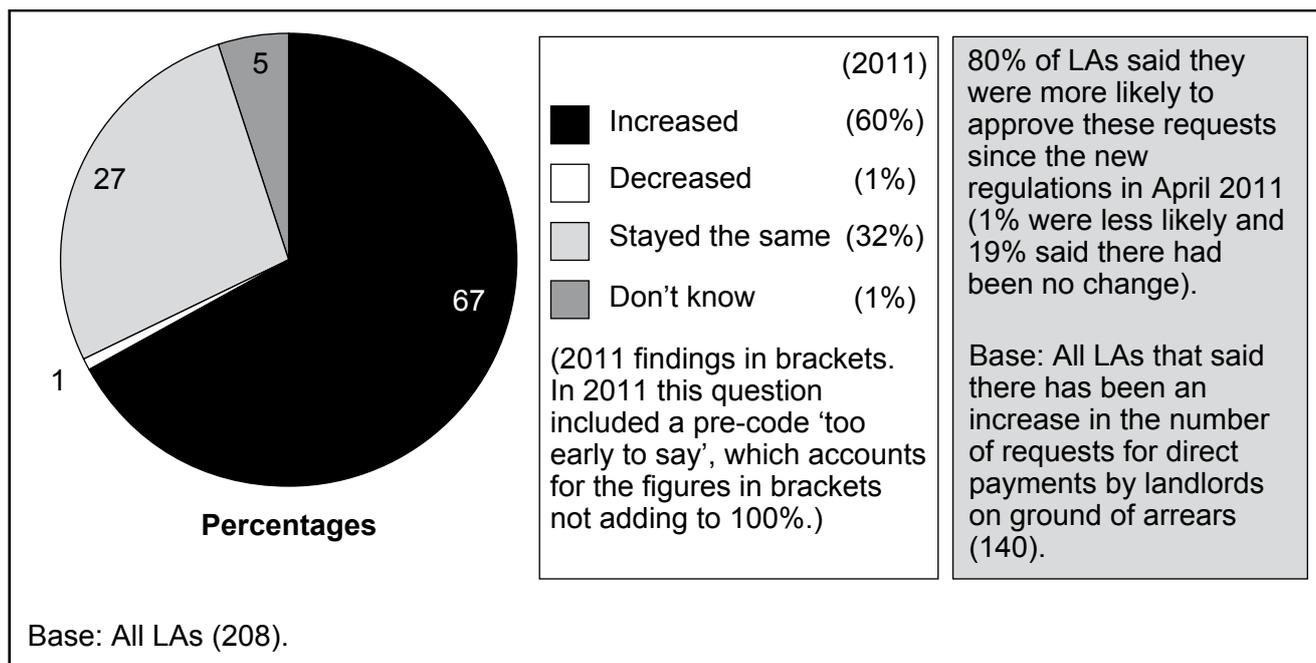


Figure 4.1 illustrates the main answers to these questions. There has been a significant rise between autumn 2011 (60 per cent) and autumn 2012 (67 per cent) in the percentage of LAs that have seen an increase in the number of requests for direct payments by landlords on the grounds of arrears. The autumn 2012 data shows that the amount of requests of this nature was significantly higher within the English Metropolitan Districts (81 per cent) compared to Scottish local authorities (53 per cent).

Among the 140 LAs that had seen an increase in such requests, four in five (80 per cent) said they were more likely to approve these requests following the change to regulations in April 2011. The survey findings for this measure have not shown significant change between the levels recorded in autumn 2011 and autumn 2012.

Looking solely at the findings for autumn 2012, the English Metropolitan Districts were significantly more likely to have said they were more likely to approve such requests (100 per cent) compared to all other LA types (e.g. just 67 per cent of Welsh LAs said they were more likely to approve requests of this kind).

Figure 4.2 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 requests by landlords for direct payments on grounds of claimants being unlikely to pay has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

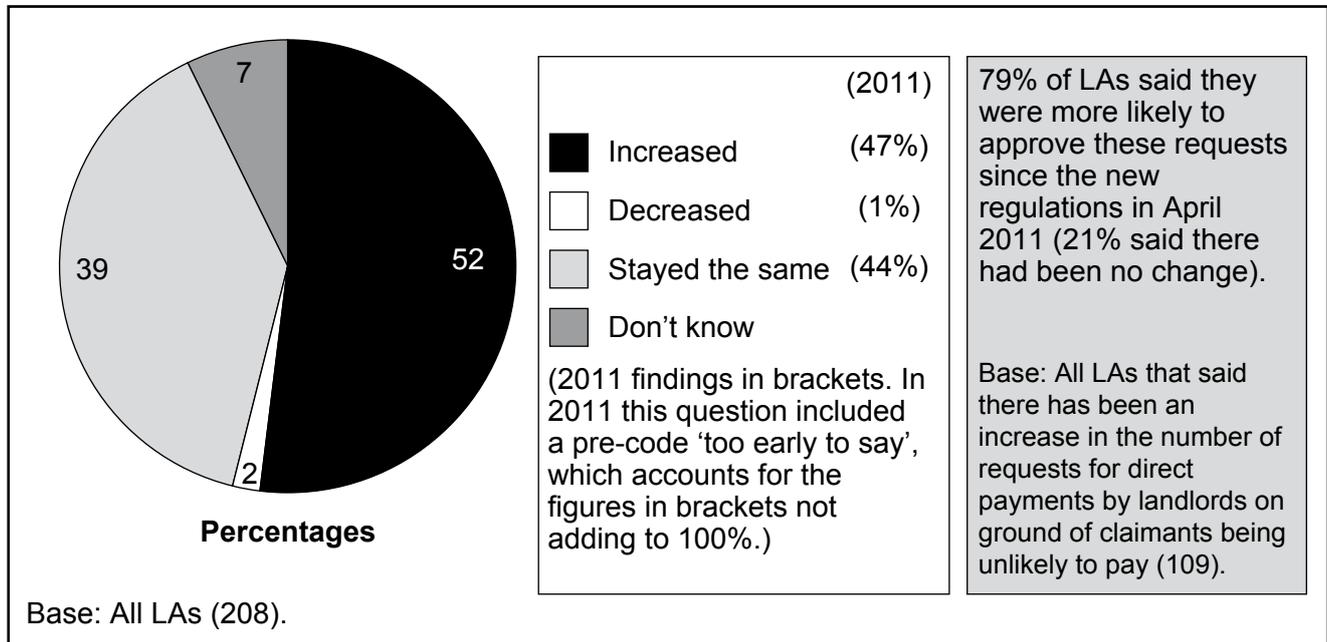


Figure 4.2 shows responses to these questions concerning the change in the number of requests for direct payments by landlords on the grounds of claimants being unlikely to pay. There has been a significant rise in the number of LAs that have observed an increase in such requests between autumn 2011 (47 per cent) and autumn 2012 (52 per cent). Looking at the 2012 responses in more detail, the English Metropolitan Districts had significantly higher numbers experiencing an increase in these kinds of requests when compared with English Districts (71 per cent versus 51 per cent respectively).

Among the 109 LAs that said they had observed an increase in requests of this nature, approximately four in five (79 per cent) said that they were more likely to approve these requests subsequent to the changes to regulations in April 2011. This represents a significant decrease from the equivalent finding for this measure from the autumn 2011 data when 85 per cent said they were more likely to approve requests for direct payments by landlords on the grounds of claimants being unlikely to pay.

In 2012 the following regions had significantly higher proportions of LAs that said they were more likely to approve these requests: North West (100 per cent); London (91 per cent); South West (90 per cent); South East (89 per cent) in comparison to 50 per cent of LAs in the North East and 56 per cent in the East of England.

Figure 4.3 Since the regulations changed in April 2011 has your LA made use of the new safeguard that allows LHA to be paid direct to the landlord in order to help claimants secure or maintain a tenancy provided the landlord reduces the rent?

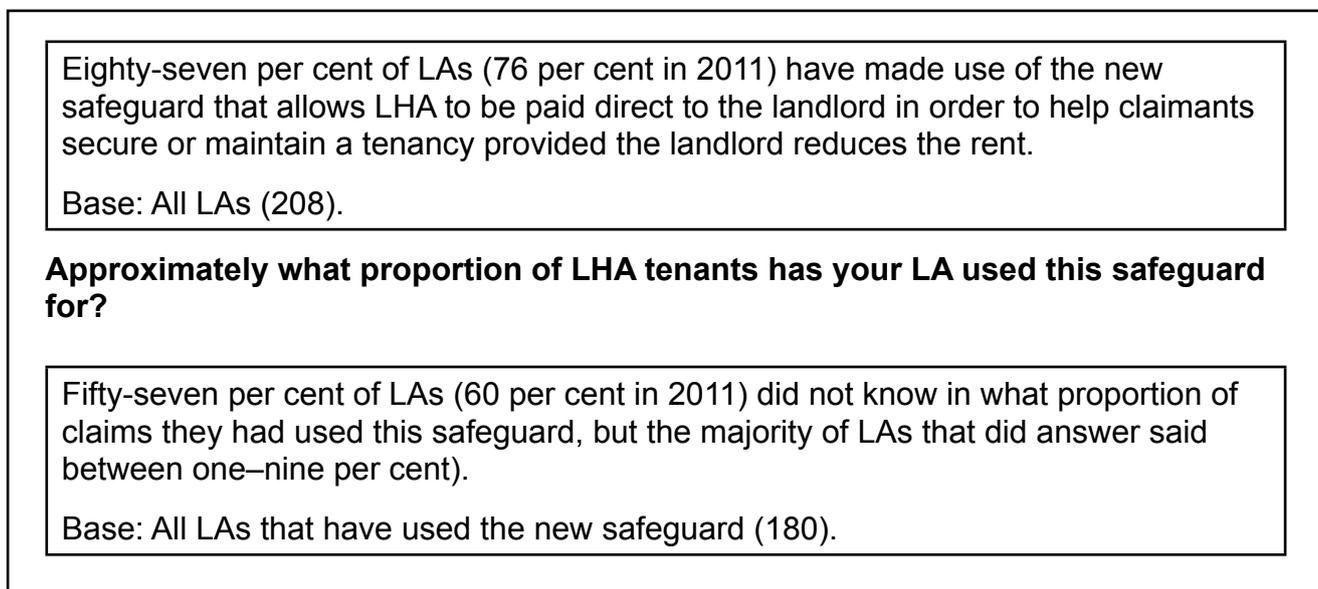


Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of LAs have made use of the safeguard that allows LHA to be paid direct to the landlord in order to help claimants secure or maintain a tenancy provided the landlord reduces the rent. The proportion recorded for autumn 2012 (87 per cent) represents a significant increase to the equivalent finding for autumn 2011 (76 per cent). In 2012 the use of this safeguard was significantly higher among English Metropolitan Districts (100 per cent using it). It was also higher among LAs with medium (90 per cent) or high (97 per cent) caseloads, compared to LAs with low caseloads (77 per cent using). London Boroughs were more likely to answer ‘don’t know’ to this question (14 per cent of London Boroughs) compared to none of the English Metropolitan Districts and just three per cent of English Districts that said ‘don’t know’ at this question.

In terms of the proportion of claims where LAs had used this safeguard, among the LAs that answered with a figure, the trend is for increased proportions from those recorded in 2011 to those recorded in 2012 as Table 4.1 illustrates.

Table 4.1 Comparative proportions of claims using safeguards

| Proportion of claims using safeguard | 2012 (%) | 2011 (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| 1–9% | 23 | 28 |
| 19–19% | 9 | 3 |
| 20–29% | 6 | 3 |
| 30–39% | 2 | 1 |
| 40–49% | - | - |
| 50–69% | 3 | 2 |
| Don’t know | 57 | 60 |

5 Risk-based verification

5.1 Introduction and summary

Risk Based Verification (RBV) assigns a risk rating to each Housing Benefit (HB)/Council Tax Benefit (CTB) claim which determines the level of verification required. It allows more intense verification activity to be targeted at those claims which are deemed to be at highest risk of involving fraud and/or error.

It is practiced on aspects of claims in Jobcentre Plus and The Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS). In April 2012 DWP extended RBV on a voluntary basis to all local authorities (LAs). The following section describes LAs' experiences about the take-up of the scheme and their views on its effectiveness and efficiency. This section reports on LAs use of RBV, satisfaction with RBV among those LAs applying it, and tools used to apply it.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'other' categories, or multiple answers.

Four in five (81 per cent) of LAs were not currently¹⁶ applying RBV at the time of the survey. Of the group of 30 LAs that were applying RBV, slightly higher than four in five (83 per cent) said that they were using IT tools to risk profile their HB/CTB claimants and 80 per cent were using tools supplied by external suppliers; the remaining three per cent (one LA) reported using IT tools they had set up internally.

LAs' satisfaction with their current approach to applying RBV among the LAs that were applying it was high with 83 per cent of this group recorded as stating they were satisfied on this measure. Slightly greater than half (53 per cent) said that they thought RBV had been effective in reducing fraud and error and the same proportion (53 per cent) said RBV had been effective in improving processing times.

According to the group of 30 LAs that were applying RBV on HB/CTB claims, the kinds of checks that appear to be more likely to happen once an LA had identified a high risk claim were visits to the claimants home and increased documents checks (both mentioned by 70 per cent).

¹⁶ 'Currently' used in the question wording refers to the interviewing period of 22 October – 14 December 2012.

5.2 Main findings

This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 5.1 Is your LA currently applying RBV on HB/CTB claims?

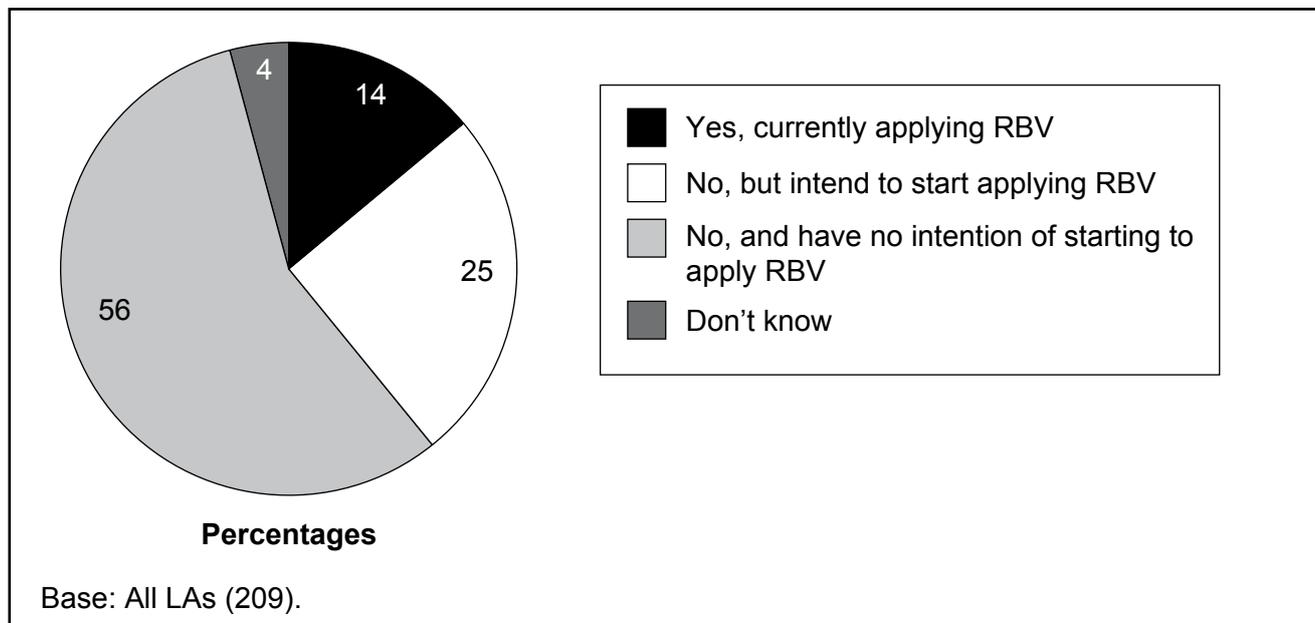


Figure 5.1 shows that at the time of the 2012 survey, four in five (81 per cent) of LAs were not currently¹⁷ applying RBV; more than half (56 per cent) indicated that they had no intention of starting to apply RBV. English Metropolitan Districts were significantly more likely to have said that they had no intention of starting to apply RBV (81 per cent said this compared to 56 per cent of Unitary authorities, 54 per cent of English Districts, 43 per cent of London Boroughs and 33 per cent of Welsh LAs).

LAs that said they were currently applying RBV were in significantly greater concentrations within the following regions: East of England (33 per cent); Wales (33 per cent); West Midlands (22 per cent) and London (19 per cent) compared to Scotland and the South West where none of the LAs said they were applying RBV at the time of interview for this survey.

¹⁷ 'Currently' used in the question wording refers to the interviewing period of 22 October – 14 December 2012.

Figure 5.2 Which of the following approaches has your LA adopted to risk profile your HB/CTB claimants?

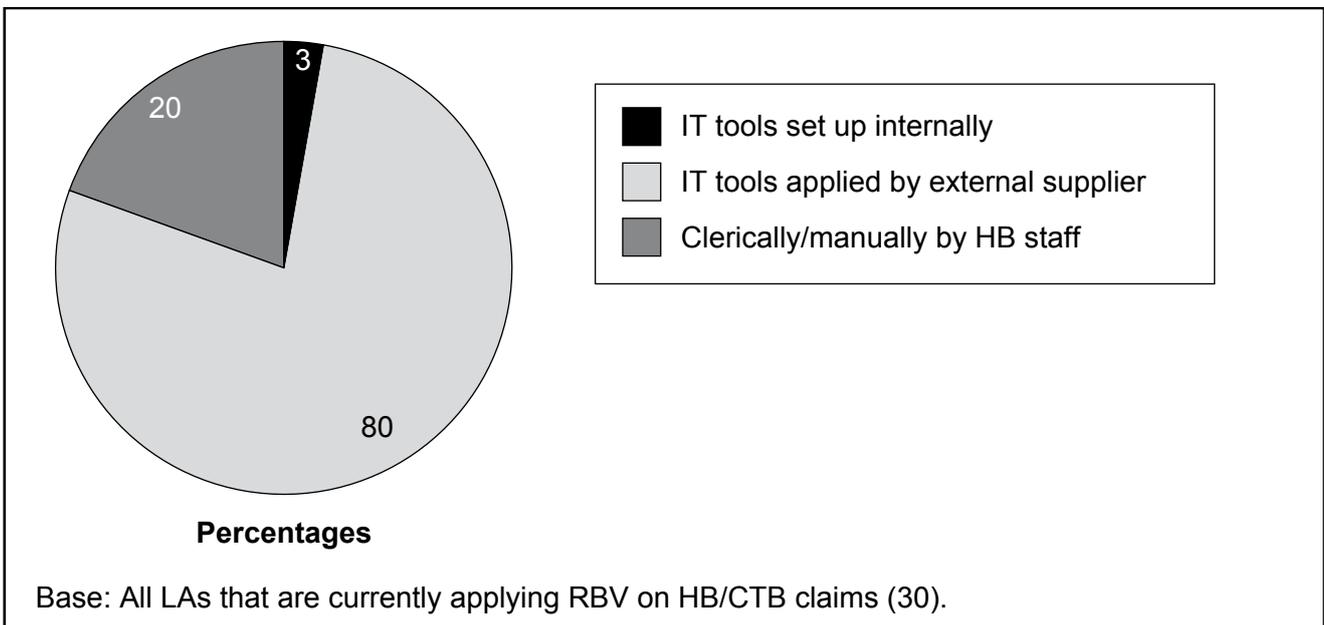


Figure 5.2 is based on thirty LAs that said they were currently¹⁸ applying RBV on HB/CTB claims. Of this group, slightly higher than four in five (25 LAs) said that they were using IT tools to risk profile their HB/CTB claimants; 24 LAs were using tools supplied by external suppliers, the remaining one LA reported using IT tools they had set up internally. One in five (six LAs) said their approach was to risk profile claimants clerically or manually.

¹⁸ 'Currently' used in the question wording refers to the interviewing period of 22 October – 14 December 2012.

Figure 5.3 How satisfied are you with the approach you are currently using to risk profile HB/CTB claimants?

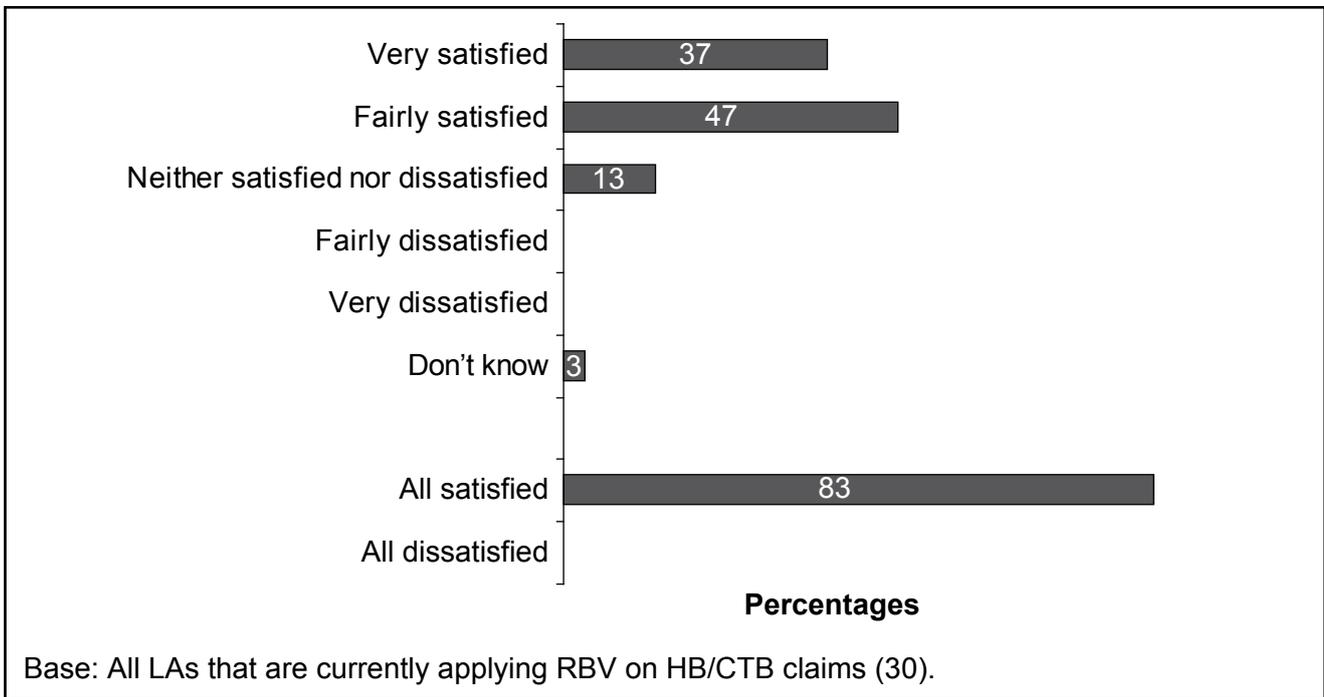


Figure 5.3 shows that among LAs that were applying RBV on HB/CTB claims, satisfaction with their current approach to doing so was high with 25 LAs of this group recorded as stating they were satisfied on this measure (11 LAs very satisfied and 14 LAs fairly satisfied).

The four LAs that said they were not satisfied with their current approach were asked to detail their reasons for dissatisfaction. Two LAs said that it was too early to say and the two remaining answered that their reasons were ‘consistency of decisions’ and ‘unaware of the profile used by company to locate risk’.

Figure 5.4 Overall, how effective would you say that RBV has been in terms of each of the following: Reducing fraud and error?

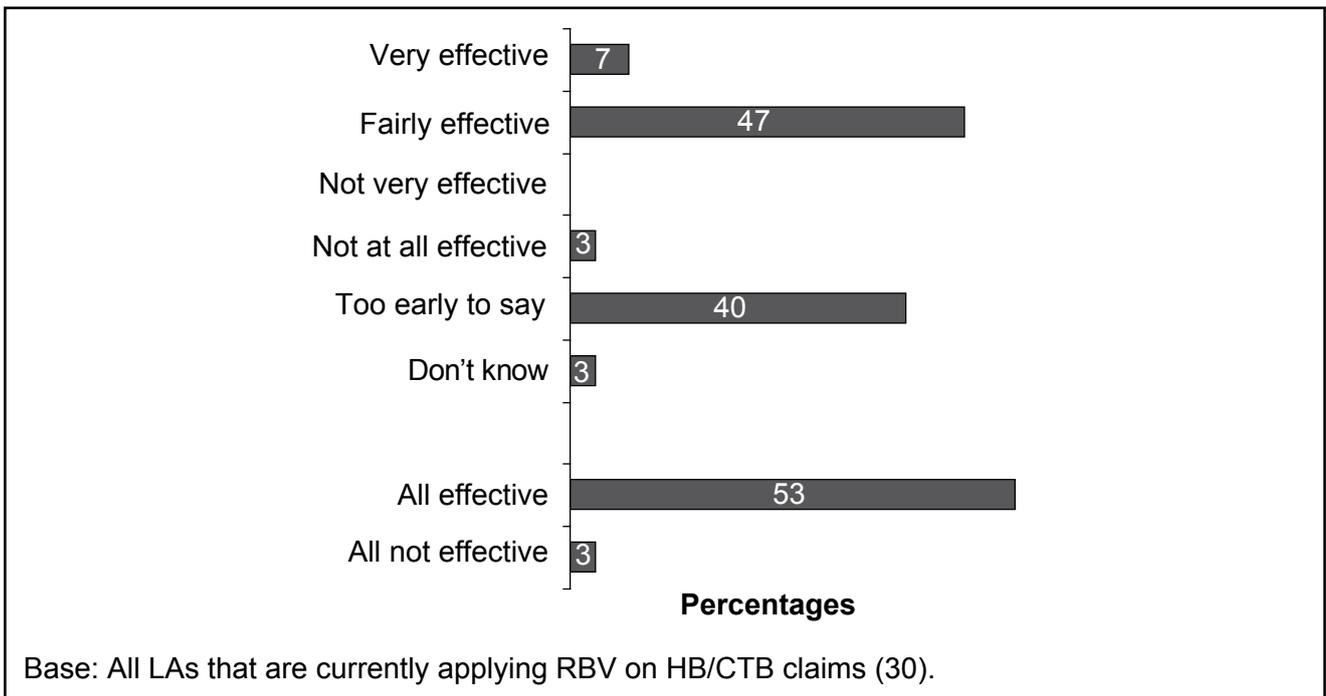


Figure 5.4 shows that among those LAs that were applying RBV on HB/CTB claims at the time of the survey, more than half (16 LAs) said that they thought RBV had been effective in reducing fraud and error. Two in five (12 LAs) of this group said that it was too early to say whether RBV was effective in this way.

Figure 5.5 Overall, how effective would you say that RBV has been in terms of each of the following: Improving processing times?

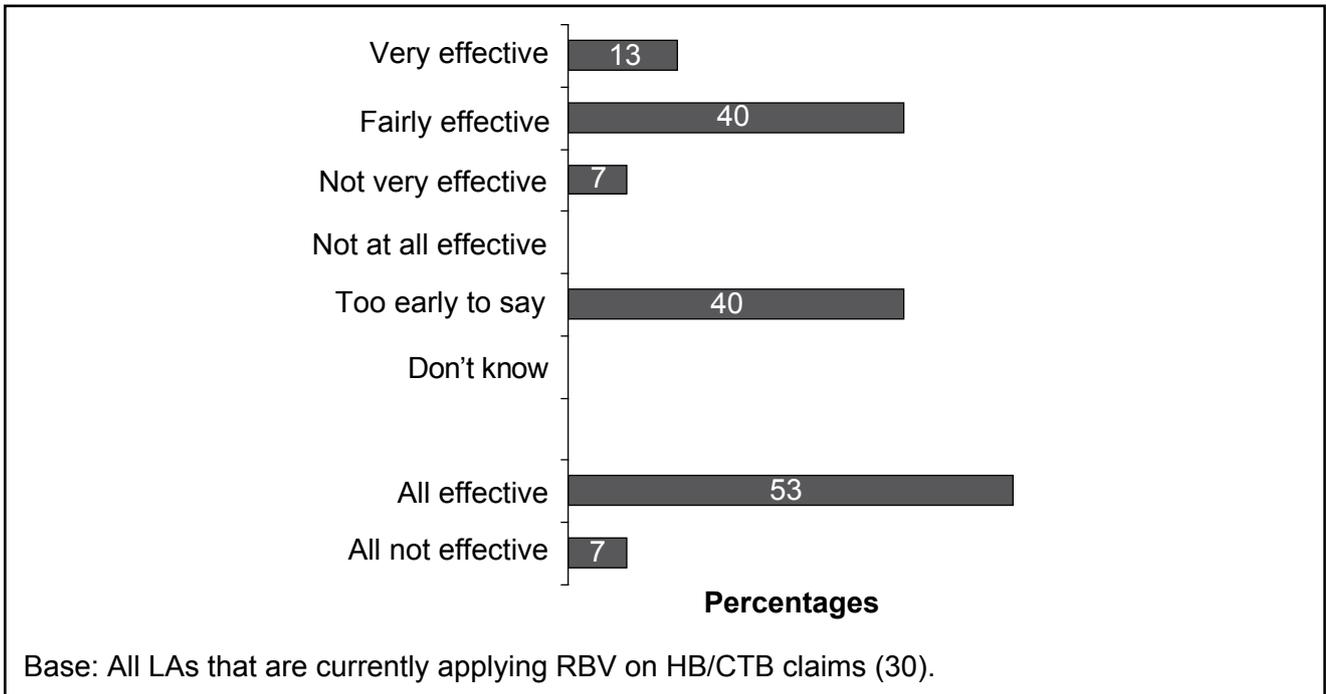
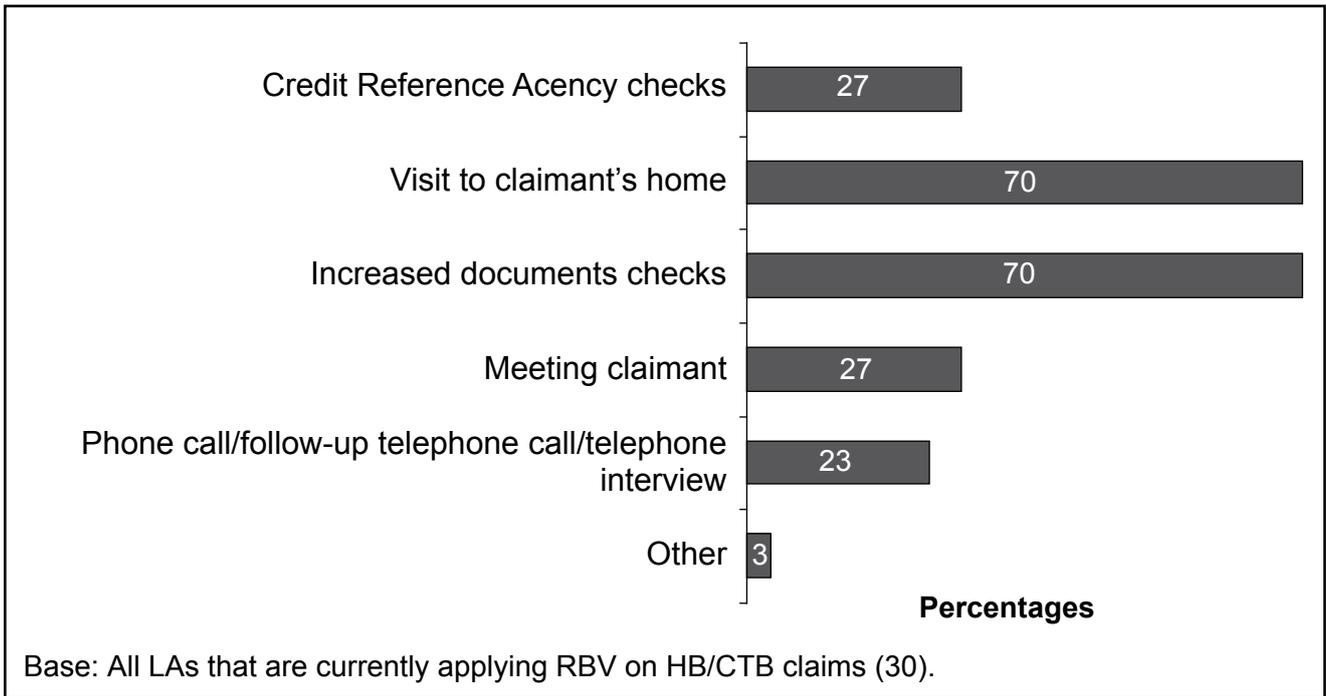


Figure 5.5 shows that among those LAs that said they were applying RBV on HB/CTB claims, more than half (16 LAs) said that they thought RBV had been effective in improving processing times. Two in five (12 LAs) of this group said that it was too early to say whether RBV was effective in this way.

Figure 5.6 When your LA identifies high risk claims, what increased verification is carried out?



According to the group of 30 LAs that were applying RBV on HB/CTB claims, the kinds of checks (LAs could use more than one type of check and were asked for details of all that applied) that appear to be more likely to happen once an LA had identified a high risk claim were visits to the claimant's home and increased documents checks (both mentioned by 21 LAs).

6 Removal of the spare room subsidy and introduction of the benefit cap

6.1 Introduction and summary

On 1 April 2013 the Government removed the spare room subsidy in Housing Benefit (HB) for those who are of working age and renting from a local authority (LA), a housing association (HA) or other registered social landlord (RSL). The removal of the spare room subsidy restricts the size of accommodation that a claimant can receive HB for, based on their household size. If a claimant is assessed under these rules as having more bedrooms than is necessary for their household, they will be considered to be under-occupying that property and a percentage reduction of 14 per cent for one spare bedroom or 25 per cent for two or more spare bedrooms will be applied to their eligible rent.

Additionally in April 2013, a cap for the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive was also introduced. This means that workless households no longer receive more benefits than the average earnings of working households. In the first instance, the cap is administered jointly by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and LAs through deductions from HB payments. In the longer term it will form part of the new Universal Credit system.

It is important to note that the measures had not yet been implemented at the time that the survey was conducted. This section, therefore, reports on the processes that LAs were carrying out to identify cases affected by the new rules and the support they required to assist them in doing so.

The key findings based on all LAs answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'other' categories, or multiple answers.

At the time that the survey was conducted in autumn 2012, greater numbers of LAs said they were finding the process of identifying cases affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy difficult (44 per cent) than were finding it easy (32 per cent). Difficulty obtaining the required information and lack of resources to carry out the extra tasks were cited as reasons explaining why LAs said they were not finding the process of identification of these cases easy.

The majority of LAs said that they thought they would be able to identify at least some cases affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy electronically. Approximately four in five (78 per cent) of LAs said that they currently hold information which allowed some (49 per

cent) or all (29 per cent) of HB claimants in supported 'exempt' accommodation to be easily identified. When the group of LAs that said they did not hold sufficient information to allow them to identify all of their HB claimants in supported 'exempt' accommodation were asked how they intended to identify those claimants, the majority (81 per cent) said they would use local knowledge/other resources available to them.

A wide range of work was being done by LAs to alert current claimants to the removal of the spare room subsidy. The most frequently reported activities of this type were:

- sending letters to claimants (86 per cent);
- putting information on websites (79 per cent); and
- alerting current claimants through stakeholders (77 per cent).

Similarly, a wide range of work was also being done by LAs to alert current claimants about the forthcoming benefit cap. Two thirds of LAs (67 per cent) had put information about it on their websites, 64 per cent had been alerting current claimants through stakeholders, and 56 per cent had sent letters direct to claimants.

The vast majority (84 per cent) of LAs said that they were engaging with the process of reviewing their Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allocation in anticipation of the removal of the spare room subsidy. A fifth (20 per cent) of LAs have already reviewed their DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of the benefit cap, and a further three in five (60 per cent) said that they intended to review it.

Almost all (96 per cent) LAs found the circulars regarding the removal of the spare room subsidy helpful, and the findings for the circulars regard the benefit cap were similar in that the vast majority of LAs surveyed (91 per cent) found them helpful.

Half (50 per cent) of LAs said they either definitely need more support to implement the removal of the spare room subsidy (15 per cent), or that more support would be useful even if it is not essential (35 per cent). Slightly more than a half (53 per cent) of LAs said they either definitely needed more support or that more support would be useful even if it is not essential to help implement the benefit cap.

Additional information or online tools were the most frequently cited (mentioned by 46 per cent) type of extra support for aiding LAs with the removal of the spare room subsidy, and the same finding was recorded for the preferred form of additional help with implementing the benefit cap.

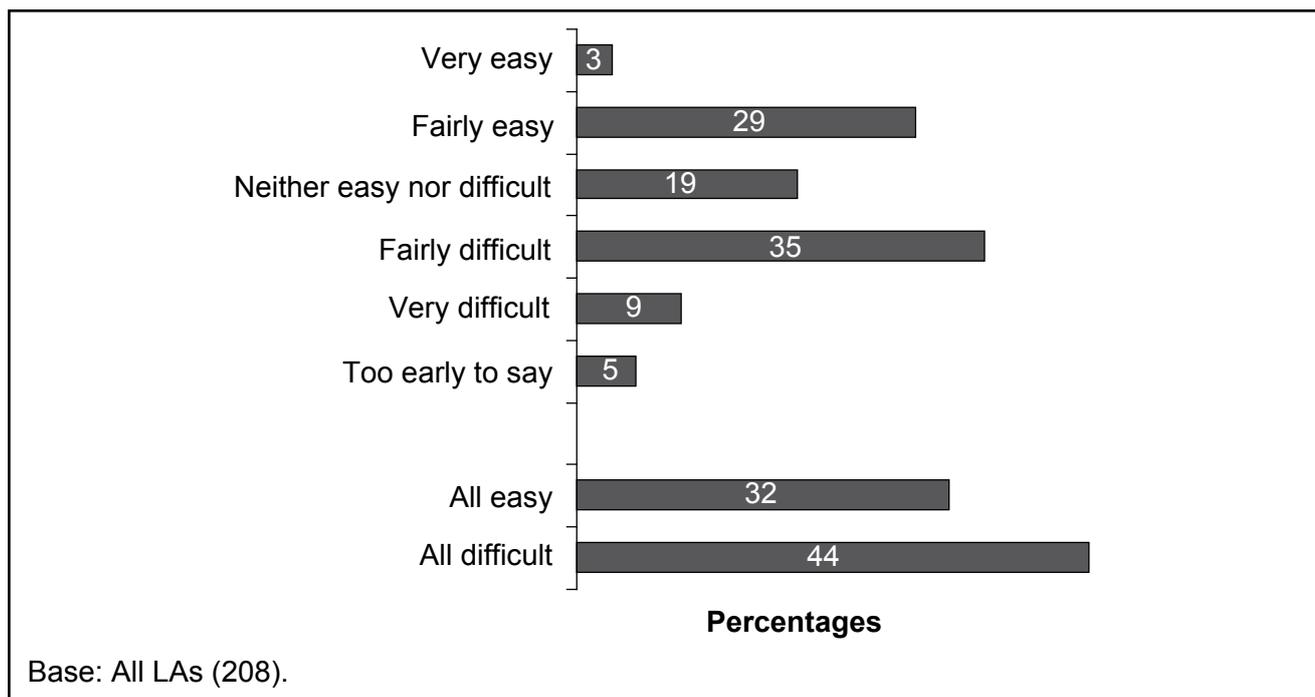
One in eight LAs (12 per cent) said that they were producing tools to help support the removal of the spare room subsidy. One in ten LAs (10 per cent) said that they were producing tools to help support the delivery of benefit cap changes. The kinds of things LAs were producing to support the delivery of these changes were:

- leaflets
- letters to claimants
- videos/presentations to landlords.

6.2 Main findings

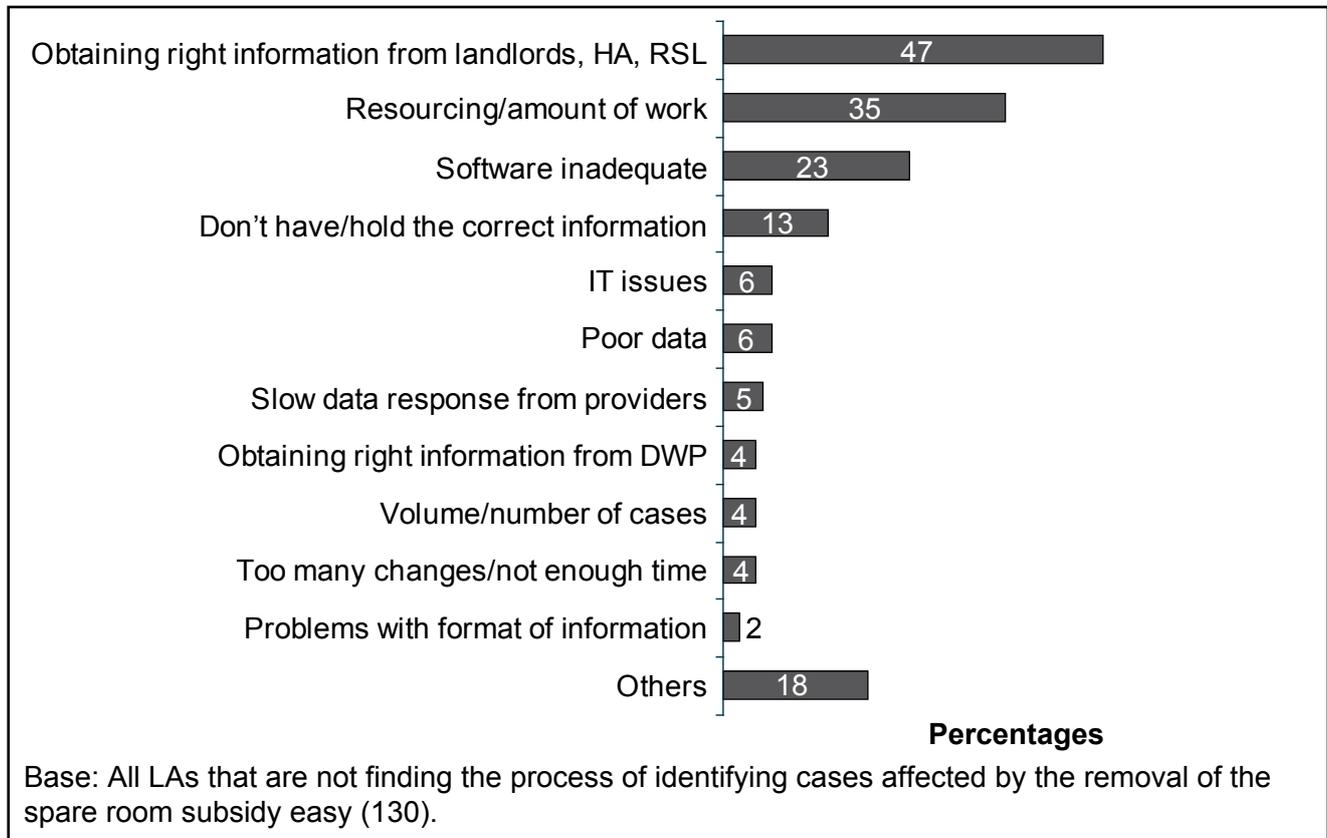
This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 6.1 LAs are currently in the process of identifying cases affected by the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy. How is your LA finding this process?



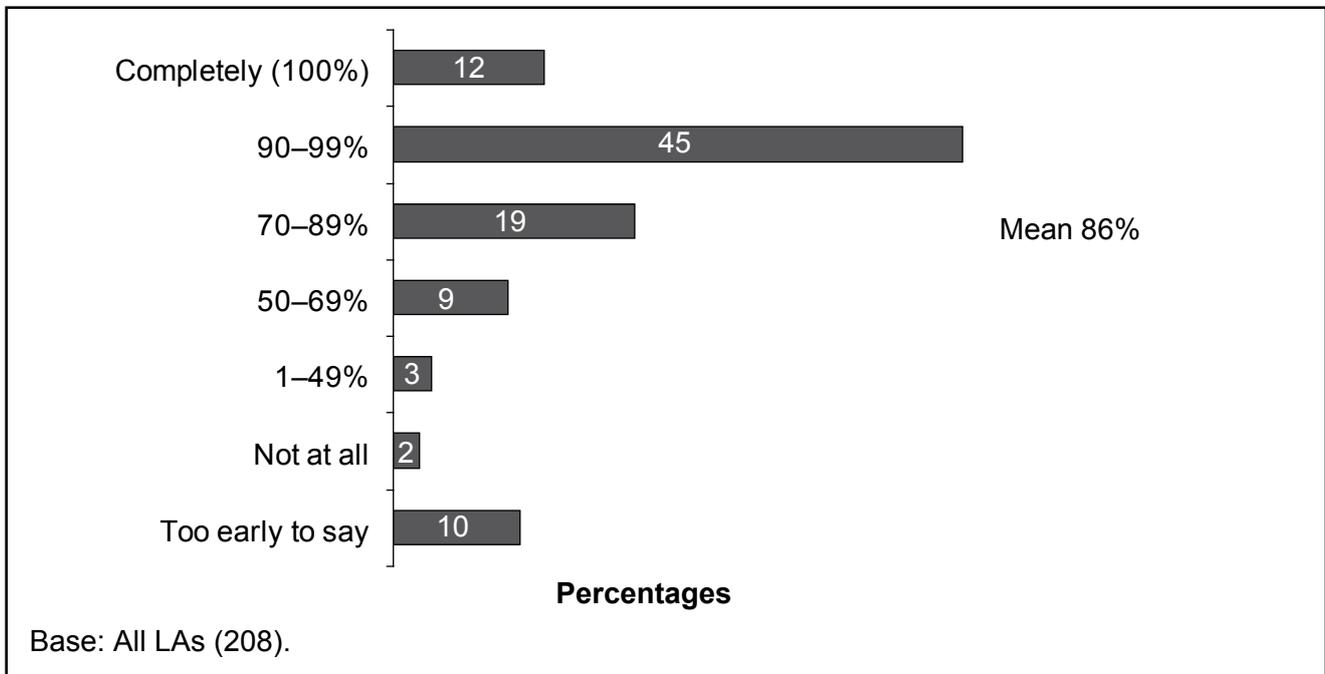
Opinion was divided among LAs as to whether they were finding the process of identifying cases affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy easy or difficult; greater numbers (44 per cent) said they were finding it difficult than easy (32 per cent). English Metropolitan Districts were significantly more likely to have said that they were finding the identification of these cases difficult. Slightly higher than three in five (62 per cent) of English Metropolitan Districts said they were experiencing difficulty compared to 22 per cent of Welsh LAs, 38 per cent of English Unitary authorities and 42 per cent of English Districts.

Figure 6.2 Why do you say that the process of identifying cases affected by the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy is not easy?



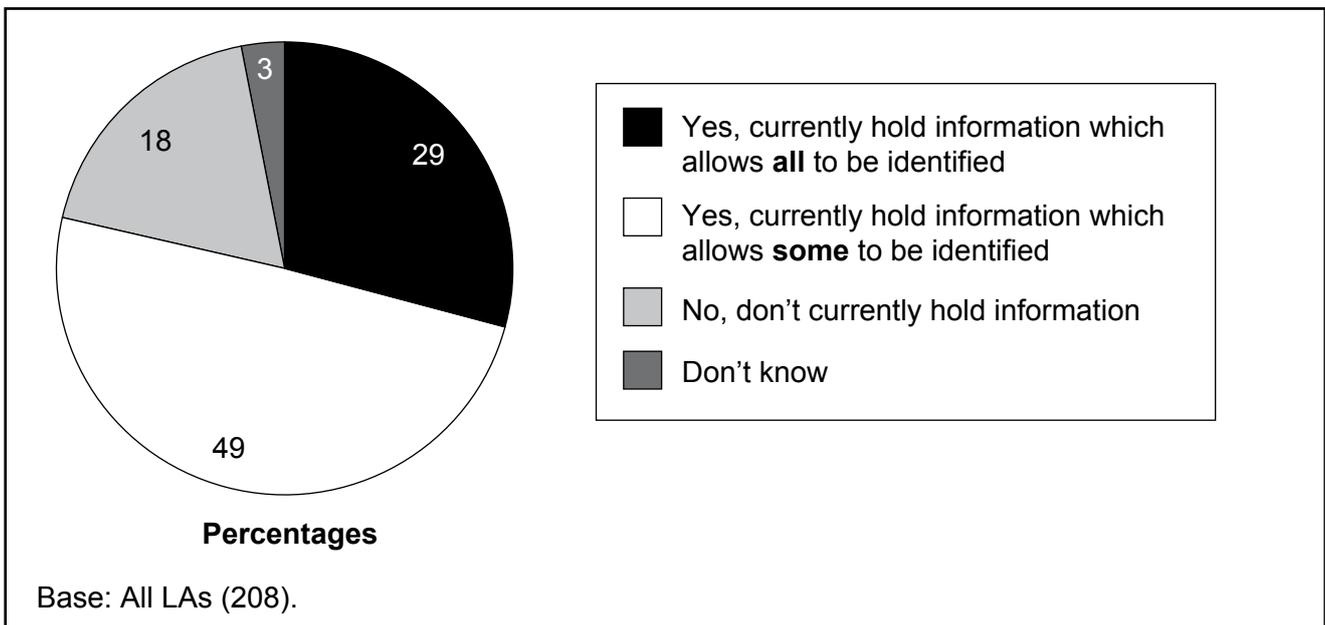
It is clear from Figure 6.2 that not being able to obtain the required information from a range of different sources in order to identify cases affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy was key reason proffered by the group of LAs to explain why they said they were not finding the process of identification of these cases easy. Obtaining information from landlords, RSLs and HAs was mentioned by approximately half (47 per cent). Obtaining information from DWP was also mentioned as a difficulty but at a very low level (four per cent). Approximately a third (35 per cent) gave the reason for this not being easy as being to do with lacking the resources/time/labour needed to carry out the work involved. Resources were mentioned with greater frequency by LAs in Scotland (70 per cent) and Wales (67 per cent) than, for instance, in London Boroughs (13 per cent). Approximately a quarter (23 per cent) said that their software was inadequate and LAs in Scotland (50 per cent) and London Boroughs (40 per cent) displayed greater numbers stating this was a factor preventing the easy identification of cases affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy, in comparison to 12 per cent of English Districts that said software inadequacies were a problem.

Figure 6.3 For the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy, under-occupation will be calculated from bedroom entitlement based on household composition information already held by local authorities and property size information to be received from landlords.



The vast majority of LAs said that they thought they would be able to identify at least half of the cases affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy electronically, but the proportions that LAs estimated would be identifiable in this way varied widely. One in eight (12 per cent) said all cases could be identified electronically and this rose to a third (32 per cent) of LAs in the North West region. Nationally a further 45 per cent said 90-99 per cent could be identified in this way, and approximately one in five said 70-89 per cent of cases in their LA could be identified electronically.

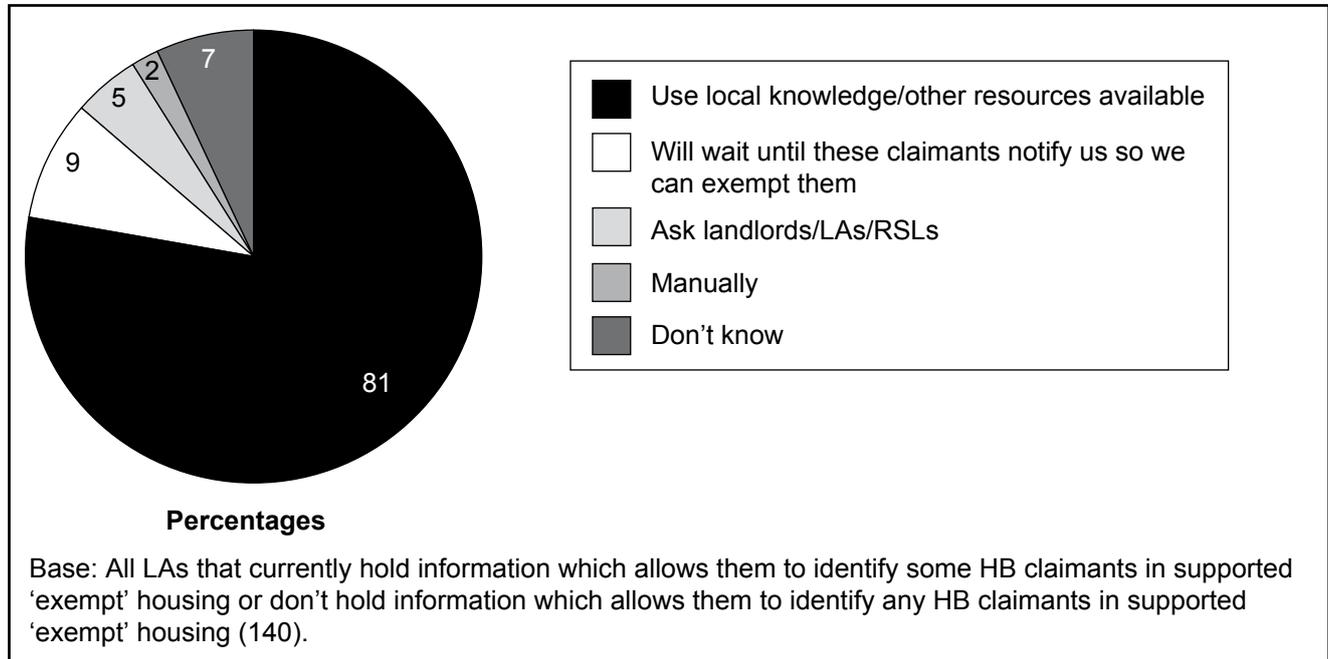
Figure 6.4 Do you currently hold information which allows you to easily identify HB claimants in Supported ‘Exempt’ Housing?



Approximately four in five (78 per cent) of LAs said that they currently hold information which allowed some (49 per cent) or all (29 per cent) of HB claimants in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation to be easily identified. None of the Welsh LAs said that they could easily identify all of these types of claimants, in contrast to 41 per cent of Scottish LAs, 32 per cent of English Districts and 29 per cent of London Boroughs.

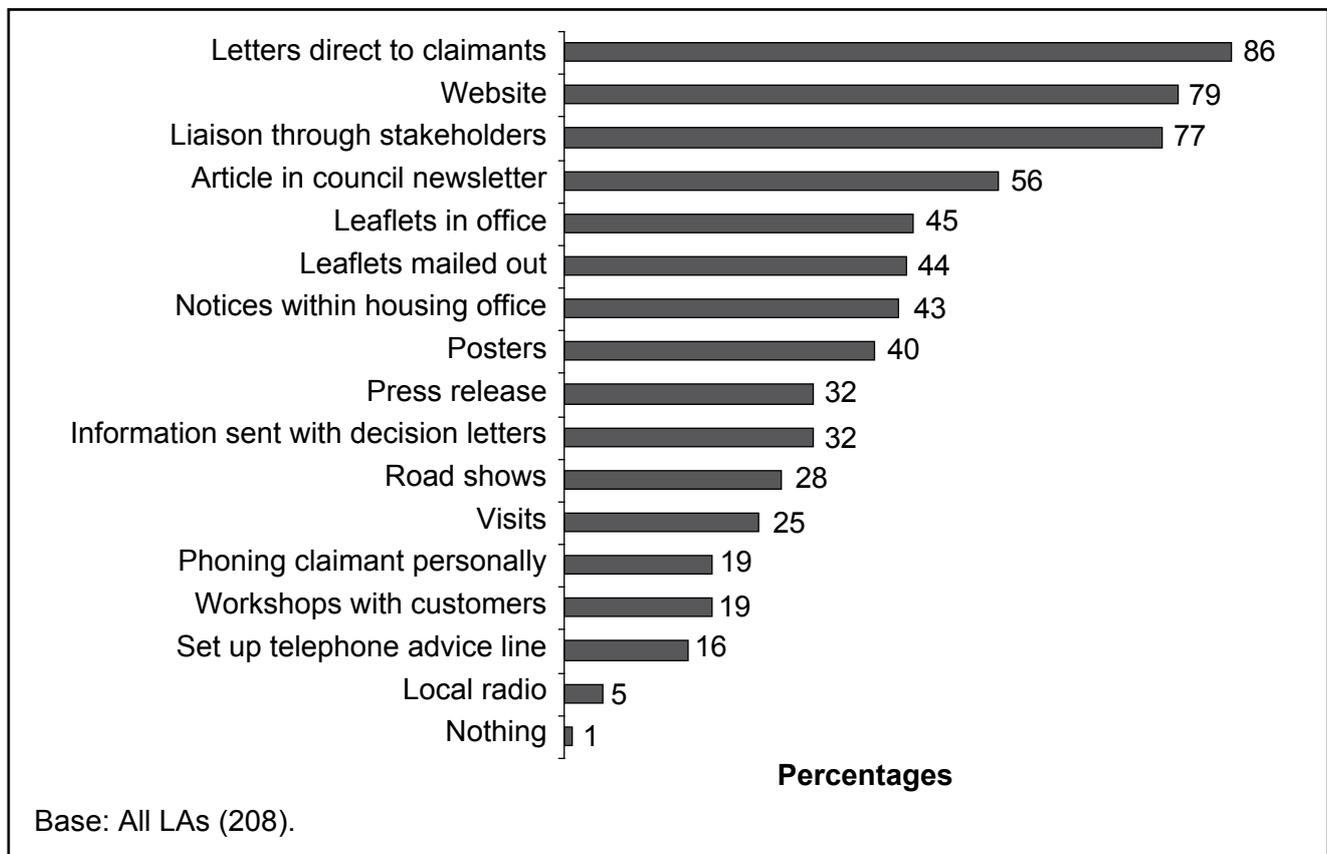
Across all LAs slightly fewer than one in five (18 per cent) said that they did not currently hold the information to easily identify any HB claimants in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation. This ranges from just four per cent of LAs in the East of England to 29 per cent in Scotland, 25 per cent in Yorkshire and Humberside, 24 per cent in the South West and London Boroughs, and 22 per cent in the West Midlands.

Figure 6.5 How do you intend to identify those HB claimants in ‘Exempt’ Supported Housing who will be excluded from the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy but you don’t currently hold information on?



When the group of LAs that said they did not hold sufficient information to allow them to identify all of their HB claimants in supported 'exempt' accommodation were asked how they intended to identify those claimants, the majority (81 per cent) said they would use local knowledge/other resources available to them. Among English Metropolitan Districts this intention was significantly higher (100 per cent) compared to, for example, London LAs, where slightly fewer than seven in ten (69 per cent) said they intended to use local knowledge/other resources available to identify HB claimants in supported 'exempt' accommodation.

Figure 6.6 What work, if any, is your LA doing to alert current claimants of the upcoming Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy rules? (main answers)



As Figure 6.6 illustrates, a wide range of work was being done by LAs to alert current claimants to the coming removal of the spare room subsidy. The most frequently reported activities of this type were sending letters to claimants (86 per cent); putting information on websites (79 per cent) and alerting current claimants through stakeholders (77 per cent).

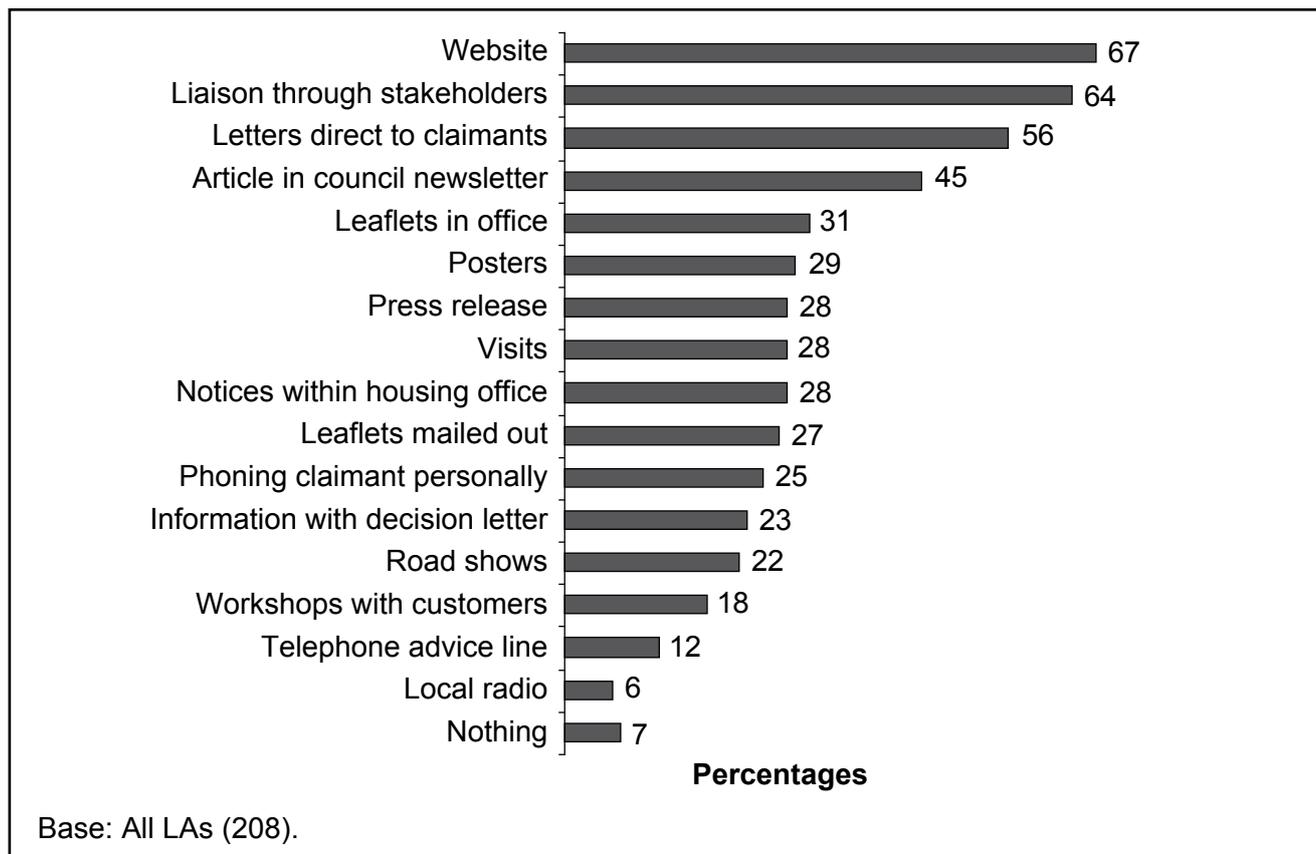
In addition to the activities shown in Figure 6.6, smaller proportions of LAs were engaging in the following activities to alert current claimants to the removal of the spare room subsidy:

Two per cent each were: working with RSLs; working with landlords/landlords visiting customers etc; said DWP were writing letters to customers. One per cent each said they were sending texts and using automated telephone calls to alert current claimants about the removal of the spare room subsidy.

Levels of specific types of activity to alert current claimants to the removal of the spare room subsidy varied by region. London LAs were significantly more likely to conduct workshops with customers to this end (38 per cent London compared to none engaging in this activity in each of the following regions: Yorkshire and Humberside, South West and Wales). Road shows were more likely to be undertaken by Welsh LAs (56 per cent), English Unitary authorities (41 per cent) and English Metropolitan authorities (38 per cent), compared to a lower incidence of this kind of activity among English Districts (19 per cent). All (100 per cent) of LAs in Scotland said they were sending letters directly to claimants, which was a significantly higher proportion than the equivalent finding for direct mailings to claimants by Welsh LAs (78 per cent), English Unitary authorities (78 per cent), and English Districts (83 per cent). LAs in the North East region were significantly more likely to have said they were

carrying out the following activities: mailing-out printed leaflets (86 per cent); putting notices within the housing office (86 per cent); using posters (71 per cent); and posting an article in the council newsletter (86 per cent) in contrast to, for example, LAs in the North West region (where 21 per cent said they were mailing-out printed leaflets; 32 per cent said they were putting notices within the housing office; 26 per cent were using posters; and 37 per cent were posting an article in the council newsletter).

Figure 6.7 What work, if any, is your LA doing to alert current claimants of the upcoming Benefit Cap? (main answers)



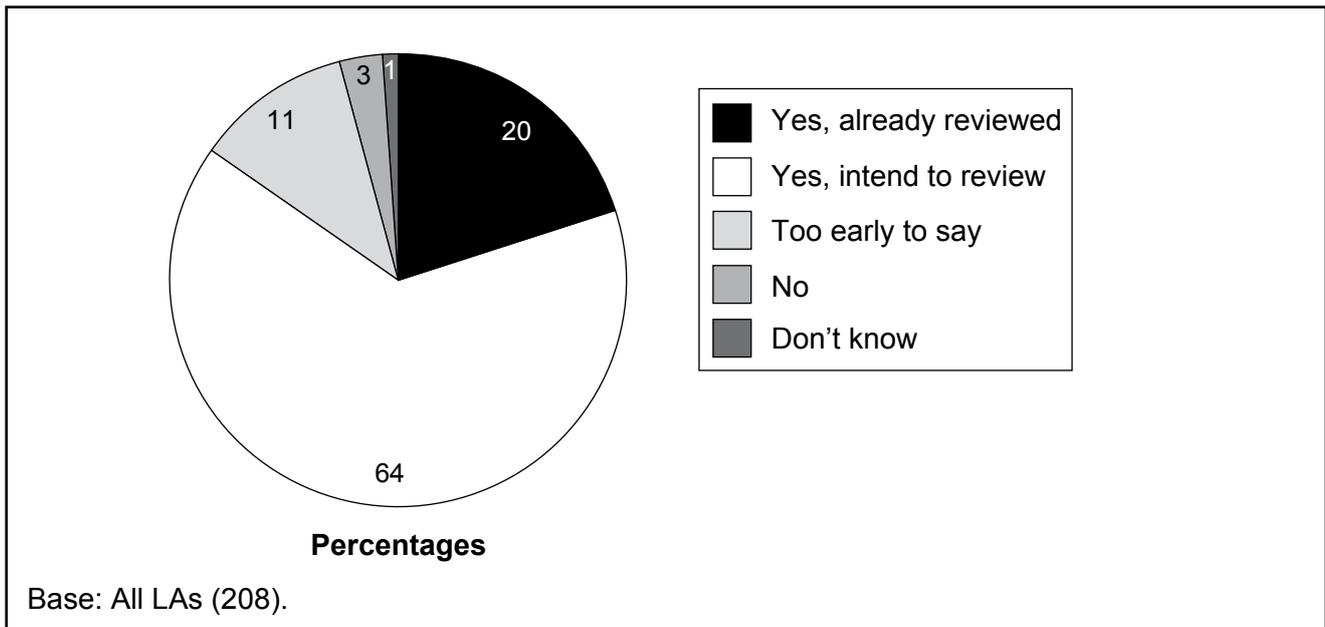
With regard to the work being done by LAs to alert current claimants about the forthcoming benefit cap, a multitude of activity was reported. Two thirds of LAs (67 per cent) have put information about it on their websites, 64 per cent have been alerting current claimants through stakeholders, and 56 per cent have sent letters direct to claimants.

In addition to the activities shown in Figure 6.7, smaller proportions of LAs were engaging in the following to alert current claimants to the benefit cap: two per cent each were working with RSLs; working with landlords/landlords visiting customers etc; DWP writing letters to customers. One per cent were sending texts to their customers.

Levels of specific types of activity alerting current claimants to the upcoming benefit cap varied by region. London LAs were significantly more likely to conduct workshops with customers to this end (38 per cent London compared to none engaging in this activity in each of the following regions: Yorkshire and Humberside, and the North West). LAs in the North East region were significantly more likely to have said they were carrying out the

following activities: mailing-out printed leaflets (71 per cent); placing printed leaflets within the office (71 per cent); using notices within the housing office (71 per cent); and using posters (57 per cent), in contrast to, for example, LAs in the North West region (five per cent said they were mailing-out printed leaflets; 16 per cent said they were using notices within the housing office; 16 per cent were using posters).

Figure 6.8 Has your LA already reviewed, or does your LA intend to review, your DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of Size Criteria rules?

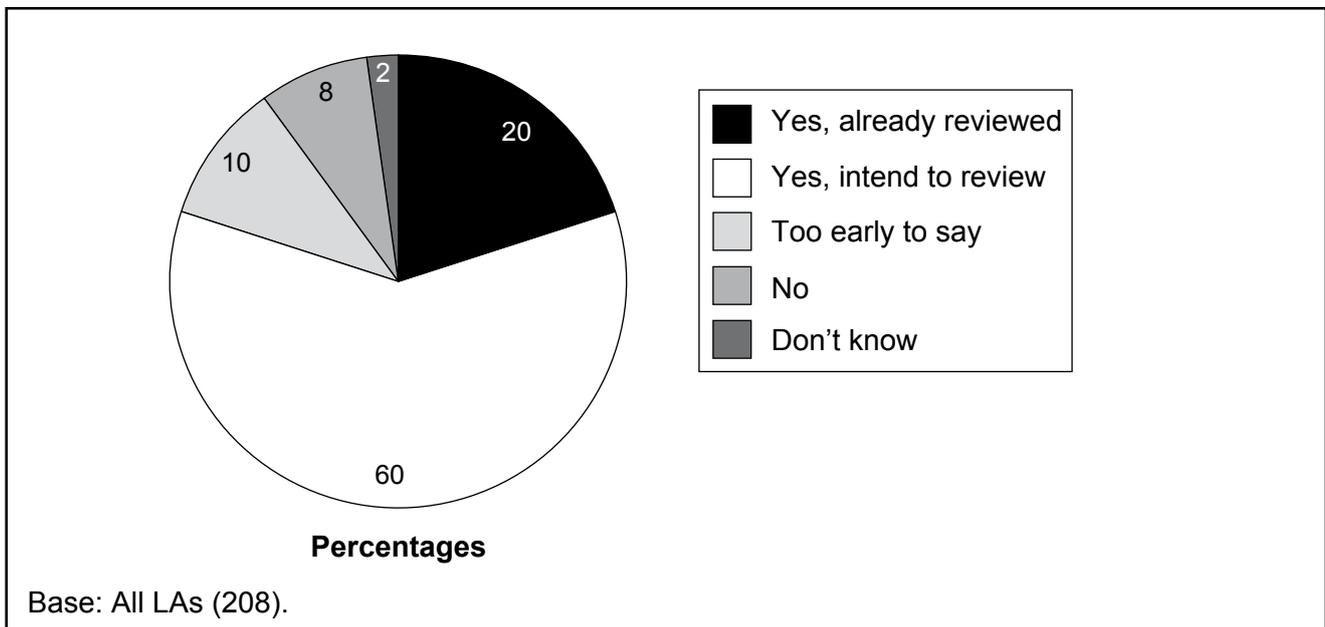


The majority of LAs said that they were engaging with the process of reviewing their DHP allocation in anticipation of the removal of the spare room subsidy. A fifth (20 per cent) have already reviewed their criteria and approximately two thirds (64 per cent) said that they intended to review it.

LAs with high caseloads were significantly more likely to have said that they have already reviewed their DHP allocation in anticipation of the removal of the spare room subsidy (29 per cent of LAs with a high caseload compared to 15 per cent of LAs with a low caseload).

Just three per cent of LAs said they had not reviewed their DHP allocation criteria at all in anticipation of the removal of the spare room subsidy. However, this was significantly higher among LAs from the South West (19 per cent), the North East (14 per cent) and Wales (11 per cent), in comparison to LAs in Scotland, Yorkshire and Humberside, the North West, East Midlands, the South East, London and the East of England, all of which are regions where none of the LAs responded in this way.

Figure 6.9 Has your LA already reviewed, or does your LA intend to review, your DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of the Benefit Cap?

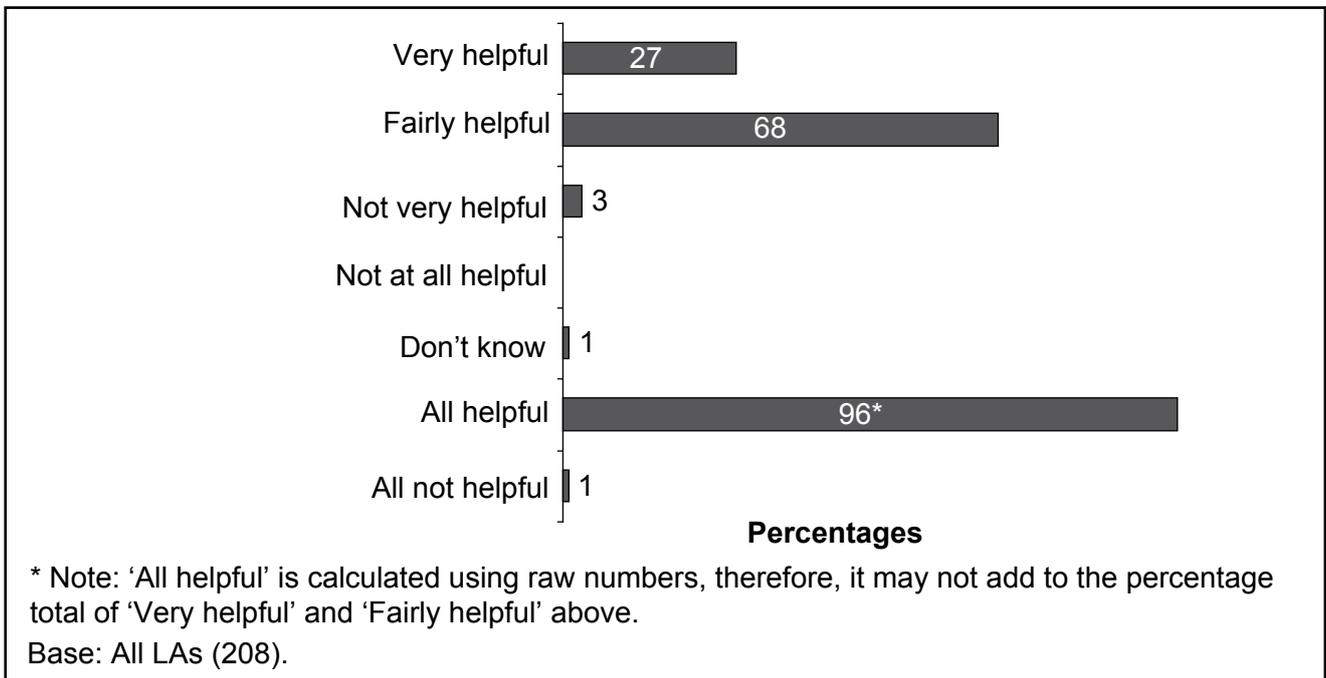


As Figure 6.9 illustrates, a fifth (20 per cent) of LAs have already reviewed their DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of the benefit cap, and a further three in five (60 per cent) said that they intended to review it.

LAs with high caseloads were significantly more likely to have said that they have already reviewed their DHP allocation in anticipation of the benefit cap (29 per cent of LAs with a high caseload compared to 15 per cent of LAs with a low caseload).

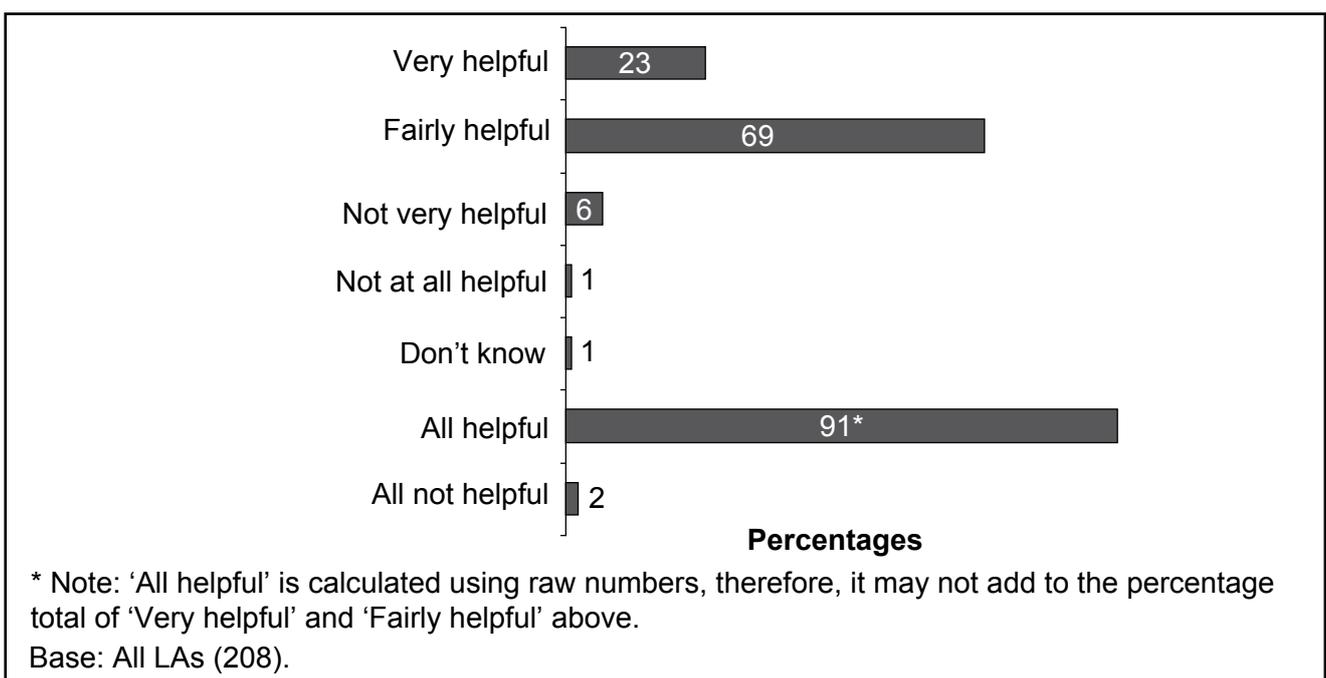
Just eight per cent of LAs said they had not reviewed their DHP allocation criteria at all in relation to anticipation of the benefit cap. However, the frequency of LAs that had not reviewed their criteria in this context was significantly higher among LAs from Yorkshire and Humberside (25 per cent), the South West (19 per cent), the North East (14 per cent), the East Midlands (12 per cent), the North West (11 per cent) and Wales (11 per cent); in comparison to LAs in Scotland, the North West, the South East, and London, all of which are regions where none of the LAs responded in this way.

Figure 6.10 How useful were the Circulars sent to your LA regarding the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy?



Nearly all (96 per cent) LAs found the circulars about the removal of the spare room subsidy helpful: in fact, a little more than a quarter (27 per cent) found them very helpful. LAs with low and medium caseloads were significantly more likely to have said that they found the circulars about the removal of the spare room subsidy helpful; 98 per cent for both LAs with small and medium caseloads compared to 90 per cent for LAs with high caseloads (either very or fairly helpful).

Figure 6.11 How useful were the Circulars sent to your LA regarding the Benefit Cap?

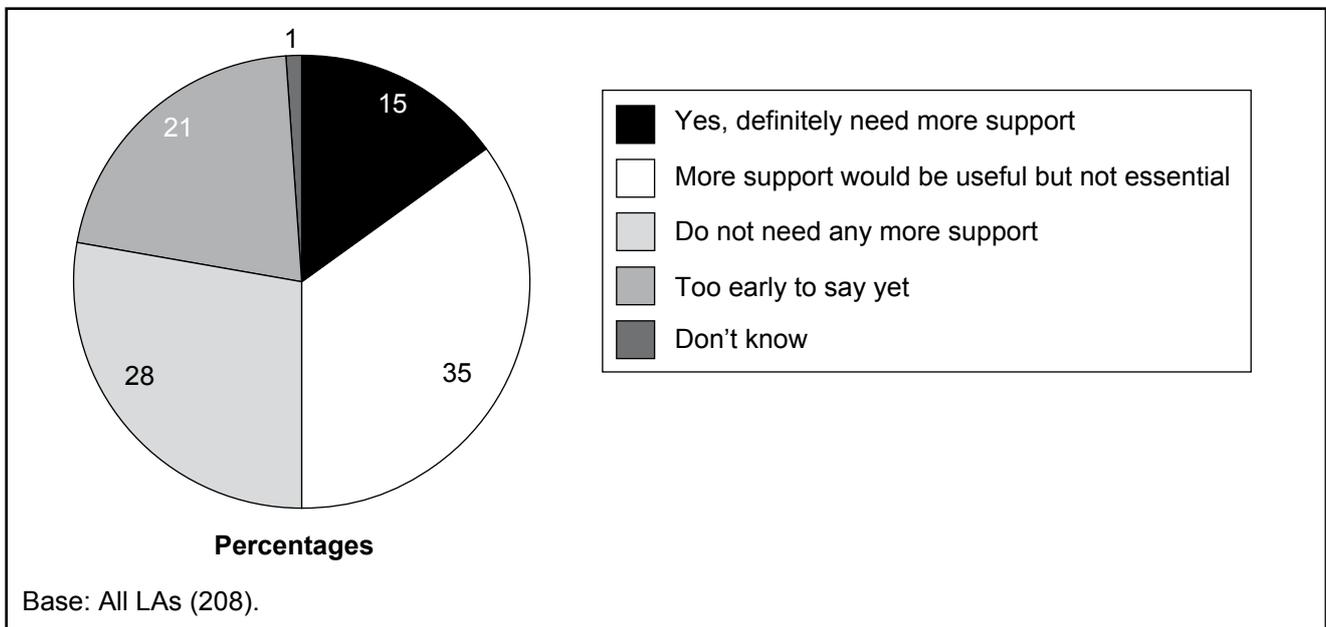


Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

The findings for the circulars about the benefit cap were similar to those for the removal of the spare room subsidy, in that the vast majority (91 per cent) found them helpful (23 per cent found them very helpful).

LAs with low and medium caseloads were significantly more likely to have said that they found the Circulars about the benefit cap helpful; 98 per cent for LAs with small caseloads, 92 per cent for those with medium caseloads compared to 81 per cent for LAs with high caseloads (either very or fairly helpful). English Metropolitan Districts were significantly less likely to have said that they found the benefit cap circulars helpful (71 per cent) compared to, for example, English Unitary authorities, among which 97 per cent found these circulars helpful.

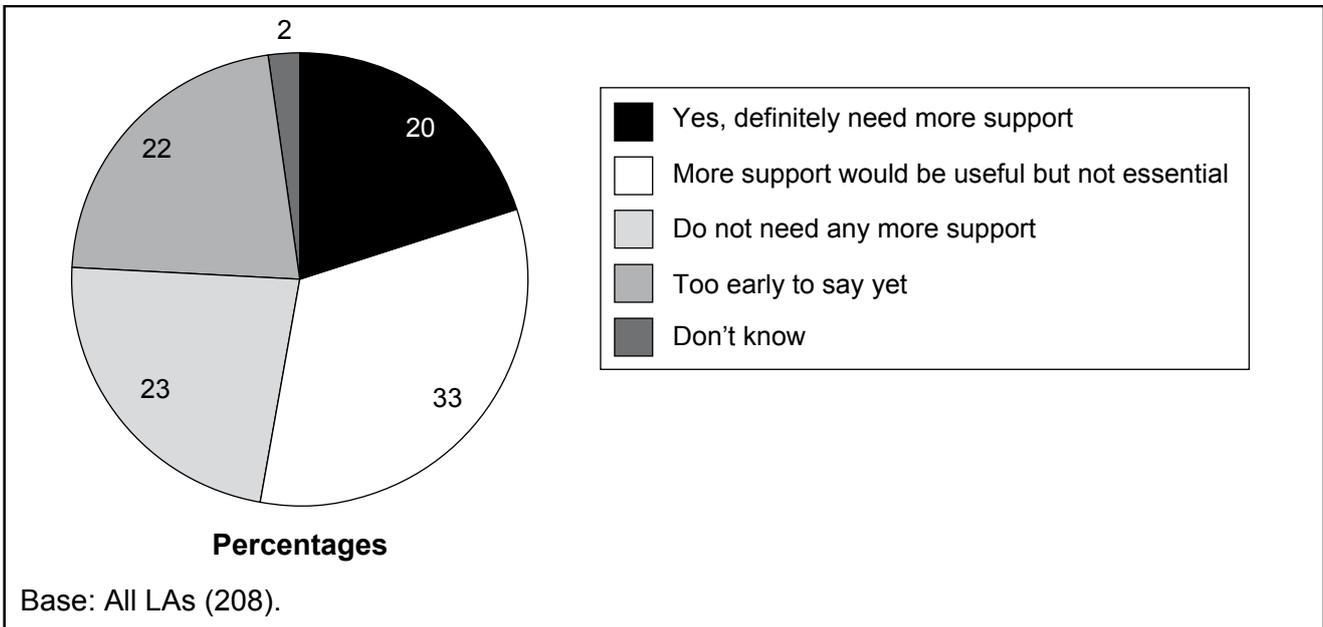
Figure 6.12 Do you think that your LA needs further support to implement the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy?



As Figure 6.12 illustrates, half (50 per cent) of LAs said that they either definitely needed more support to implement the removal of the spare room subsidy (15 per cent), or that more support would be useful even if it was not essential (35 per cent). London Boroughs (33 per cent) and English Metropolitan Districts (24 per cent) were significantly more likely to have said that they definitely needed more support with implementation of the removal of the spare room subsidy than were English Districts (nine per cent).

Slightly fewer than three in ten (28 per cent) said that they did not need any more support but this rose to slightly more than half (53 per cent) among LAs in the North West region, in contrast with 11 per cent of LAs in Wales.

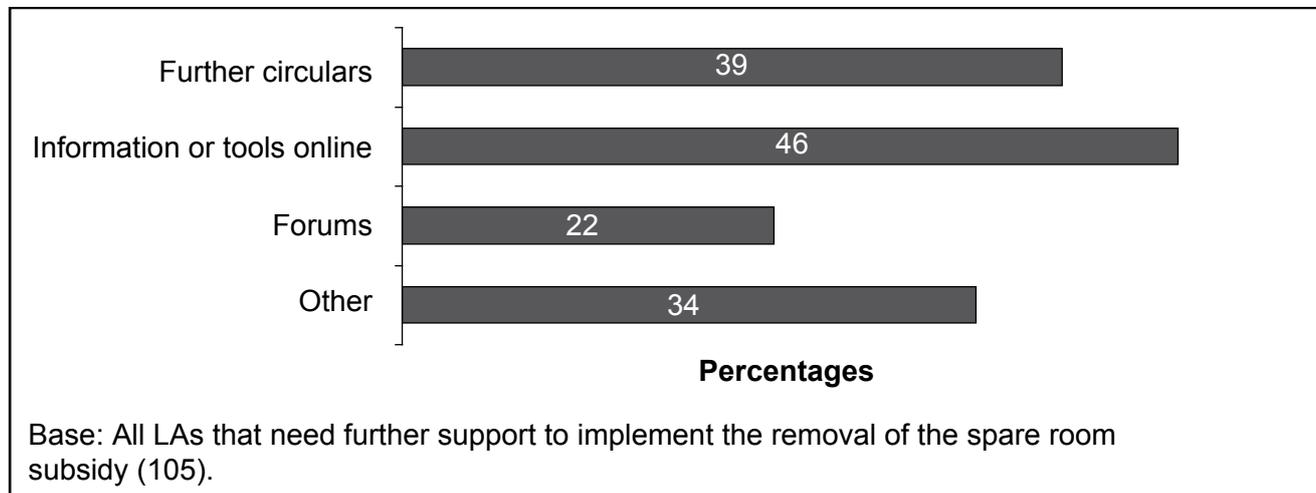
Figure 6.13 Do you think that your LA needs further support to implement the Benefit Cap?



LAs were asked if they thought they needed further support to implement the benefit cap. The consequent findings were similar to those recorded for needs for additional support for the implementation of the removal of the spare room subsidy. Slightly more than a half (53 per cent) of LAs said they either definitely needed more support or that more support would be useful even if it is not essential to help implement the benefit cap.

Slightly fewer than a quarter (23 per cent) said that they did not need any more support to implement the benefit cap but this was significantly higher among LAs in the North West region where 53 per cent said that they did not need any further support for this, contrasting with 11 per cent in both the West Midlands and Wales.

Figure 6.14 Which of these types of additional support would you like? Please tick the box for the type of additional support you would like for the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy as appropriate and specify (on the dotted lines) what topics you would like it to cover

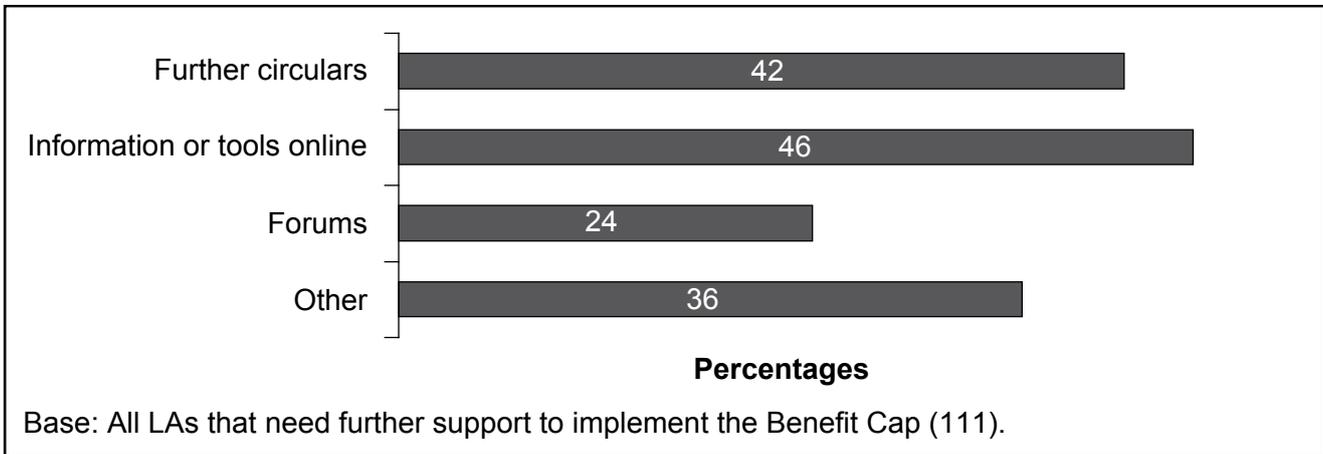


As Figure 6.14 shows, the most frequently cited type of extra support for aiding LAs with the implementation of the removal of the spare room subsidy was additional information or tools online, mentioned by 46 per cent (rising to 58 per cent among LAs with high caseloads compared to 33 per cent of LAs with medium caseloads). The LAs that stated that they would like additional information or tools online were then asked to give details of the topics they would like covered by them. The responses given include five LAs that mentioned greater advice/guidance, three LAs mentioned better/more accurate/up-to-date information and three LAs mentioned a calculation tool.

Approximately two in five (39 per cent) of LAs said they would like to be provided with further circulars as a means of additional support to help them implement the removal of the spare room subsidy. LAs in Scotland (67 per cent), the West Midlands (67 per cent) and the South West (75 per cent) were significantly more likely to have said that more circulars of this type would be helpful to them, in contrast to none of the LAs in the North East region. When asked about the topics that LAs would like coverage of in further circulars, the responses were very sparse and disparate, and 71 per cent of LAs could not provide a specific topic as a response. Forums were mentioned by 22 per cent of LAs as a type of additional support they would like to have to help implement the removal of the spare room subsidy. When asked about the topics LAs would like these forums to focus on, three LAs mentioned discussions/sharing of good practice.

A third (34 per cent) said they would like to receive ‘other’ forms of support. When asked about the topics they would like these ‘other’ forms of support to take, the suggestions provided by LAs included additional financial support to LAs (17 LAs) and the possibility of additional resources (four LAs).

Figure 6.15 Which of these types of additional support would you like? Please tick the box for the type of additional support you would like for the Benefit Cap as appropriate and specify (on the dotted lines) what topics you would like it to cover

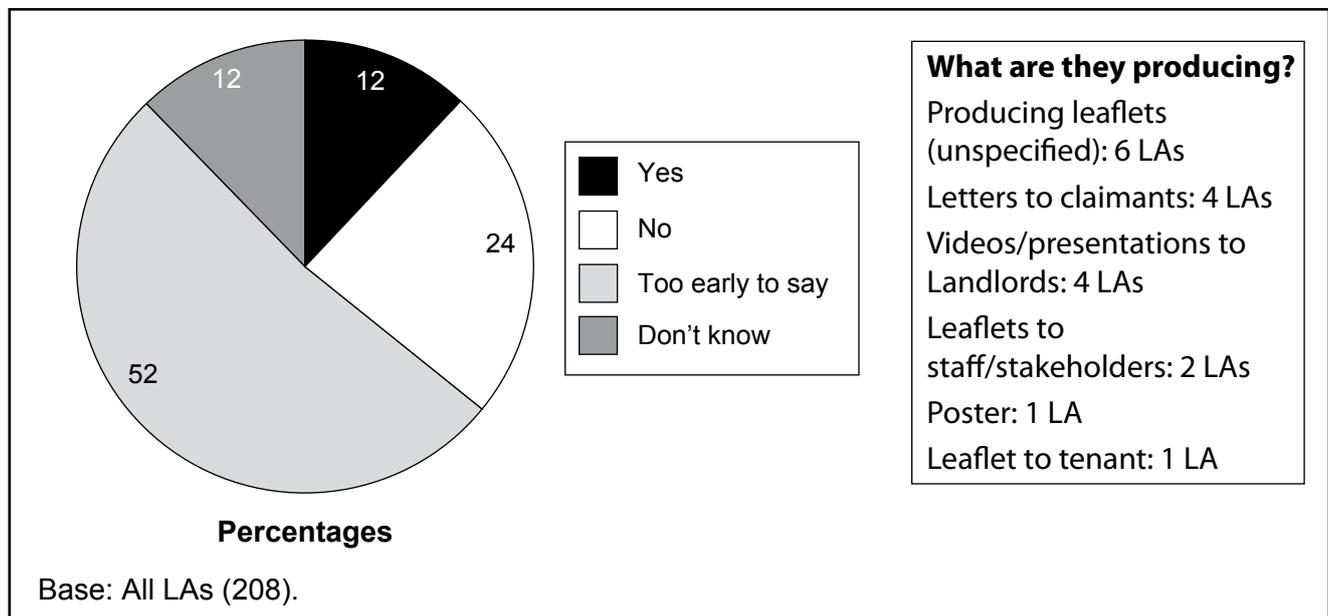


As Figure 6.15 shows, the most frequently cited type of extra support for aiding LAs with the implementation of the benefit cap was additional information or tools online, mentioned by 46 per cent although this was significantly higher among LAs in the East of England where nine in ten (90 per cent) said this would be helpful, in contrast to the North East region where none of the LAs said this would be helpful. When asked about the topics that LAs would like coverage of by additional information or tools online, responses included five LAs that mentioned greater advice/guidance, three LAs that said ‘everything’, three LAs that mentioned better/more accurate/up-to-date information and three LAs that mentioned improved/more up to date FAQs. Approximately two in five (42 per cent) of LAs said they would like to be provided with further circulars as a means of additional support to help them implement the benefit cap. LAs in Scotland (80 per cent), the West Midlands (67 per cent) and the South West (60 per cent) were significantly more likely to have said that more circulars of this type would be helpful to them, compared to none of the LAs in Wales or the North East. When asked about the topics that LAs would like coverage of in further circulars, the responses were very sparse and 70 per cent of LAs could not provide a specific topic as a response to this question.

Forums were mentioned by approximately a quarter (24 per cent) of LAs as a type of additional support they would like to have to help with implementing the benefit cap. When asked about the topics LAs would like these forums to consist of, among those who provided a response, two LAs mentioned discussions/sharing of good practice.

Thirty-six per cent of LAs said that there were ‘other’ forms of support that would be useful. The additional suggestions included additional financial support (ten LAs); greater clarity (four LAs); more/better information (four LAs) and additional resources (three LAs). When the LAs that had said other types of support would be useful were asked about the topics that they would like to see covered by them, the suggestions provided included additional funding/financial support to LAs (ten LAs), greater clarity/explanation (four LAs), improved information (four LAs), and the possibility of additional resources (three LAs).

Figure 6.16 Is your LA producing anything to help support the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy that might be of value/use to other LAs?

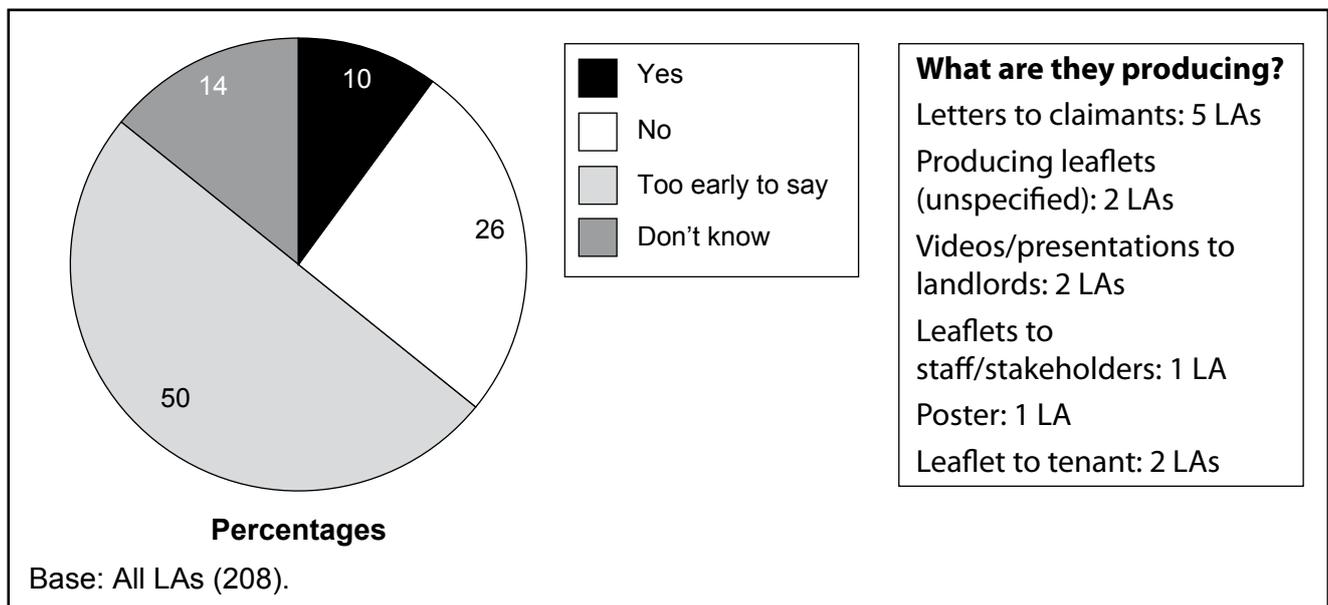


One in eight LAs (12 per cent) said that they were producing something to help support the delivery of the removal of the spare room subsidy. Scottish LAs (24 per cent), London Boroughs (24 per cent) and English Unitary authorities were significantly more likely to have reported independently producing material to support the removal of the spare room subsidy, compared to six per cent of English Districts that were doing so.

Approximately half of all LAs overall (52 per cent) said that it was too early to say and a quarter (24 per cent) said that they were not producing anything of their own to help support the removal of the spare room subsidy.

When the group of LAs that said they were producing something internally to help support the removal of the spare room subsidy, the detail of items they were producing included leaflets (six LAs), letters to claimants (four LAs), and videos/presentations to landlords (four LAs).

Figure 6.17 Is your LA producing anything to help support the delivery of Benefit Cap changes that might be of value/use to other LAs?



One in ten LAs (10 per cent) said that they were producing something to help support the delivery of benefit cap changes. English Unitary authorities (22 per cent) and London Boroughs (19 per cent) were significantly more likely to have reported independently producing material to support the benefit cap changes, in contrast to six per cent of English Districts that were active in this way.

Half of all LAs (50 per cent) said that it was too early to say and a quarter (26 per cent) said that they were not producing anything of their own to help support the benefit cap changes.

When the group of LAs that said they were producing something internally to help support the delivery of the benefit cap, the detail of items they were producing included: letters to claimants (five LAs); leaflets (two LAs); and videos/presentations to landlords (two LAs).

7 Supported ‘exempt’ accommodation

7.1 Introduction and summary

The following section reports on questions asked about supported ‘exempt’ accommodation. This refers to supported housing **but only** as defined in legislation: either a resettlement place or accommodation provided by a county council, housing association (be it unregistered or a registered housing association/not-for-profit private registered provider of social housing/registered social landlord), registered charity or voluntary organisation where that body or person acting on their behalf provides the claimant with care, support or supervision.

Such accommodation includes group homes, hostels, refuges, sheltered housing, supported living complexes, extra care housing and adapted housing for the disabled provided by housing associations (see above), registered charities, voluntary organisations and county councils. Housing Benefit (HB) recognises the often higher costs of providing such accommodation.

Following a Department for Work and Pensions consultation in 2011 on reforming this area of support for housing costs, this section of the survey sought to update information on caseloads and expenditure in this area to inform further development of the reforms.

The key findings based on all local authorities (LAs) answering are summarised in this section. These are followed by the main findings, which include charts plus commentary highlighting the key statistically significant sub-group differences. We have not commented on differences that are not significant. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of ‘don’t know’ or ‘other’ categories, or multiple answers.

The average (mean score) number of cases in supported housing that met the definition of 'Exempt Accommodation' where the landlord was a county council or housing association across all LAs interviewed was 385. Where the landlord was a registered charity or voluntary organisation, the average number (mean score) of cases of this kind across all LAs was 124.

Where LAs had HB cases in supported 'exempt' accommodation (where the landlord was a county council or housing association) and such cases were not referred, the most common reason given by LAs for not referring them, selected by three quarters (77 per cent), was that the LA judged the rent reasonable compared to social sector rents for similar accommodation.

The responses of LAs to the question about what percentage of cases in supported 'exempt' accommodation were living in each of the following types of accommodation: purpose built; hostels; adapted from mainstream social sector housing stock; foyer or other specialist provision; refuges; sheltered housing; extra care housing; group homes and other shared housing were affected by two thirds (65 per cent) of LAs being unable to provide any indication of an answer to this question.

Similarly when LAs were asked to state the percentage of cases in supported 'exempt' accommodation living in each of the following types of accommodation – communal/shared units or self-contained units – 61 per cent of LAs could not give an answer.

LAs were asked to state the average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for their caseload in supported 'exempt' accommodation where the landlord was a county council or housing association. Approximately two in five (41 per cent) of LAs could not provide an answer to this question, despite the question stating that estimates were acceptable. The averages, where LAs were able to provide an answer, (123 LAs in total answered with amounts) were recorded in greatest concentrations in the range between £101 and £200 (mean score £154). Responses to the same question, but applied to situations where a registered charity or voluntary organisation were the landlord, were recorded in the greatest concentrations in the range between £151 and £200 (mean score £170).

7.2 Main findings

This section details the main findings and includes charts for all questions plus commentary highlighting the key sub-group differences.

Figure 7.1 How many cases do you currently have in supported housing that meet the above definition of ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association¹⁹

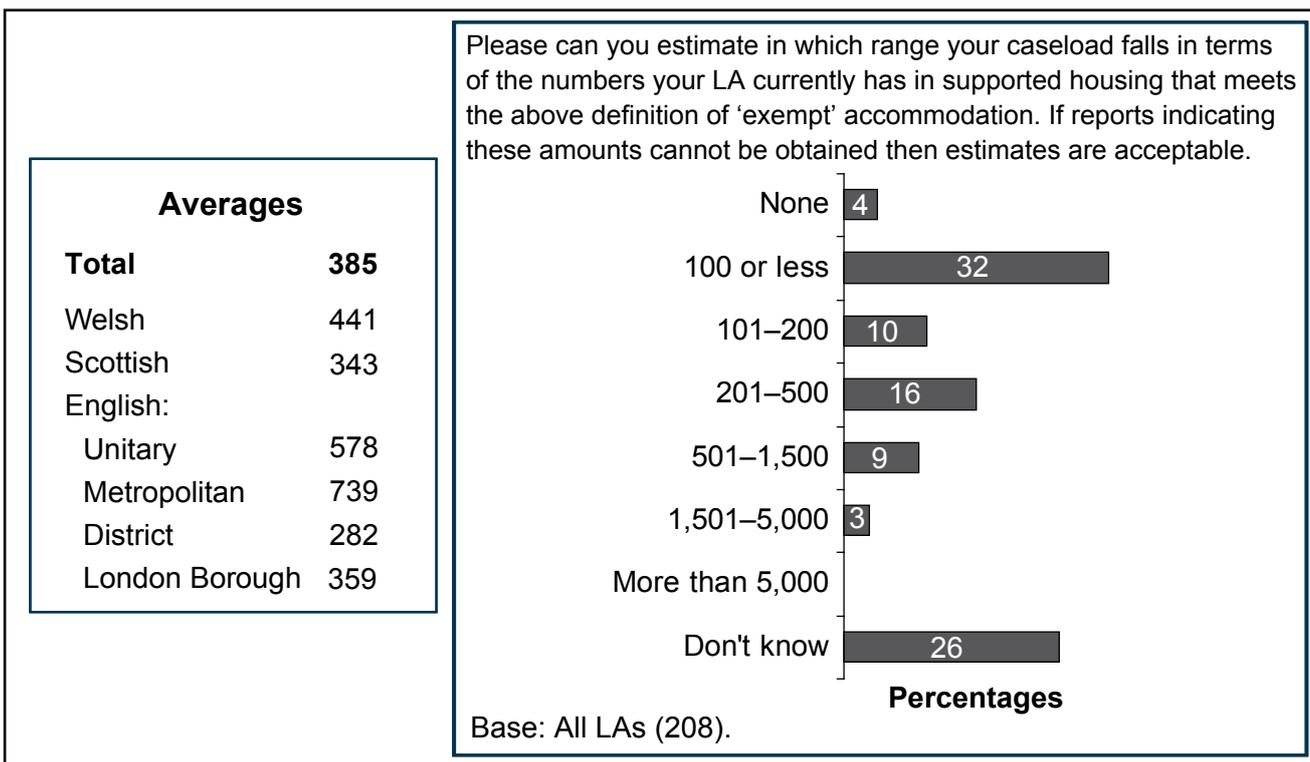
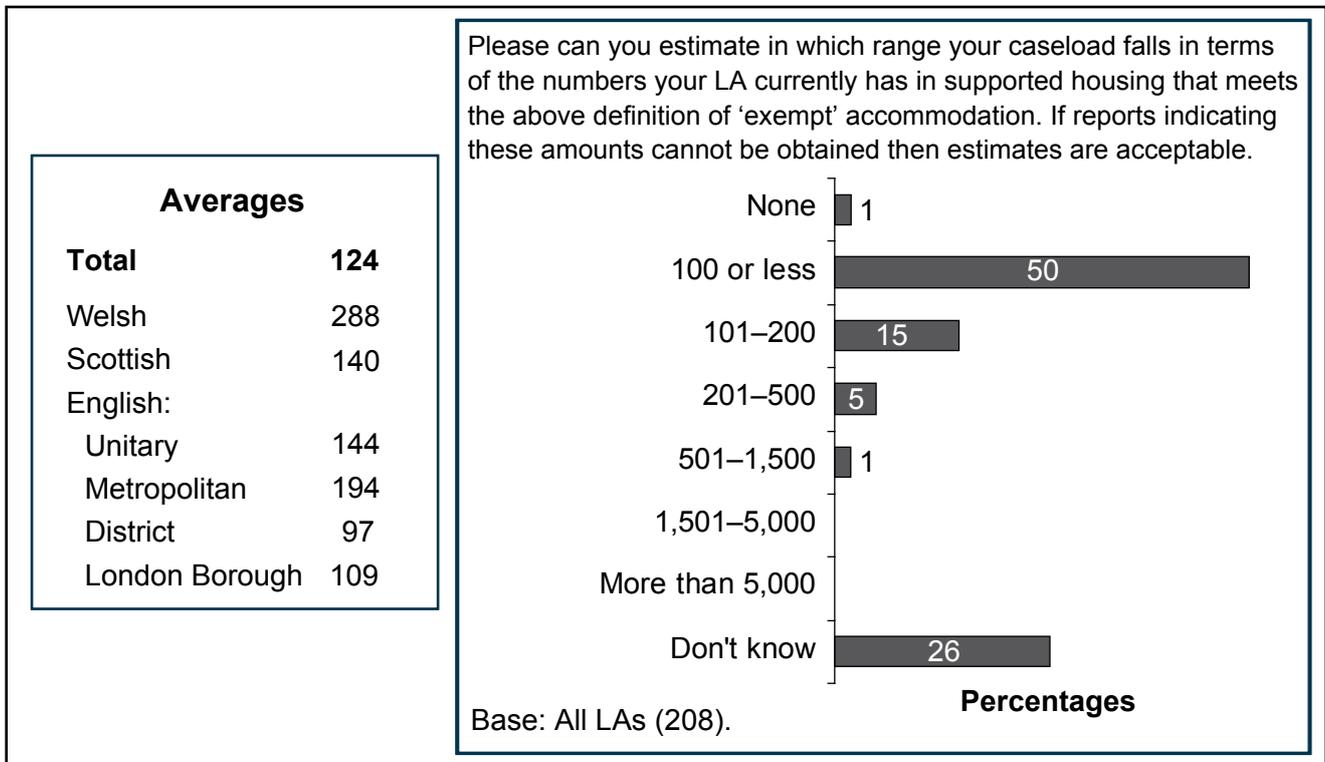


Figure 7.1 illustrates that where the landlord was a county council or housing association, the majority (58 per cent) of LAs had between one and five hundred cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation, 32 per cent had one hundred or less, and four per cent had none. Twelve per cent had between 501 and 5,000 cases. Approximately a quarter (26 per cent) of LAs could not answer this question in either the unprompted form or when asked to select a band from a range.

The average (mean score) number of cases of this kind across all LAs was 385. There were variations in the mean scores by LA type; English Unitary authorities at 578 had a higher incidence of these cases, as did English Metropolitan Districts at 739, in comparison to English Districts at 282.

¹⁹ LAs were strongly encouraged to run reports indicating these amounts where possible. Where a report was not possible, estimates were also accepted.’

Figure 7.2 How many cases do you currently have in supported housing that meet the above definition of ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation²⁰

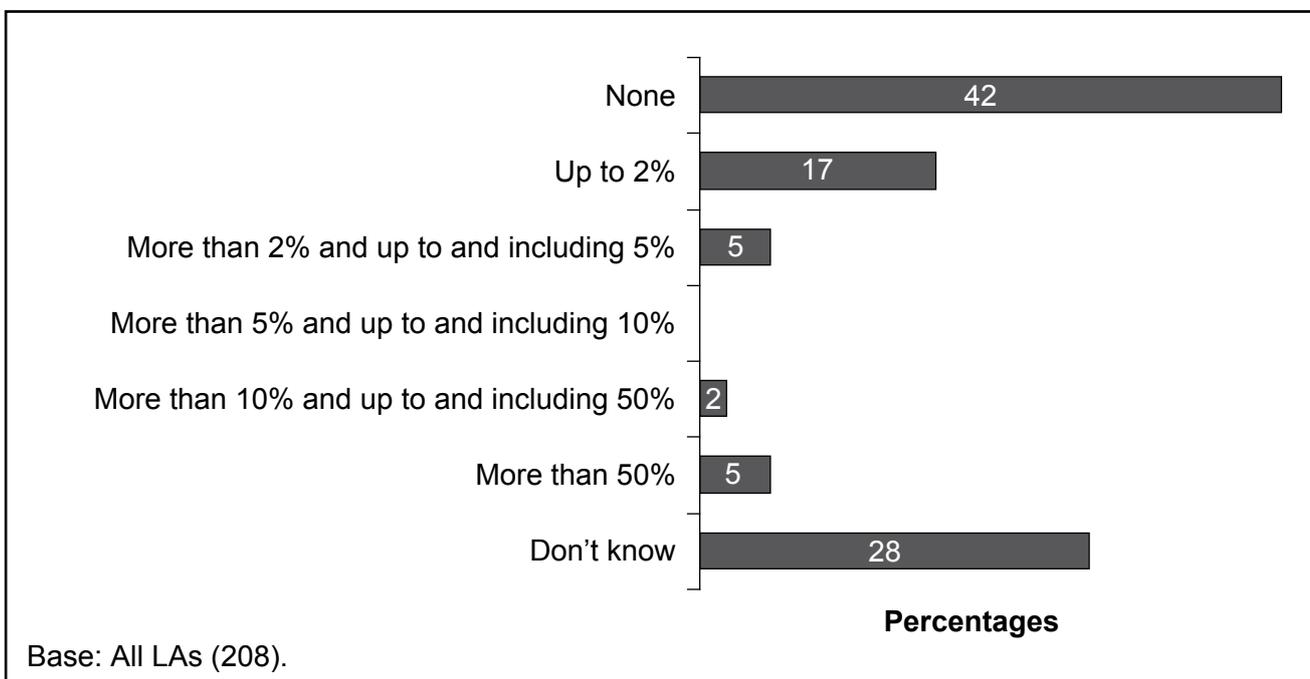


Where the landlord was a registered charity or voluntary organisation, the majority (70 per cent) of LAs had between one and five hundred cases in supported housing that met the definition of ‘Exempt Accommodation’, a half (50 per cent) had 100 or less, one per cent said they had none. Just two per cent had between 501 and 1,500 cases in this category; none of the LAs said there were more than 1,500 cases in this category.

The average number (mean score) of cases of this kind across all LAs was 124. There were variations by LA type which were reflected in the mean scores for this measure. Welsh LAs had a higher incidence of these cases, with a mean score at 288, as did English Metropolitan Districts with a mean score of 194, in contrast to English Districts at 97.

²⁰ LAs were strongly encouraged to run reports where possible.

Figure 7.3 For HB cases in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association, what proportion of cases are referred to a rent officer?²¹

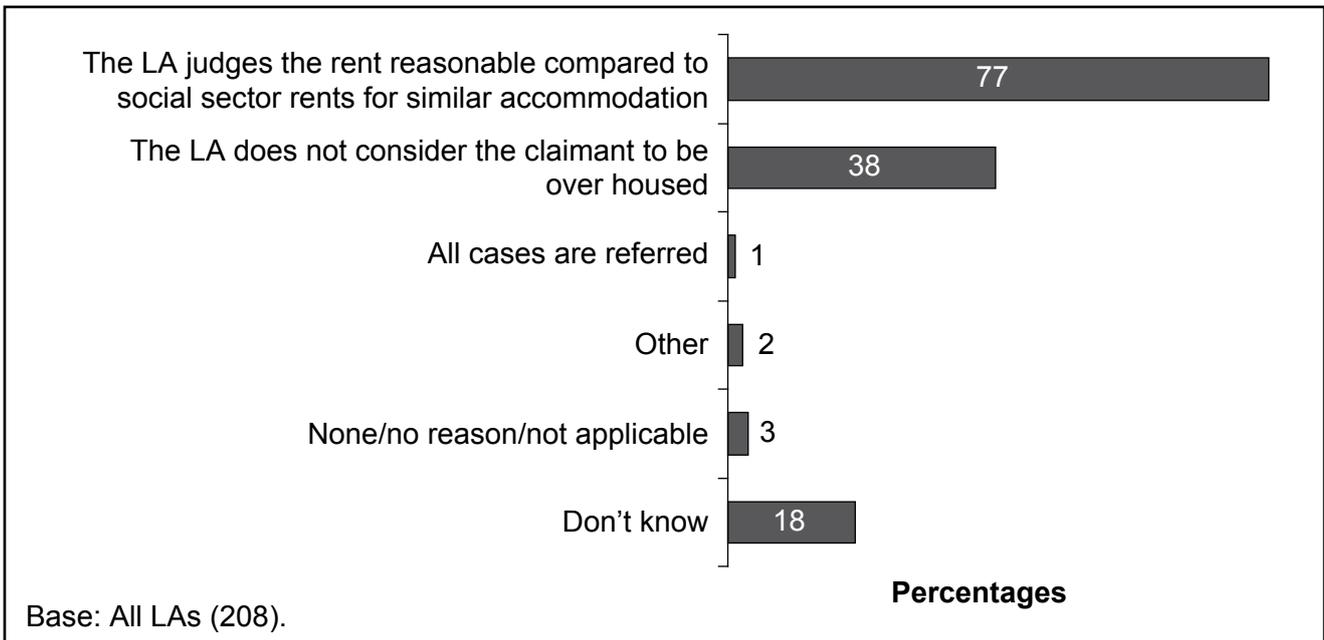


Approximately two in five (42 per cent) of LAs said none of the HB cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation, where the landlord was the county council or housing association, were referred to a rent officer. The proportion reporting no referrals of this type was significantly higher among LAs with low caseloads (49 per cent) compared with LAs with high caseloads (34 per cent).

Seventeen per cent of all LAs said up to two per cent of cases of this kind were referred, five per cent said it was between two and five per cent. Two per cent said that more than ten per cent and up to and including 50 per cent were referred, and five per cent said more than 50 per cent were.

²¹ LAs were strongly encouraged to run reports.

Figure 7.4 Thinking of HB cases in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association, that are not referred to a rent officer, what are the reasons for not referring?



Where LAs had HB cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation (where the landlord was a county council or housing association) and such cases were not referred, the most common reason given by LAs for not referring them, mentioned by three quarters (77 per cent) was that the LA judged the rent reasonable compared to social sector rents for similar accommodation. The proportions of LAs responding with this reason was significantly higher among English Metropolitan Districts (86 per cent), English Districts (81 per cent) and English Unitary Authorities (81 per cent), compared to, for example, Scottish LAs (53 per cent).

Approximately two in five of all LAs (38 per cent) said the reason for not referring was that the LA did not consider the claimant to be over housed. The number of LAs citing this reason was significantly higher among LAs that had not contracted-out administration (41 per cent) compared to those that had contracted-out administration (22 per cent).

Table 7.1 Please write in what percentage of cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation are living in each of the following types of accommodation?²²

| | Purpose built (%) | Hostels (%) | Adapted from mainstream social sector housing stock (%) | Foyer or other specialist provision (%) | Refuges (%) | Sheltered Housing (%) | Extra care housing (%) | Group homes (%) | Other shared houses (%) |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|---|---|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| None | 14 | 14 | 17 | 25 | 18 | 14 | 23 | 24 | 20 |
| Under 10 % | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 13 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| 11–24 % | 6 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 25–49% | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 1 | * |
| 50–74% | 1 | 4 | 2 | – | 1 | 4 | 1 | – | 2 |
| 75–99% | – | 1 | – | – | – | 2 | – | – | 2 |
| 100% | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | * | – | – | * | * |
| Don't know | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 |

Base: All LAs (208). Note: * indicates a value of less than 0.5%.

²² The total for all percentages should not exceed 100 per cent. If reports indicating these amounts cannot be obtained then estimates are acceptable, but we would strongly encourage the running of reports where possible

Table 7.1 details the responses of LAs to the question about what percentage of cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation were living in each of the following types of accommodation: purpose built; hostels; adapted from mainstream social sector housing stock; foyer or other specialist provision; refuges; sheltered housing; extra care housing; group homes and other shared housing.

LAs were encouraged to run reports where possible to attain this data but the question also stated that estimated answers would be acceptable. Despite the stated allowance of estimated responses, approximately two thirds (65 per cent) of LAs could not give an answer to this question about the breakdown of types of accommodation for cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation. London Boroughs were significantly more likely to have said don’t know to this question (86 per cent of London Boroughs compared to 64 per cent of English Districts, 62 per cent of English Metropolitan authorities, and 53 per cent of Scottish authorities).

Where LAs could give a definitive answer for the percentage of cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation by type of accommodation, Table 7.1 illustrates that sheltered housing and hostels made up slightly greater proportions of supported ‘exempt’ accommodation than Foyer or other specialist provision and refuges.

Table 7.2 Percentage of cases in supported exempt accommodation in communal/shared units and self-contained units²³

| | Communal/shared units (%) | Self-contained units (%) |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| None | 1 | 4 |
| Under 10 % | 5 | 3 |
| 11–24 % | 4 | 3 |
| 25–49% | 6 | 6 |
| 50–74% | 11 | 10 |
| 75–99% | 8 | 11 |
| 100% | 4 | 1 |
| Don’t know | 61 | 61 |

Base: All LAs (208).

Table 7.2 illustrates the responses of LAs to the question about what percentage of cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation were living in each of the following types of accommodation: communal/shared units or self-contained units.

LAs were encouraged to run reports where possible to attain this data but the question also stated that estimated answers would be acceptable. Despite the stated allowance of estimated responses, approximately three in five (61 per cent) of LAs could not give an answer to this question about the breakdown between these two categories of accommodation for cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation.

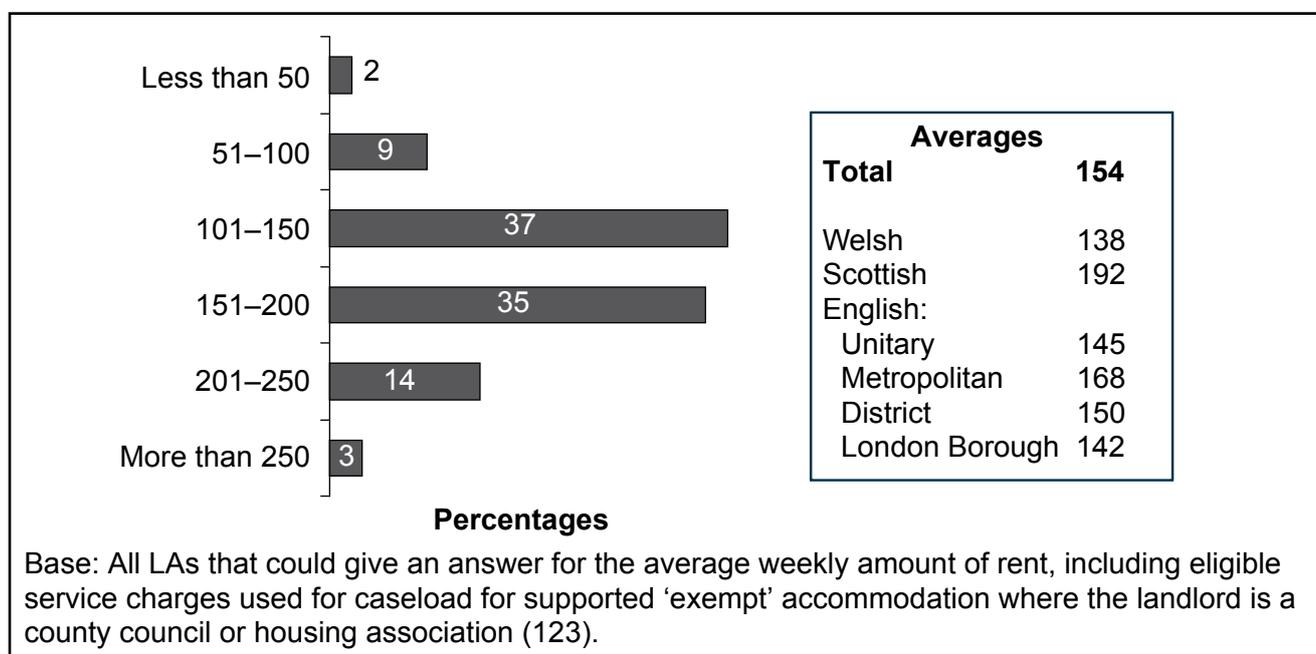
²³ Estimates were acceptable, however, LAs were strongly encouraged to run reports where possible in order to obtain precise figures.

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Where LAs could give a definitive answer to this question, Table 7.2 shows that the patterns of proportions of these two types of accommodation were relatively similar. For example, 12 per cent of LAs said they had between 75-100 per cent of their cases of supported ‘exempt’ accommodation in communal/shared units and the same proportion (12 per cent) said they had that number of cases within self-contained units.

However, there were significant differences for the responses to this question by LA type. Scottish LAs (12 per cent) and London Boroughs (five per cent) were significantly more likely to have said that 100 per cent of their cases in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation were living in self-contained units.

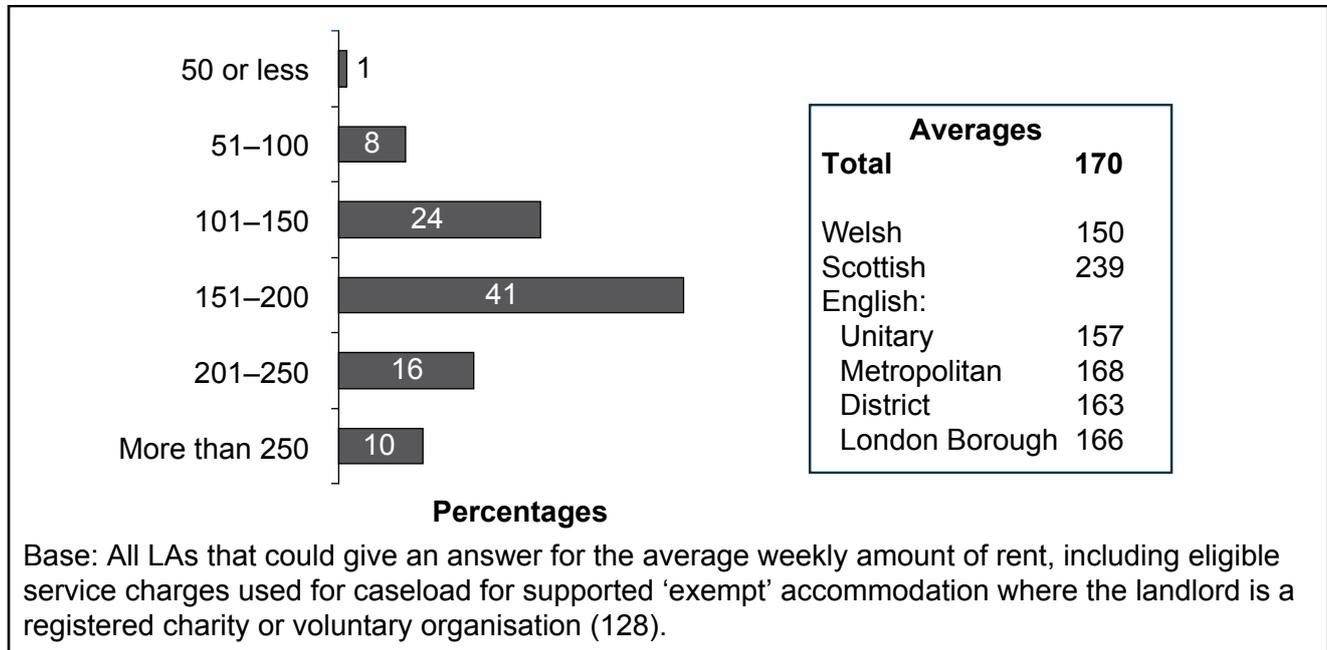
Figure 7.5 Average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for caseload in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association²⁴



LAs were asked to state the average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for their caseload in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation where the landlord was a county council or housing association. Approximately two in five (41 per cent) of LAs could not provide an answer to this question, despite the question stating that estimates were acceptable. The averages, where LAs were able to provide an answer, (123 LAs in total answered with amounts) were recorded in greatest concentrations in the range between £101 and £200 (mean score £154). Looking at the mean scores for type of authority, the amount was significantly higher in Scottish LAs (£192) compared to, for example Welsh LAs (mean score £138).

²⁴ Estimates were acceptable, however, LAs were strongly encouraged to run reports in order to obtain precise figures.

Figure 7.6 Average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for caseloads in Supported ‘Exempt’ Accommodation, where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation²⁵



LAs were asked to state the average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for their caseload in supported ‘exempt’ accommodation where the landlord was a registered charity or voluntary organisation. Approximately two in five (39 per cent) of LAs could not provide an answer to this question, despite the question stating that estimates were acceptable. The averages, where LAs were able to provide an answer, were recorded in the greatest concentration in the range between £151 and £200 (mean score £170). Looking at the mean scores for type of authority, the amount was significantly higher in Scottish LAs (£239) compared to, for example Welsh LAs (mean score £150).

²⁵ If reports indicating these amounts could not be obtained then estimates were also accepted.

Appendix A

Changes to Housing Benefit

A key aim of this wave of the survey was to explore the impact of changes to Housing Benefit (HB) in the private rented sector (PRS) and social rented sector (SRS). These changes were announced in the June 2010 Budget and the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 and included:

- changing the basis for setting Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in the PRS from the median (50th percentile) to the 30th percentile of local market rents;
- capping LHA rates by property size;
- uprating HB rates annually from April 2013 at the 30th percentile of market rents, or, if lower, the September 2012 Consumer Price Index rate; and
- removing the spare room subsidy in the SRS.

Other relevant measures included increasing the Government's contribution to the Discretionary Housing Payment budget by £10m in 2011/12 and an additional £40 million per year in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15. A non-dependant deduction to HB and Council Tax Benefit was also implemented in stages from April 2011 onwards.

Two further changes were announced in October 2010: raising the age for the Shared Accommodation Rate in the PRS from 25 to 35 (introduced in January 2012) and capping total household benefits at £500 per week (£350 for single people), to be introduced in four London boroughs from April 2013, and more widely from autumn 2013.

Not all of the changes had come into affect at the time that the survey was conducted. It is possible, however, that anticipatory effects of these changes may have had a bearing on the survey. Indeed, several of the questions asked local authorities about their future plans in light of the changes.

Appendix B

The survey

B.1 Methodology

Up to Wave 9 of the Local Authority Omnibus Survey we interviewed respondents on the telephone. However, at Wave 9 respondents were given a choice of completing the questionnaire on the telephone, as a self-completion questionnaire on paper or as a self-completion questionnaire on the Internet. This mixed-mode approach achieved a relatively good response rate of 71 per cent and, therefore, has been used from Wave 9 onwards. The response rate achieved at Wave 24 was 55 per cent (see below for more detail).

B.2 Sample

Using the updated contacts database from Wave 23, the local authority (LA) manager with responsibility for the most areas (out of Rent Rebate, Rent Allowance, Council Tax Benefit (CTB), Overpayment Recovery and Benefit Fraud) was identified. This manager then became our contact for Wave 24 and was sent a letter which set out the aims of the survey, explained the nature of the input required and advised the recipient that they had a choice of how to complete the questionnaire. The letter was signed by a signatory at the Department for Work and Pensions and included contact names at both GfK NOP and DWP for queries or if the respondent wanted to opt out of the survey.

The advance letter included details of each methodology – web-based questionnaire, paper questionnaire and telephone interview. Each respondent was assigned a user ID/password, which had to be entered at the start of the web survey. This enabled GfK NOP to keep track of interviews and ensure no one completed a survey more than once. Including an ID also allowed respondents to stop and restart an interview at any point and meant that different managers could easily access and complete the sections relevant to them.

Respondents were also sent a copy of the questionnaire so that they could prepare their answers in advance, or if they chose to, use it to fill-in their answers and return it to GfK NOP in the reply-paid envelope provided. It emphasised that, if necessary, they should consult other managers and staff for their input into the questionnaire. Telephone interviewers were instructed to check that the respondent had completed the questionnaire sent in advance and that it was readily available for reference during the interview.

B.3 Questionnaire design

Both Department officials and LA managers were consulted about the content of the questionnaire in order to gain as much useful information as possible from the research.

The first stage of questionnaire development involved a meeting between GfK NOP and relevant officials within the Department to discuss current issues and policy initiatives and establish the question areas that they would like to be included in the questionnaire.

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

The Wave 24 questionnaire was made up of seven sections and comprised questions about Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), Housing Benefit (HB) advice, Wider Issues (in particular whether there have been any early indications of the changes in Local Housing Allowance having an impact on homelessness and the movement of private rental sector tenants into, out of, and within the LA area), arrears and safeguards, risk-based verification, size criteria and benefit cap, and supported exempt accommodation.

Once the questionnaire had been through several drafts, eight LA managers were contacted in order to ask them about their understanding and comprehension of the questions. We discussed the questionnaire face to face with three LA managers and on the telephone with a further four. These discussions also gave managers an opportunity to raise any issues that were particularly important and relevant to them at the time. They were structured around the draft questionnaire but the structure of the session was kept fluid enough to allow managers to raise new issues and enlarge on existing subjects as they wished.

The comments of these managers were reviewed with the relevant officials at DWP and the questionnaire was, wherever possible, amended to take on board their views. The questionnaire was then piloted to test the wording and coverage of the draft document as well as the length of the questionnaire (11-26 September 2012). The questionnaire was tested on a total of seven LA managers on the telephone, using a paper version of the questionnaire.

Our specialist Web department within GfK NOP developed the web-based questionnaire. It was written in mriInterview, software supplied by SPSS and hosted on the GfK NOP facility. Every attempt has been made to make sure that the web questionnaire is as user-friendly and straightforward as possible, in order to encourage as many authorities as possible to use it. For example, respondents do not have to input their own and their colleagues' contact details – they are on the screen for them to check and amend; more than one person can be in the questionnaire at one time; respondents can fill in a section at a time, in any order.

As for the main stage of fieldwork, each pilot respondent was sent an advance letter and questionnaire. The GfK NOP executive team briefed a small team of interviewers. The briefing covered the purpose of the survey and explanations of any particular questionnaire points, as well as allowing time for practice on the questionnaire by means of dummy interviewing. A debrief was held at the end of the pilot interviewing which involved interviewers talking through their experiences in carrying out the pilot work and highlighting any areas of confusion or ambiguity they had observed.

B.4 Fieldwork

The same team of interviewers that worked on the pilot was briefed on the telephone for the main stage of the survey. Interviewers were also issued with full interviewer instructions, which comprised all survey materials including a hard copy of the questionnaire with the advance letter.

As in previous waves of the survey, interviewers' first task was to telephone LAs and check how they planned to complete the questionnaire. Respondents choosing to undertake the survey on the telephone were then either interviewed or an appointment for another

more convenient time was set-up. Those selecting to complete the questionnaire on paper or on the web were asked to complete it as soon as possible before 30 November 2011. Interviewers were then instructed to ‘telephone chase’ those respondents who did not return their completed questionnaire within the following 10 days or so and ask them to complete it as soon as possible. This process continued throughout fieldwork. An invitation email plus two reminder emails were also sent to all non-respondents after four and six weeks of fieldwork.

Given the fact that this was a census of all LAs and that HB managers are difficult to get hold of due to workload and turnover of staff, interviewers were not given a maximum number of call backs. Instead, in order to maximise the response rate across the country as a whole, they were asked to adopt a flexible approach in terms of call-backs and to liaise closely with head office throughout the fieldwork period.

Interviewers were required to provide weekly progress figures that were used to identify response difficulties during fieldwork. Unobtainable numbers, no answers, wrong numbers etc were all investigated immediately.

Fieldwork started on 22 October 2012 and was supposed to finish on 30 November 2011, although it was actually held open until 14 December 2012 to try and increase the response rate. By the end of fieldwork a total of 211 LA managers had participated in the survey, representing a response rate of 55 per cent. Within this achieved sample of 211 there were seven LAs that did not complete every section of the questionnaire. The section filled-in by the highest number of LAs (211) was Section A on DHPs.

This total sample of 211 LAs breaks down as 169 web-based questionnaires, 35 paper questionnaires and seven telephone interviews (all of these were pilot interviews).

The overall percentage of authorities completing the questionnaire has decreased on the previous wave in 2011 when 62 per cent of LAs participated.

B.5 Interpretation of the data

Data used for the analysis is derived from three sources: the contacts database, DWP and the interview itself. The data was analysed by a number of different variables as shown below:

Table B.1 Data analysis variables

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| LA type | Welsh, Scottish, English Unitary, English Metropolitan, English District, London Borough |
| Contracting-out status | Contracted out, not contracted out |
| HB/CTB caseload | Low (up to 10,000 cases), Medium (10,001-20,000 cases), High (20,001+ cases) |
| Region | Scotland, North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, North West, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, South East, South West, London, Wales |

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Information on LA type, HB/CTB caseload and region was provided as part of the contacts database, while data from the previous wave of the survey was used for contracting-out status.

The following points should be noted when using this report:

- a sample, not the entire ‘population’, of LA HB managers has been interviewed. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. Where bases are low, care should be taken when interpreting the data;
- where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of ‘don’t know’ or ‘other’ categories, or multiple answers; and
- throughout the report, an asterisk indicates a value of less than 0.5 per cent but not zero, and ‘0’ (zero) denotes no observation in that cell.

B.6 Statistical reliability

It should be remembered that a sample, not the entire population, of HB managers was interviewed. We cannot, therefore, be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the ‘true’ values). We can however, predict the variation between the sample results and the ‘true’ values from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95 per cent – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value will fall within a specified range.

However, given that this sample comprises 55 per cent of the total population, the level of statistical reliability is slightly higher than if the sample had come from a larger population. On this basis, responses to the questionnaire provide data with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points at the 95 per cent level. In practice this means that where 50 per cent give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the ‘true’ value will fall between 45.5 per cent and 54.5 per cent. Table B.2 shows the sampling error for the whole sample and key sub-groups across a range of parameters. Note that the closer a finding is to 50 per cent the greater the variability of responses within the sample.

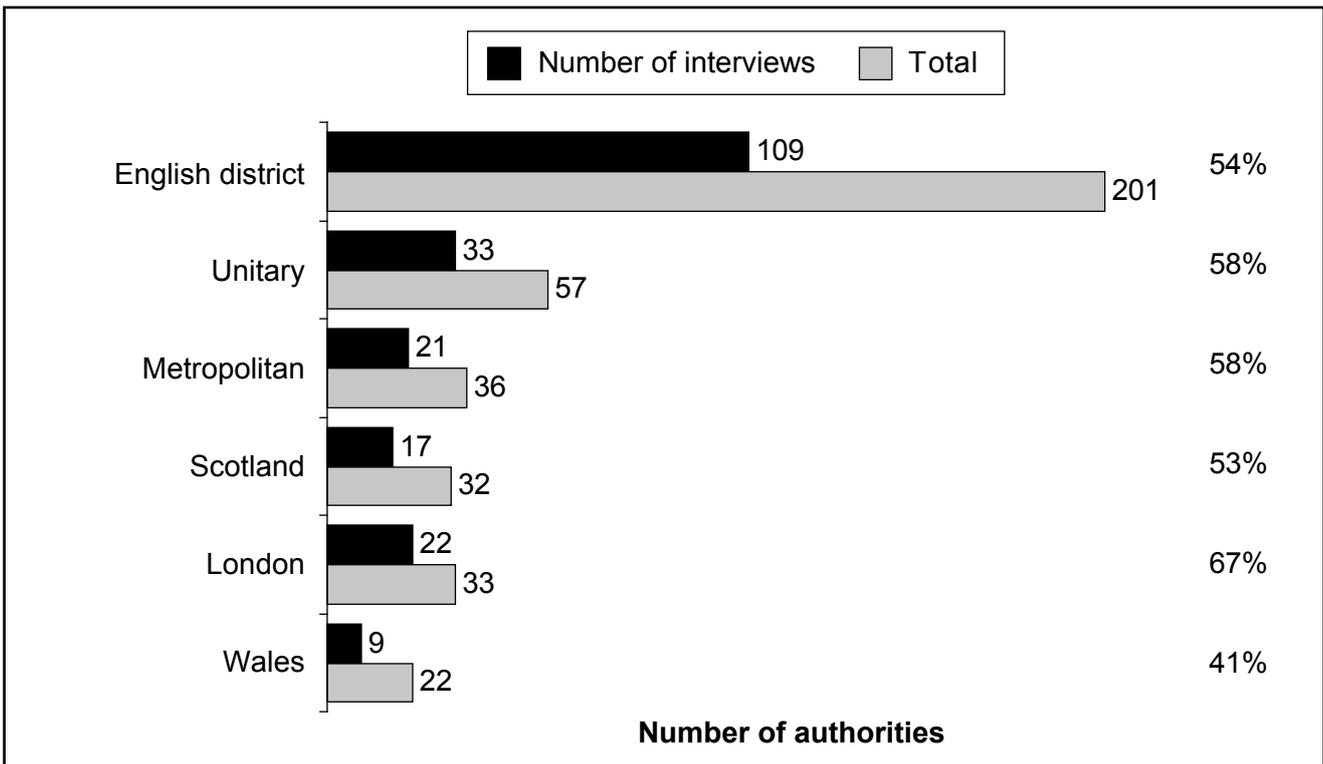
Table B.2 Wave 24 sampling error

| | Sample size | Universe | 10% or 90% ± | 30% or 70% ± | 50% ± |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|
| All local authorities | 211 | 381 | 2.7 | 4.1 | 4.5 |
| LA type | | | | | |
| Welsh | 9 | 22 | 15.1 | 23.0 | 25.1 |
| Scottish | 17 | 32 | 9.8 | 14.9 | 16.3 |
| English Unitary | 33 | 57 | 6.6 | 10.1 | 11.1 |
| English Metropolitan | 21 | 36 | 8.3 | 12.7 | 13.8 |
| English District | 109 | 201 | 3.8 | 5.5 | 6.4 |
| London Borough | 22 | 33 | 7.2 | 11.1 | 12.1 |

B.7 Response rates

As mentioned earlier, a total of 211 LAs participated in Wave 24 of the survey, which represents a response rate of 55 per cent. As Figure B.1 shows, response rate varies by local authority type, from a high of 67 per cent of London Boroughs and 58 per cent of English Metropolitan Districts and Unitary authorities to just 41% of Welsh LAs.

Figure B.1 Response rates, by LA type



Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Table B.3 provides further details of response rate by LA type.

Table B.3 Response rates by LA type

| | Total | Wales | Scotland | English District | English Metropolitan District | English Unitary | London Borough |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Telephone: mainstage completes | | | | | | | |
| Telephone: pilot completes | 7 | | 1 | 4 | | | 2 |
| Web: completes | 163 | 8 | 10 | 86 | 19 | 26 | 14 |
| Web: partial completes | 6 | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Paper: completes | 34 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| Paper: partial completes | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Total: completes + partial completes | 211 | 9 | 17 | 109 | 21 | 33 | 22 |
| Soft call back | 42 | 2 | 3 | 20 | 3 | 8 | 6 |
| Will complete paper questionnaire | 6 | 1 | 2 | | | 3 | |
| Will complete on web | 32 | 4 | 2 | 22 | 1 | 3 | |
| Refusal (insufficient time/resources) | 60 | 4 | 4 | 37 | 8 | 5 | 2 |
| No answer/engaged/voicemail | 30 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Total | 381 | 22 | 32 | 201 | 36 | 57 | 33 |
| Response rate | 55% | 41% | 53% | 54% | 58% | 58% | 67% |

B.8 Sample profile

Table B.4 Sample profile

| | Number | % |
|--|--------|-----|
| Total | 211 | 100 |
| LA type | | |
| Welsh | 9 | 4 |
| Scottish | 17 | 7 |
| English Unitary | 33 | 16 |
| English Metropolitan | 21 | 10 |
| English District | 109 | 52 |
| London Borough | 22 | 10 |
| Contracting Out Status (based on 174 as this question was not asked at W24. Data was used from the previous wave) | | |
| Contracted out | 23 | 13 |
| Not contracted out | 151 | 87 |
| HB/CTB caseload | | |
| Low | 89 | 42 |
| Medium | 62 | 29 |
| High | 60 | 28 |
| Region | | |
| Scotland | 17 | 8 |
| North East | 7 | 3 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 12 | 6 |
| North West | 19 | 9 |
| East Midlands | 25 | 12 |
| West Midlands | 18 | 9 |
| East | 27 | 13 |
| South East | 34 | 16 |
| South West | 21 | 10 |
| London | 22 | 10 |
| Wales | 9 | 4 |

Appendix C

Questionnaire

ID Number: <<ID>>

JN 14500182

**Local Authority (LA) Insight Survey
Wave 24**

Dear Benefit Manager

I am writing to ask for your help with Wave 24 of the LA Insight Survey (previously known as LA Omnibus) where we are asking questions to feed into the monitoring of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) changes, as well as in preparation for the size criteria rules in the social rented sector and benefit cap which will be introduced in April 2013, and the review of the Risk Based Verification System.

You may be aware that the Department for Work and Pensions has commissioned an independent evaluation to monitor changes to the Local Housing Allowance system that were introduced in April 2011. These changes include the capping of LHA paid to new claimants, restrictions on the bedroom entitlement and an increase in the age for the single room rate of benefit. The Insight Survey that you may have completed last year has played a key role in the monitoring of a number of the early implementation issues and fed into the evaluation. We are interested in understanding how/whether there is a development in the effects these changes had on local authorities' work around administering Local Housing Allowance since you last completed the survey. This area covers the majority of this wave of the survey and includes DHPs, the work of HB advisers, tenants movement in and out of LAs (PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME OF THE QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION C MAY BE BEST ANSWERED BY YOUR HOMELESSNESS DEPARTMENT), rent negotiations, and arrears and safeguards.

Other sections are related to understanding the effect of the size criteria rule in the social rented sector and benefit cap to be introduced in April 2013. This will support the wider evaluation strategies for these changes. In addition, we are also looking for your feedback on the effectiveness of the Risk Based Verification System.

We appreciate that we have distributed more surveys over the past few months than usual. All the information gathered is essential for delivering an effective business, and the surveys provide the best method for collating important information during these changing and challenging times. We appreciate and are grateful for your effort in completing this survey.

The deadline for completing the survey is 30 November and you can complete it online, on this paper version or on the telephone (please see overleaf for instructions). If you need any help completing the survey itself please contact Darren Yaxley at GfK NOP on 020 7890 9759 or darren.yaxley@gfk.com. Alternatively for general queries about the survey contact Preeti Tyagi at DWP on 020 7449 5378 or rachel.tsang@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely



DWP Project Manager – Rachel Tsang – Housing Policy and Working Age Benefit Research

Self-completion survey on the internet: If you choose to fill-in the survey on the internet, you may access it anytime from 22 October – 30 November 2012. You will find it at <http://www.surveys.com/lao24>

This method is quite simple and you will be automatically routed through the survey as you answer each question. It allows you to enter our site any number of times, saving your details whenever you exit, allowing you to complete the survey at your own pace and convenience and to complete the sections in the order that suits you. However, please note that once you have input answers into all of the sections of the survey, you will be unable to re-start again and your responses will be sent directly to GfK NOP Research.

To access the survey you will be asked for your User ID. Please copy this carefully from the top of the letter for this survey. You, or your colleagues, can access the survey more than once using this User ID until you have completed it. All information is password protected and no one other than the GfK NOP team will be able to access your site or see your personal entries.

Self-completion survey on paper: If you choose to fill-in the survey on paper and post it back in the pre-paid envelope enclosed, please follow the instructions below and return it as soon as possible – by **30 November 2012** at the latest.

- Most questions can be answered simply by putting one (or more) tick(s) in the box(es) next to the answer(s) that applies to your local authority.
- Sometimes you are invited to write in your answer in your own words.
- Sometimes you are asked to write in a number. Please use leading zeros where necessary.
- Normally, after answering each question, you go on to the next one, UNLESS a box you have ticked has an instruction to GO TO another question.
- Please ensure that you check and amend the contact information at the back of the questionnaire (Section H).
- When you have finished, please post the survey using the pre-paid envelope provided.

Telephone interview: If you choose to conduct a telephone interview, then please use the hardcopy of this survey to prepare your answers in advance of the interview. By doing this, you should find that the interview itself will take no longer than 10-15 minutes. You will receive a call from a GfK NOP interviewer sometime between **22 October and 30 November 2012** or please contact karina.o'neill@gfk.com if you would prefer to make an appointment.

Contents

Section A: DHPs

Section B: HB Advice

Section C: Wider Issues

Section D: Arrears and safeguards

Section E: Risk Based Verification

Section F: Size Criteria and Benefit Cap

Section G: Supported Exempt Accommodation

Section H: Contact details

Section A – Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)

From April 2011 until the end of the spending review period in March 2015 an extra £130 million of funding is being provided to local authorities for the award of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). The following questions concern how your use of DHPs may have changed since April 2011.

All answer.

A1 In what situations does your LA currently award a DHP? Please tick all that apply in the first column below and then indicate what approximate percentage each situation makes up of total DHPs. The total for all percentages should not exceed 100%. Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, write in your % answer/s and then tick box for 'estimate'.

%

| | |
|---|---|
| Rent can't be met in full because of LHA rate or rent officer determination | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tenant in Rent Arrears | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Where there is a non-dependant deduction and non dependant can't pay | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rent in advance/rent deposit | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Meet cost of an additional room for carer/other non resident (eg.visiting children) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Meet additional cost because family member is ill/disabled | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Change in family circumstances mean they can't meet rent commitment | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Helping with mortgage payments in certain circumstances | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Emergencies, e.g. house fire, car accident etc | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Help with Council Tax | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Assistance to people under 35 on a temporary basis to give them time to move home | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 100% |

.....

Don't know

Tick this box if any answers here are estimated

Answer if you ticked more than three situations at A1. Others go to A3.

A2 What are the 3 most common reasons for currently awarding a DHP in your LA? Please tick up to 3 only

- Rent can't be met in full because of LHA rate or rent officer determination
- Tenant in Rent Arrears
- Where there is a non-dependant deduction and non dependant can't pay
- Rent in advance/rent deposit
- Meet cost of an additional room for carer/other non resident (eg. visiting children)
- Meet additional cost because family member is ill/disabled
- Change in family circumstances mean they can't meet rent commitment
- Helping with mortgage payments in certain circumstances
- Emergencies, e.g. house fire, car accident etc
- Help with Council Tax
- Assistance to people under 35 on a temporary basis to give them time to move home
- Other (please specify)

.....

Don't know

All answer.

A3 Thinking now about how your LA's use of DHPs has changed, if at all, since the regulations changed in April 2011. Firstly, since the regulations changed has your LA been more likely to use DHPs for any of the following groups of claimants than previously? Tick all that apply.

- Black and minority ethnic (BME)
- Disabled claimants
- Larger families (those with 3 or more children)
- Families with dependent children
- Lone parents
- Single people
- People under 25
- Single people aged 25-34
- Other (please specify)

.....

No, not more likely to use DHPs for any of these
No, not more likely to use DHPs – too early to notice changes in patterns of DHP awards

Don't know

A4 Would you say that since the transitional protection (TP) began to end, the number of DHPs awarded for periods of 3 months or less has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Tick one only.

- Increased **Answer A5**
- Decreased **Go to A7**
- Stayed the same **Go to A7**
- Don't know **Go to A7**

Answer if 'Increased' at A4. Others go to A7.

A5 What are the reasons for offering a short-term (short-term meaning 3 months or less) DHP award? Tick all that apply.

- Support tenants until the end of tenancy
- Tenant in Rent Arrears
- Longer term awards are not affordable
- Rent in advance/rent deposit
- Helping with mortgage payments in certain circumstances
- Emergencies, e.g. house fire, car accident etc
- Short term payment to landlords as part of rent and/or tenancy negotiation
- Other (please specify)

.....

Don't know

Answer if you ticked more than three reasons at A5. Others go to A7.

A6 What are the 3 most important reasons for offering a short-term (short-term meaning 3 months or less) DHP award? Please tick up to 3 only.

- Support tenants until the end of tenancy
- Tenant in Rent Arrears
- Longer term awards are not affordable
- Rent in advance/rent deposit
- Helping with mortgage payments in certain circumstances
- Emergencies, e.g. house fire, car accident etc
- Short term payment to landlords as part of rent and/or tenancy negotiation
- Other (please specify)

.....

Don't know

All answer.

A7 Would you say that since the transitional protection (TP) began to end, the number of DHPs awarded for periods of more than 3 months has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Tick one only.

- Increased **Answer A8**
Decreased **Go to A9**
Stayed the same **Go to A9**
Don't know **Go to A9**

Answer if 'Increased' at A7. Others go to A9.

A8 What is the maximum period that DHPs have been awarded for?

- 26 weeks
39 weeks
52 weeks
Other time period (weeks)
Don't know

All answer.

A9 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 your LA has been more or less likely to use DHPs for existing tenants (ie, those who had been tenants prior to April 2011 and were not affected by the change in LHA regulations) or has there been no change? Tick one only.

- More likely
Less likely
There has been no change
Don't know

A10 In January 2012 the LHA regulations for shared accommodation changed so that, unless they are in an exempt category, all single persons under 35 are now only eligible for the shared accommodation rate.

Has your LA reviewed your DHP allocation criteria in response to these changes to LHA regulations from January 2012? Tick one only.

- Yes **Answer A11**
No **Go to A12**
Don't know **Go to A12**

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Answer if ‘Yes’ at A10.

A11 **What changes, if any, has your LA made to your DHP allocation criteria in response to these changes to LHA regulations from January 2012? Tick all that apply.**

- Extend/use criteria currently used for 16-24s
- Concentrate on those with learning difficulties
- Concentrate on those with medical needs
- Concentrate on those escaping domestic violence
- Concentrate on vulnerable people
- Concentrate on Hostel leavers
- Other (please specify)

-
Have not made any changes
- Don't know

All answer.

A12 **Does your LA expect to spend/commit your full ‘additional’ DHP allocation in this financial year or not? Tick one only.**

- Yes, expect to spend/commit full allocation
- No, do not expect to spend/commit full allocation
- Don't know

Section B – Housing Benefit Advice

DWP is interested in whether the new regulations have had an effect on the work done by benefit advisers within your Local Authority.

B1 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the overall level of need for advice by HB claimants has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Please note we are interested only in changes in the level of need for advice here and not an actual change in the numbers claiming. Tick one only.

- Level of need has **increased a lot**
- Level of need has **increased a little**
- Level of need has **stayed the same**
- Level of need has **decreased a little**
- Level of need has **decreased a lot**
- Don't know

B2 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the demand for your LA to support tenants in rent negotiation with landlords has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Tick one only.

- Increased **Answer B3**
- Decreased **Go to B5**
- Stayed the same **Go to B5**
- Don't know **Go to B5**

Answer if 'Increased' at B2.

B3 For what proportion of the total number of LHA tenants in your LA has your LA been involved in rent negotiations with landlords? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, please tick the appropriate box and then tick box for 'estimate'.

- Under 10%
- 10% – 24%
- 25% – 49%
- 50% – 74%
- 75% – 99%
- 100%
- Don't know

Tick this box if answer here is an estimate

Answer if 'Increased' at B2.

B4 What proportion of these rent negotiations that your LA has been involved in have been successful? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, please tick the appropriate box and then tick box for 'estimate'.

- Under 10%
- 10% – 24%
- 25% – 49%
- 50% – 74%
- 75% – 99%
- 100%
- Don't know

Tick this box if answer here is an estimate

All answer.

B5 In general, would you say that as a result of the regulation changes in April 2011 your LA's HB Advisers have been able to offer the same level of service (i.e. claim times, processing etc) to tenants or have they had to cut back any of their services? Tick one only.

- Been able to offer the same level of service
- Have had to cut back some of the services
- Don't know

Section C – Wider issues

Please note that this section (or questions within this section) may be best answered by colleagues in Housing and Homelessness teams so may need to be passed on to them

One of the changes introduced to new LHA claims from April 2011 is that LHA is now calculated on the basis of the 30% median (previously it was 50%). This has potential implications in terms of how much rent claimants are able to pay and how much income landlords can derive from letting to LHA tenants. The department would like to know of any indications of landlords leaving the LHA sub-market or increased homelessness. The following questions concern the operation of private rental sector with regard the Housing Benefit sub-markets.

All answer.

C1 Have the April 2011 regulations caused landlords to leave the HB sub-market in your area, i.e. have any stopped renting to HB claimants, or not, compared with 18 months ago? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. Tick one only.

Yes **Answer C2**

No **Go to C3**

Don't know **Go to C3**

Answer if 'Yes' (have noticed landlords leaving HB sub-market) at C1.

C2 What proportion of landlords would you estimate have withdrawn from the private rented sector in your area? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, please tick the appropriate box and then tick box for 'estimate'.

Under 10%

10% – 24%

25% – 49%

50% – 74%

75% – 99%

100%

Don't know

Tick this box if answer here is an estimate

All answer.

C3 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of people who would normally be housed in the Private Rented Sector presenting to your LA as homeless has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. Tick one only.

- Increased Answer C4
- Decreased Go to C5
- Stayed the same Go to C5
- Don't know Go to C5

Answer if 'Increased' at C3.

C4 What are the three main reasons for homelessness in your LA amongst those who would normally be housed in the Private Rented Sector? Please tick the three main reasons below.

- Relationship breakdown
- Family dispute
- Domestic violence
- Neighbourhood harassment
- Loss of accommodation due to rent arrears
- Suitable accommodation not affordable
- A reduction in the number of properties available in the PRS
- Wider economic circumstances
- End of support for mortgage interest
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Other (please specify)
-
Don't know

Movement of claimants.

All answer.

C5 In your opinion, since the regulations changed in April 2011 has the number of claimants in the Private Rented Sector moving into your LA area increased, decreased (a lot or a little) or stayed the same? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. Tick one only.

- Increased a lot Answer C6
- Increased a little Answer C6
- Stayed the same Go to C8
- Decreased a little Go to C8
- Decreased a lot Go to C8

Don't know **Go to C8**

Answer if 'Increased' at C5.

C6 Thinking about the claimants that have moved into your LA area since the regulations changed in April 2011, from where have these claimants moved? Please tick all that apply. Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information.

- Neighbouring LA area
- Same region (nearby LA area but not neighbouring)
- Greater London area
- Other part of UK
- Other (please specify)

.....
Don't know

C7 How would you describe the types of households that have moved into your LA area since the regulations changed in April 2011? Please tick all that apply in the first column and then indicate the approximate percentage of each in the second column. The total for all percentages should not exceed 100%. Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, please write in your % answer and then tick box for 'estimate'.

| | % |
|---|---|
| Black and minority ethnic (BME) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disabled claimants | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Larger families (those with 3 or more children) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Families with dependent children | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lone parents | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single people | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People under 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single people aged 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

100%

.....
Don't know
Tick this box if any answers here are estimated

All answer.

C8 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of claimants in the private rented sector moving out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation has increased, decreased (a lot or a little) or stayed the same? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. Tick one only.

- Increased a lot Answer C9
- Increased a little Answer C9
- Stayed the same Go to C10
- Decreased a little Go to C10
- Decreased a lot Go to C10
- Don't know Go to C10

Answer if 'Increased' at C8.

C9 How would you describe the types of households that have moved out of your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation since the regulations changed in April 2011? Please tick all that apply in the first column and then indicate the approximate percentage of each in the second column. The total for all percentages should not exceed 100%. Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, please write in your % answer and then tick box for 'estimate'.

| | % |
|--|---|
| Black and minority ethnic (BME) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disabled claimants | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Larger families (those with 3 or more children) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Families with dependent children | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lone parents | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single people | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People under 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single people aged 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 100% |
| | |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tick this box if any answers here are estimated | <input type="checkbox"/> |

All answer.

C10 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of claimants in the private sector moving within your LA area (ie. moving from one property to another but staying in your LA area) in order to find cheaper accommodation has increased, decreased (a lot or a little) or stayed the same? Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. Tick one only.

- Increased a lot **Answer C11**
- Increased a little **Answer C11**
- Stayed the same **Go to C12**
- Decreased a little **Go to C12**
- Decreased a lot **Go to C12**
- Don't know **Go to C12**

Answer if 'Increased' at C10.

C11 How would you describe the types of households that have moved within your LA area in order to find cheaper accommodation? Please tick all that apply in the first column and then indicate the approximate percentage of each in the second column. The total for all percentages should not exceed 100%. Please note your answer can be based on your general perception if you do not keep records of this information. If this is the case, please write in your % answer and then tick box for 'estimate'.

| | % |
|--|---|
| Black and minority ethnic (BME) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disabled claimants | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Larger families (those with 3 or more children) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Families with dependent children | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lone parents | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single people | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People under 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single people aged 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 100% |
| | |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tick this box if any answers here are estimated | <input type="checkbox"/> |

All answer.

C12 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of claimants moving to smaller properties/downsizing has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Tick one only.

- Increased
- Decreased
- Stayed the same
- Don't know

C13 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 the number of landlords in your area who are letting properties as shared housing/HMO that were previously let to families or as self-contained accommodation has increased, decreased (a lot or a little) or stayed the same. Tick one only.

- Increased a lot **Answer C14**
- Increased a little **Answer C14**
- Stayed the same **Go to Section D**
- Decreased a little **Go to Section D**
- Decreased a lot **Go to Section D**
- Don't know **Go to Section D**

Answer if 'Increased' at C13.

C14 Have the changes in landlords letting patterns affected any of the following? Tick all that apply.

- Increased demand on council services
- Areas becoming more transient
- Increasing neighbour problems/anti-social behaviour
- Increases in complaints from home owners
- Other (please specify)

.....
Don't know

Section D – Arrears and safeguards

In April 2011 DWP introduced a new temporary safeguard provision which was included in the Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulations 2010. Local authorities can make payments direct to the landlord where they consider that it will assist the claimant in securing or retaining a tenancy. The followings questions concern the experience of your local authority since this amendment.

All answer.

D1 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 requests for direct payments by landlords on grounds of arrears has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Tick one only.

- Increased **Answer D2**
 Decreased **Go to D3**
 Stayed the same **Go to D3**
 Don't know **Go to D3**

Answer if 'Increased' at D1.

D2 And have the regulations changing in April 2011 led to your LA being more or less likely to approve these requests or has there been no change? Tick one only.

- More likely to approve
 Less likely to approve
 There has been no change
 Don't know

All answer.

D3 Would you say that since the regulations changed in April 2011 requests by landlords for direct payments on grounds of claimants being unlikely to pay has increased, decreased or stayed the same? Tick one only.

- Increased **Answer D4**
 Decreased **Go to D5**
 Stayed the same **Go to D5**
 Don't know **Go to D5**

Answer if 'Increased' at D3.

D4 And since the regulations changed in April 2011, has your LA been more or less likely to approve these requests or has there been no change? Tick one only.

- More likely to approve
 Less likely to approve
 There has been no change
 Don't know

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

All answer.

D5 Since the regulations changed in April 2011 has your LA made use of the new safeguard that allows LHA to be paid direct to the landlord in order to help claimants secure or maintain a tenancy provided the landlord reduces the rent?

- Yes **Answer D6.**
No **Go to Section E**
Don't know **Go to Section E**

Answer if 'Yes' at D5.

D6 In approximately what proportion of LHA tenants has your LA used this safeguard?

- %
Don't know

Section E – Risk-based verification

Risk Based Verification (RBV) assigns a risk rating to each HB/CTB claim which determines the level of verification required. It allows more intense verification activity to be targeted at those claims which are deemed to be at highest risk of involving fraud and/or error.

It is practiced on aspects of claims in Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and the Pension Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) and in April 2012 DWP extended it on a voluntary basis to all LAs. The following questions are about take-up of the scheme and LAs views on how efficient and effective it is.

All Answer.

E1 Is your LA currently applying RBV on HB/CTB claims? Tick one only.

- Yes, currently applying RBV **Answer E2**
 No, but intend to start applying RBV **Go to Section F**
 No and have no intention of starting to apply RBV **Go to Section F**
 Don't know **Go to Section F**

Answer if 'Yes' at E1.

E2 Which of the following approaches has your LA adopted to risk profile your HB/CTB claimants? Tick all that apply.

- IT tools set up internally
 IT tools applied by external supplier
 Clerically/manually by HB staff
 Other (please specify)

.....
 Don't know

E3 How satisfied are you with the approach you are currently using to risk profile HB/CTB claimants? Tick one only.

- Very satisfied **Go to E5**
 Fairly satisfied **Go to E5**
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied **Answer E4**
 Fairly dissatisfied **Answer E4**
 Very dissatisfied **Answer E4**
 Don't know **Answer E4**

Answer if ‘Neither’, ‘Fairly’ or ‘Very dissatisfied at E3.

E4 Why is your LA not satisfied with the approach you are currently using to risk profile HB/CTB claimants? Please write in below.

.....

.....

.....

All Answer.

E5 Overall, how effective would you say that RBV has been in terms of each of the following. Tick one in each row below.

| | Very effective | Fairly effective | Not very effective | Not at all effective | Too early to say | Don't know |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reducing fraud and error | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improving processing times | <input type="checkbox"/> |

E6 When your LA identifies high risk claims, what increased verification is carried out? Tick all that apply.

- Credit Reference Agency checks
- Visit to claimants home
- Meeting claimant
- Increased documents checks
- Other (please specify)

.....
Don't know

Section F – Size criteria and Benefit Cap

On 1 April 2013 the Government is introducing size criteria rules into Housing Benefit for those renting from a Local Authority, a Housing Association or other registered social landlord. The criteria will restrict the size of accommodation a claimant can receive Housing Benefit for, based on their household size. If a claimant is assessed under these rules as having more bedrooms than is necessary for their household they will be considered to be under occupying that property and there will be a reduction in their housing benefit.

Also from April 2013 a cap will be introduced on the total amount of benefit that working age people can receive. This will mean that workless households should no longer receive more in benefits than the average earnings of working households. In the first instance, the cap will be administered jointly by DWP and local authorities through deductions from Housing Benefit payments. In the longer term it will form part of the new Universal Credit system.

All Answer.

F1 LAs are currently in the process of identifying cases affected by size criteria rules. How is your LA finding this process? Tick one box only.

- Very easy Go to F3
- Fairly easy Go to F3
- Neither easy nor difficult Answer F2
- Fairly difficult Answer F2
- Very difficult Answer F2
- Too early to say Answer F2
- Don't know Answer F2

Answer if 'Neither', 'Fairly difficult' or 'Very difficult' at F1. Others go to F3.

F2 Why do you say that the process of identifying cases affected by size criteria rules is not easy?

All Answer.

F3 For the social sector size criteria, under-occupation will be calculated from bedroom entitlement based on household composition information already held by local authorities and property size information to be received from landlords. To what extent do you think your LA will be able to achieve the identification of cases affected by size criteria rules electronically rather than manually for individual cases? Tick one only.

- Completely (100%)
- 90-99%
- 70%-89%
- 50%-69%
- 1%-49%
- Not at all
- Too early to say
- Don't know

F4 Do you currently hold information which allows you to easily identify HB claimants in Supported 'Exempt' Housing?

- (a) Yes, we currently hold information which allows us to identify **all** HB claimants in Supported 'Exempt' Housing **Go to F6**
- (b) Yes, we currently hold information which allows us to identify **some** HB claimants in Supported 'Exempt' Housing **Go to F5**
- (c) No, we don't hold information which allows us to identify any HB claimants in Supported 'Exempt' Housing **Go to F5**
- Don't know **Go to F6**

Answer if (b) or (c) at F4 ('Yes, but can only identify some' or 'No, can't identify any').

F5 How do you intend to identify those HB claimants in 'Exempt' Supported Housing who will be excluded from the size criteria rules but you don't currently hold information on? Read all options below and tick one only.

We will use local knowledge/other resources available to us to identify these claimants, so we can exempt them

We will wait until these claimants notify us, so we can exempt them

Other (please specify)

.....

Don't know

All answer.

F6 What work, if any, is your LA doing to alert current claimants of the upcoming size criteria rules and the benefit cap? Tick all that apply in both columns.

| | Size Criteria | Benefit Cap |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Printed leaflets – mailed out | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Printed leaflets – in office | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Notices within housing office | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Posters | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Letter sent direct to claimant | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information sent with Decision Letters | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Phoning claimant personally | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Workshops with customers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Road shows | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Website | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Press release | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local radio | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Article in Council newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Texts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Automated telephone calls | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Set up a telephone advice line | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Liaison through stakeholders | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not doing any work to alert current claimants | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

F7 Has your LA already reviewed, or does your LA intend to review, your DHP allocation criteria in anticipation of size criteria rules and the benefit cap? Tick one only in each column below.

| | Size Criteria | Benefit Cap |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Printed leaflets – mailed out | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, already reviewed | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, intend to review | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Too early to say | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

F8 How useful were the Circulars sent to your LA regarding the size criteria rules and the benefit cap? Tick one in each column below.

| | Size Criteria | Benefit Cap |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Very helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fairly helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not very helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not at all helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

F9 Do you think that your LA needs further support to implement the size criteria rules and the benefit cap? Tick one in each column below.

| | Size Criteria | Benefit Cap |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes, we definitely need more support | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More support would be useful but not essential | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| We do not need any more support | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Too early to say | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Answer if ‘Yes, we definitely need more support’ or ‘More support would be useful but not essential’. Others go to F11.

F10 Which of these types of additional support would you like? Please tick the box for the type of additional support you would like for size criteria/benefit cap as appropriate and specify (on the dotted lines) what topics you would like it to cover.

| | Size Criteria | Benefit Cap |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Further circulars | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | |
| Information or tools online | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | |
| Forums | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | |

All answer.

F11 Is your LA producing anything to help support the delivery of size criteria/benefit cap changes that might be of value/use to other LAs? Tick one in each column below.

| | Size Criteria | Benefit Cap |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Too early to say | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

Answer if ‘Yes’ at F11 for size criteria.

F12a **What is your LA producing to help support the delivery of size criteria changes that might be of value/use to other LAs? Please write in below as appropriate.**

Size criteria:

.....

Answer if ‘Yes’ at F11 for benefit cap. Others go to Section G.

F12b **What is your LA producing to help support the delivery of benefit cap changes that might be of value/use to other LAs? Please write in below as appropriate.**

Benefit cap:

.....

Local Authority Insight Survey – Wave 24

b) Where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation

- 100 or less
- 101-200
- 201-500
- 501-1500
- 1501-5000
- More than 5000
- Don't know

All Answer.

G3 For HB cases in Supported Exempt Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association, what proportion of cases are referred to a rent officer? If reports indicating these amounts cannot be obtained then estimates are acceptable, but we would strongly encourage the running of reports where possible.

- None
- Up to 2%
- More than 2% up to and including 5%
- More than 5% up to and including 10%
- More than 10% up to and including 50%
- More than 50%
- Don't know
- Tick this box if answer here is an estimate**

G4 Thinking of HB cases in Supported Exempt Accommodation where the landlord is a county council or housing association, that are not referred to a rent officer, what are the reasons for not referring? Tick all that apply.

- The LA judges the rent reasonable compared to social sector rents for similar accommodation
- The LA does not consider the claimant to be over housed
- Other (please specify)
-
Don't know

All Answer.

- G5** Please write in what percentage of cases in Supported Exempt Accommodation are living in each of the following types of accommodation? The total for all percentages should not exceed 100%. If reports indicating these amounts cannot be obtained then estimates are acceptable, but we would strongly encourage the running of reports where possible.

| | Percentage |
|--|--|
| Purpose built | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hostels | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adapted from mainstream social sector housing stock | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Foyer or other specialist provision | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Refuges | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sheltered Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Extra Care Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Group Homes | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other shared houses | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | |
| | 100% |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tick this box if any answers here are estimates | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- G6** Please write in what percentage of cases in Supported Exempt Accommodation are living in each of the following? The total for all percentages should not exceed 100%. If reports indicating these amounts cannot be obtained then estimates are acceptable, but we would strongly encourage the running of reports where possible.

| | Percentage |
|--|--|
| Communal/shared units | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self-contained units | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 100% |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tick this box if any answers here are estimates | <input type="checkbox"/> |

G7 **What is the average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for your caseload in Supported Exempt Accommodation? If reports indicating these amounts can be run then we would strongly encourage that, especially as reports identifying these cases will also be of value in preparing for implementation of the social sector size criteria.**

- a) Where the landlord is a county council or housing association £
Don't know
- b) Where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation £
Don't know

Answer if 'Don't Know' at G7 for either (a) or (b).

G8 **Please can you estimate in which range the average weekly amount of eligible rent, including eligible service charges, used for your caseload in Supported Exempt Accommodation falls. If reports indicating these amounts cannot be obtained then estimates are acceptable.**

a) Where the landlord is a county council or housing association

- £50 or less
£51-£100
£101-£150
£151-£200
£201-£250
More than £250
Don't know

b) Where the landlord is a registered charity or voluntary organisation

- £50 or less
£51-£100
£101-£150
£151-£200
£201-£250
More than £250
Don't know

Section H – Contact details

The information that you provide on the following questions will only be passed back to DWP Policy Group, where you have agreed for us to do so.

All Answer.

H1 Would you be willing for DWP to get in touch with you in the future to pick up on any issues you may have raised and/or to offer advice or support where appropriate.

Yes

No

H2 We are interested in receiving your opinions/views on this or future waves of the LA Omnibus Survey or any issues around HB. Please use the space below for your comments.

.....
.....
.....

H3 And finally please can you check your own contact details (printed below) and tick the appropriate box below.

All my contact details are correct

I have made some amendments

I have written in the missing contact details

Full name: <<RENAME>>

Job title: <<REJOB>>

LA Name: <<LA_NAME2>>

Telephone number, with extension: <<RETEL>>

Fax number: <<REFAX>>

Email address: <<EMAILADDRESS>>

Address (inc, postcode): <<READD1>>, <<READD2>>, <<READD3>>, <<READD4>>, <<READD5>>, <<REPCD>>

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in Wave 24 of the Local Authority Insight Survey