

# Housing Benefit Recoveries & Fraud - First Release

12<sup>th</sup> September 2012

Coverage: Great Britain

Theme: People and Places

*This Statistical First Release contains statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF).*



The Housing Benefit Recovery and Fraud statistics are National Statistics.

The latest National Statistics on Housing Benefits Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) data produced by the Department for Work and Pensions were released on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This release contains statistics relating to Housing Benefit fraud volumes and amounts of incorrectly overpaid benefit. It is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each Local Authority, but published annually.

This publication includes all Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud data covering the period from April 2011 to March 2012.

## Key findings

***Please note that the following data does not allow for imputation of any missing values and is based on the summation of the data presented in the published tables only. See section 2 for details of experimental statistics showing imputed totals.***

- The total value of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments outstanding at March 2012 stood at nearly £1.13 billion; an increase of 16% from the previous year.
- The total value of HB overpayments identified during 2011/12 has increased by 12%, in comparison to 2010/2011.
- The total value of HB overpayments recovered during 2011/12 has increased by 15%, in comparison to 2010/2011.
- The total value of HB overpayments written off has increased by 12% to almost £69 million, in comparison to 2010/2011.
- At March 2012 there were 1,175 full time equivalent fraud investigators dealing with 55,910 fraud referrals issued for investigation during the quarter; 38,470 cases were closed.
- The number of full time equivalent fraud investigators has reduced during 2011/12 by 6%.
- There has been a decrease of 10% in the number of cases referred for fraud investigation during 2011/12.
- The number of cases subject to investigation by the fraud section that were closed has decreased during 2011/12 by 4%; the equivalent number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* has also decreased by 8%.
- The number of cautions offered and accepted during 2011/12 has dropped slightly by around 2%.
- The number of cases relating to administration penalties offered and accepted during 2011/12 has remained steady; the equivalent number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* has increased by a third to 625.
- There were 8,210 cases accepted for prosecution during 2011/12, an increase of around 10%; the equivalent number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* increased by a quarter.
- There were 8,430 prosecutions resulting in guilty outcomes during 2011/12, an increase of 9%; the equivalent number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* increased by 23%.

\* DWP benefit includes Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Pension Credit, Incapacity Benefit, and Employment Support Allowance



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**Next publication:**  
13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

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## 1 Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud Data

Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each Local Authority (LA). This data is used to produce established statistics on measures of activity to detect fraud and to capture information on the amounts of benefit that are overpaid to claimants.

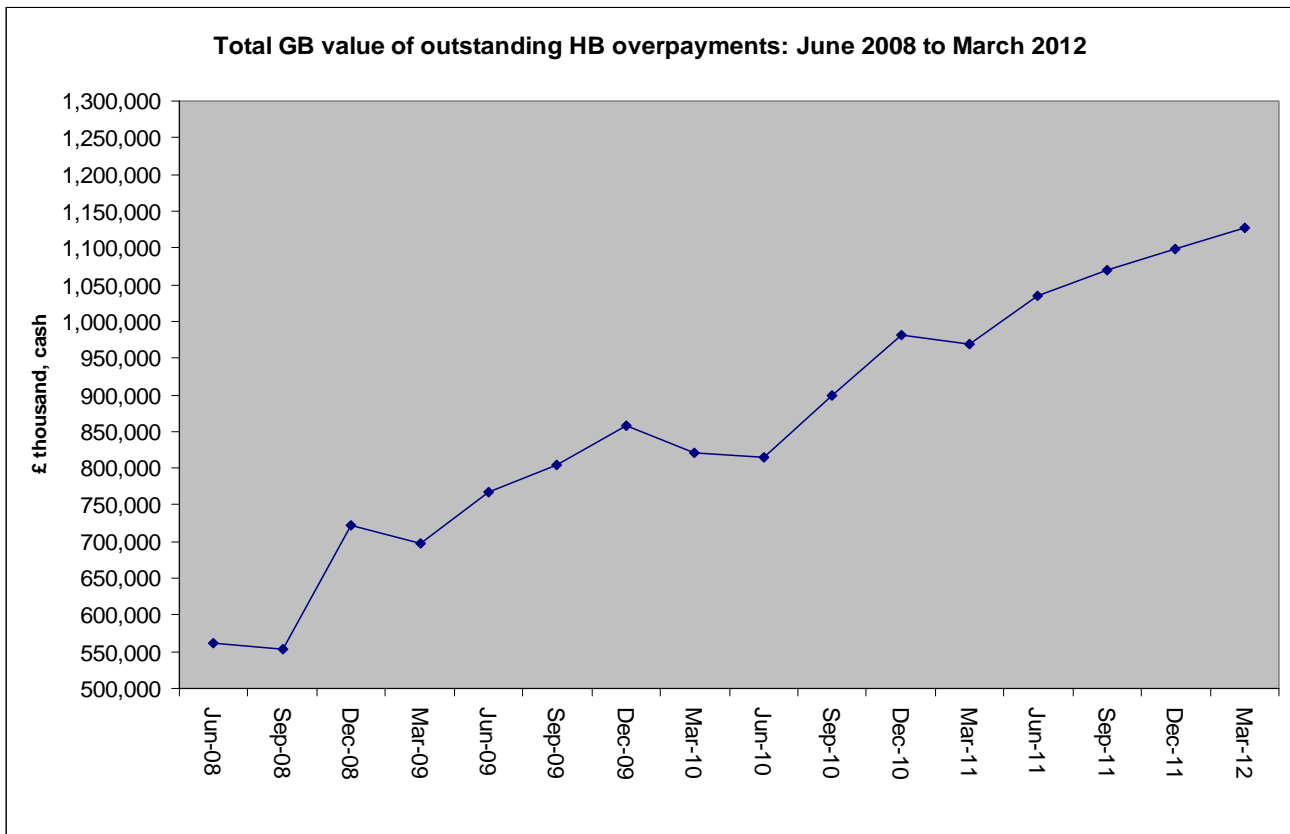
The data will also be used to feed into a range of briefings for Ministers and other senior officials on fraud and error issues and will be used to answer Parliamentary Questions. It will also be used for other policy functions including monitoring the impact of changes to sanctions policy and informing changes to policy.

### Average HBRF Data Return Rates

Collection Period	Average LA Return Rate (across all quarters)
2008 – 2009	89.7%
2009 – 2010	99.2%
2010 – 2011	99.5%
2011 – 2012	99.6%

Despite more complete returns for the current year, some Authorities cannot complete certain questions. Hence, the question level completion rate is often lower than the values quoted here. See section 2 for more details.

Please note that the following statistics in Section 1 do not allow for imputation of any missing values and are based on the summation of the data presented in the published tables only. As a result, these statistics should be used with caution as they do not represent a full national return. However, section 2 shows experimental statistics on a new basis which allow for imputation (at Great Britain level only) to account for Authorities which could not provide data.



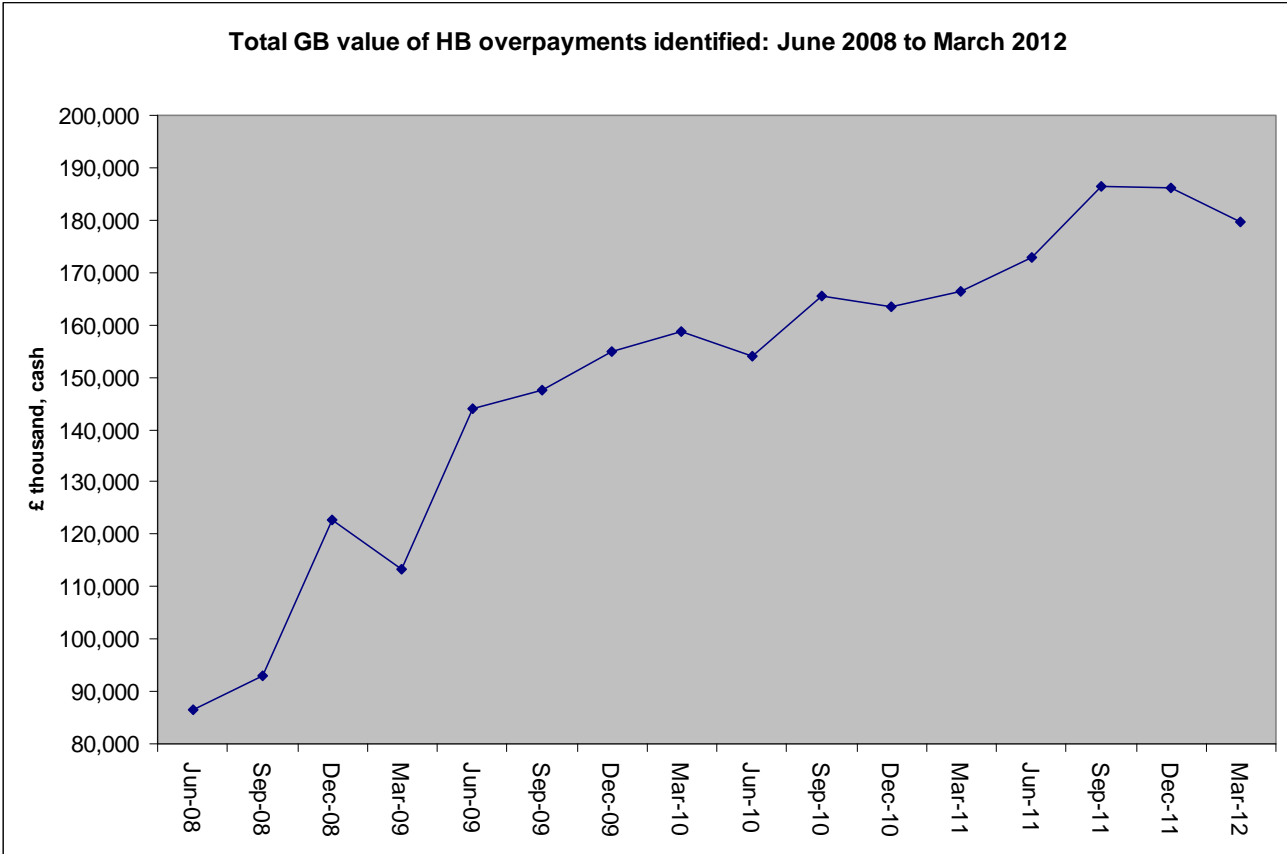
The total value of outstanding overpayments continues to follow an increasing trend. At March 2012 outstanding overpayments stood at almost £1.13 billion, an increase of 16% when compared with the equivalent value for the previous year.

88% of current outstanding overpayment is based in England.

3% of current outstanding overpayment is based in Wales.

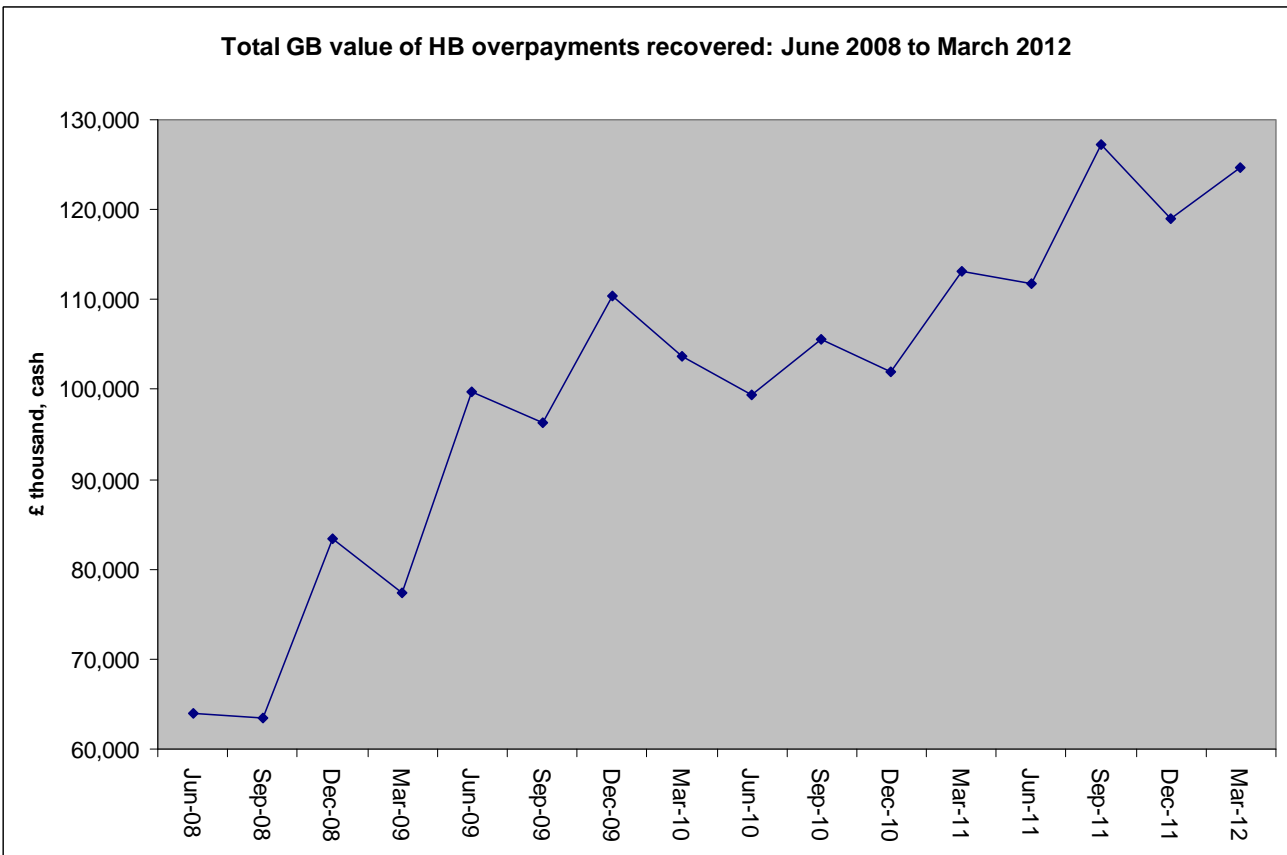
8% of current outstanding overpayment is based in Scotland.

**Total GB value of HB overpayments identified: June 2008 to March 2012**



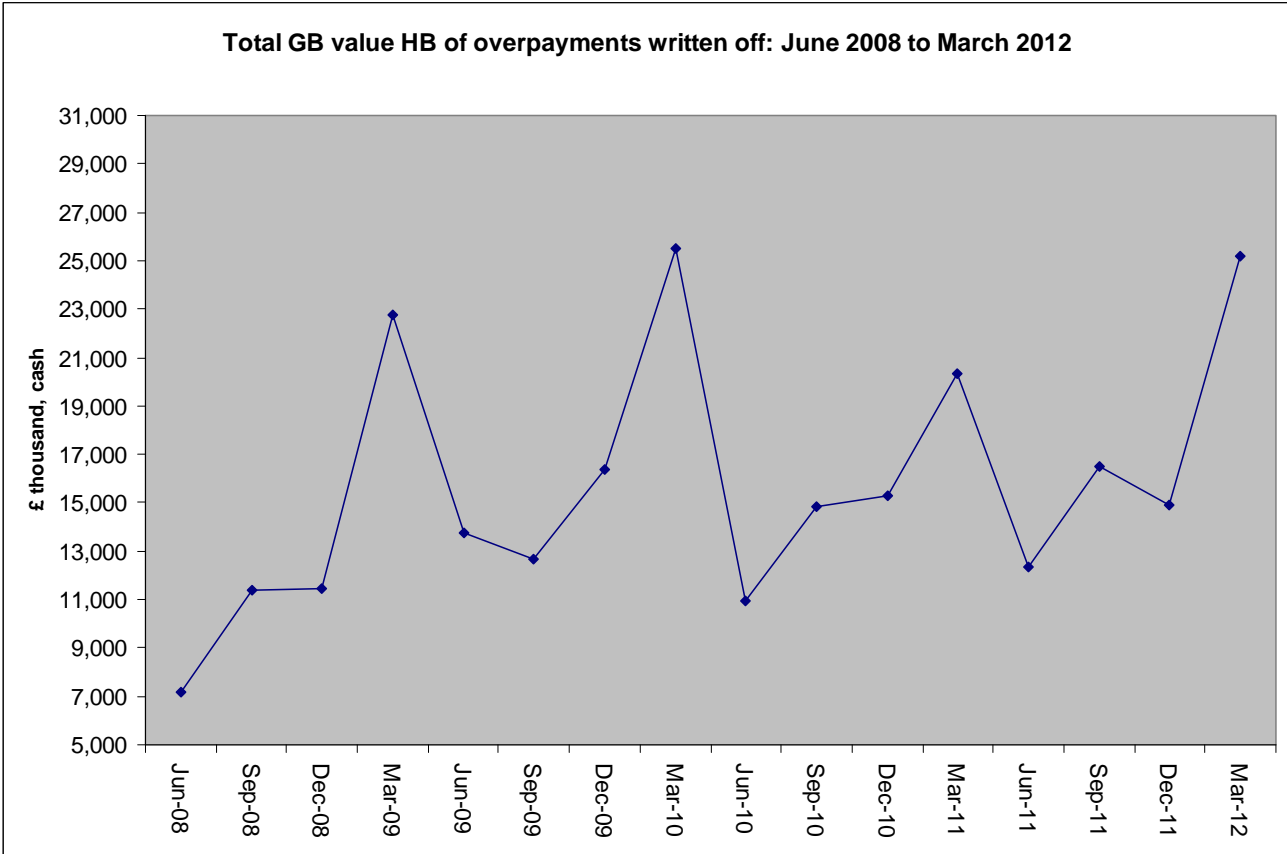
An upward trend is seen in the total value of overpayments identified, peaking at around £186m between September and December 2011. The latest quarter shows a 4% drop in overpayments identified in relation to the preceding quarter.

**Total GB value of HB overpayments recovered: June 2008 to March 2012**



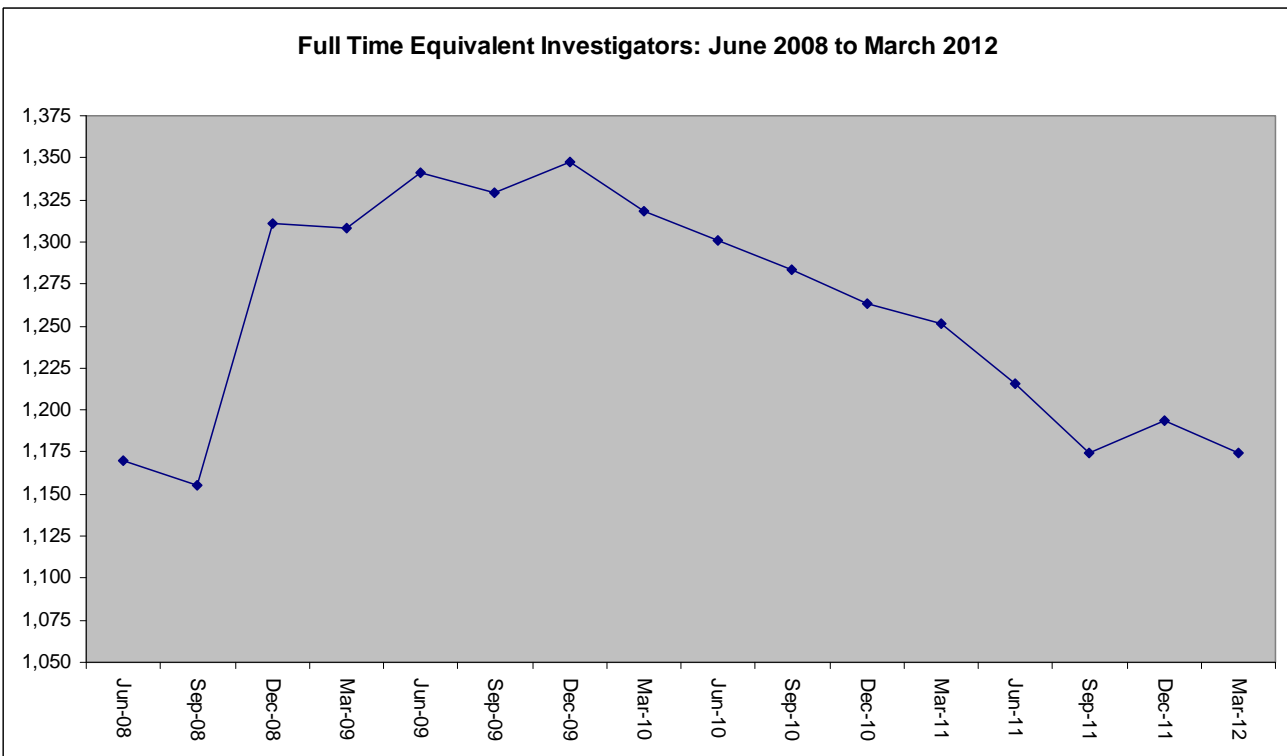
The total value of overpayments recovered varies seasonally between quarters, however overall it follows an upward trend. The total value of overpayments recovered peaked in September 2011 at over £127.2m. The latest quarter reports a level of £124.6m, an increase of 10% on the previous year.

**Total GB value HB of overpayments written off: June 2008 to March 2012**



The total value of overpayments written off is generally highest in the fourth quarter (March) of each collection year. This peaked in March 2010 at over £25m and dropped last year. However, the latest quarter (March 2012) shows that this amount has returned to previous 2010 levels.

**Full Time Equivalent Investigators: June 2008 to March 2012**



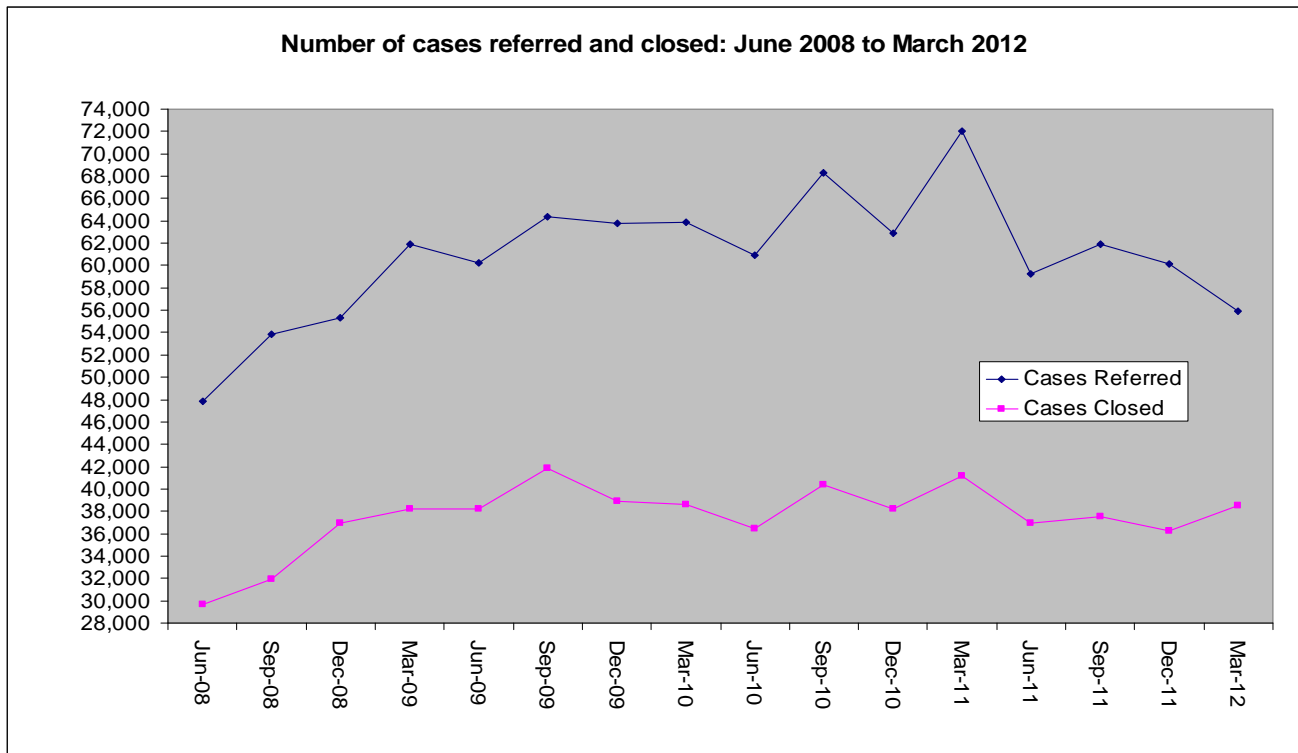
The number of full time equivalent fraud investigators peaked in December 2009 at 1,348 and has since followed a downward trend with the exception of a brief rise in December 2011. See Section 2 for details on imputation and how this affects the trend. The number of fraud investigators currently stands at 1,175, a reduction of 6% from this time last year.

At March 2012:

85% of FTE Fraud investigators are currently based in England.

6% of FTE Fraud investigators are currently based in Wales.

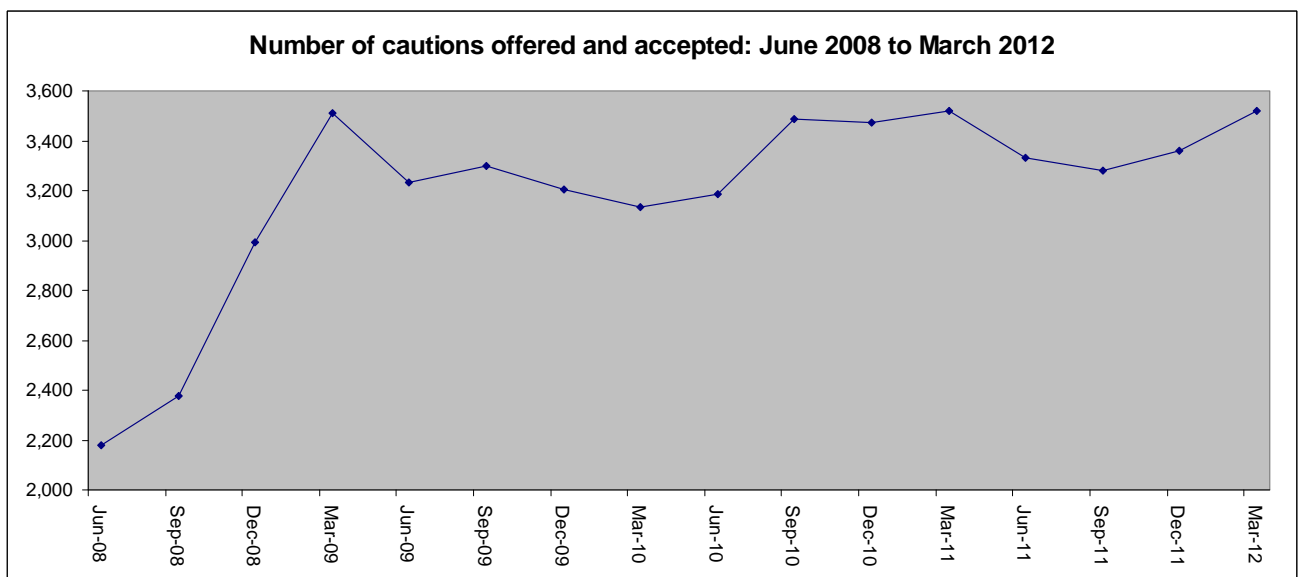
10% of FTE Fraud investigators are currently based in Scotland.



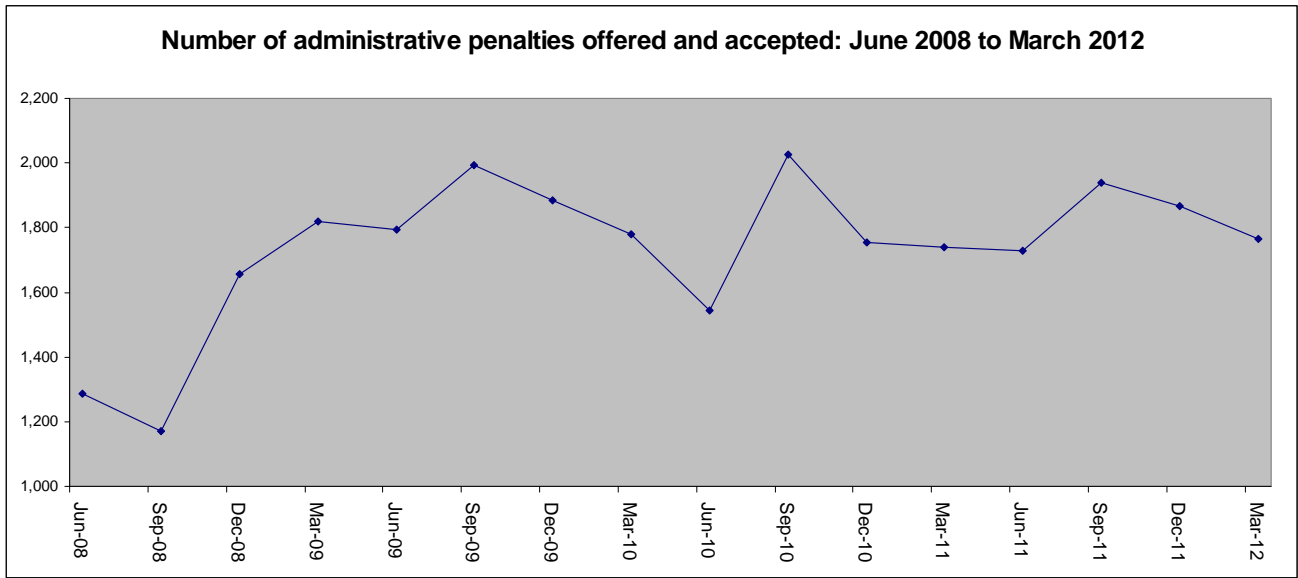
The number of cases referred to Local Authority fraud investigation peaked in March 2011 with 72,060 cases, despite the number of FTE fraud investigators reducing at this time. The number of cases closed during this period stood at 41,215.

The number of referrals to LA fraud investigation has dropped over the last year. The total number of referrals for 2011/12 was 237,290, a 10% drop from last year's figure of 264,150.

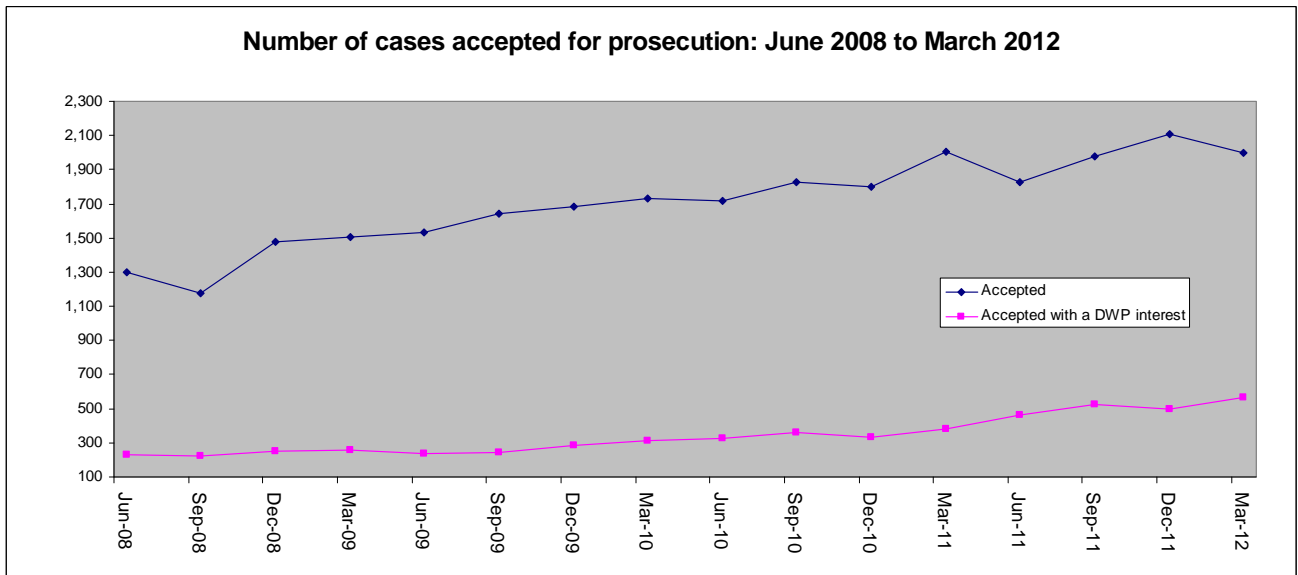
The number of cases closed seems to fluctuate between quarters throughout each year. For the last 3 years, this figure falls between 36,000 and 42,000.



The number of cautions offered and accepted dipped during the early part of last year, before rising to recapture the same level (3,520) seen at the equivalent point the previous year.

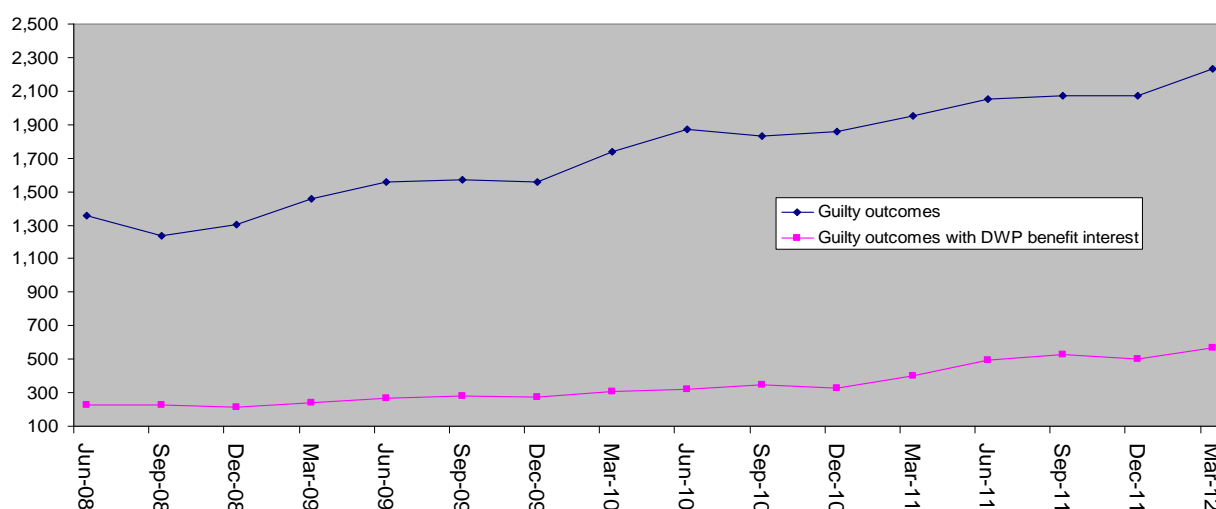


The number of administrative penalties offered and accepted shows large variations during each year. The latest year has shown an initial rise in September 2011 followed by a fall to 1,765 in March 2012, broadly in line with March figures from last year.



The number of cases that have been accepted for prosecution is steadily increasing. The cases with a DWP benefit interest are following a similar trend to the number of cases accepted for prosecution.

**Number of prosecutions resulting in guilty outcomes: June 2008 to March 2012**



The number of successful prosecutions has generally increased by the end of each collection period. Throughout the year the figure tends to remain broadly consistent for the first 3 quarters but increases slightly in the last quarter. The cases with a DWP benefit interest are following a very similar trend to the number of guilty outcomes.

*Source: Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud Extract (HBRF)*

The table below details those questions asked as part of the HBRF data collection process, which corresponds to DWP overpayments and fraud activity undertaken:

Field	Overpayment Questions
1	Total value of HB overpayments outstanding at the start of the quarter
2	Total value of HB overpayments identified during the quarter
3	Total value of HB overpayments recovered during the quarter
4	Total value of HB overpayments written off during the quarter

Field	Fraud Investigation Questions
5	Number of full time equivalent fraud investigators at the end of the quarter
6	Number of cases referred to the LA fraud investigation section during the quarter
7a	Number of cases subject to investigation by the fraud section, that were closed during the quarter
7b	Total number of cases under investigation that related to DWP administered benefits (included in 7a) that were closed during the quarter
8	Number of cautions offered and accepted during the quarter
9a	Number of administrative penalties offered and accepted during the quarter
9b	Number of administrative penalties offered and accepted with a DWP benefit interest (included in 9a) during the quarter
10a	Number of cases accepted for prosecution during the quarter
10b	Number of cases accepted for prosecution with a DWP benefit interest (included in 10a) during the quarter
11a	Number of prosecutions resulting in guilty outcomes (includes guilty pleas and verdicts) during the quarter
11b	Number of prosecutions resulting in guilty outcomes (includes guilty pleas and verdicts) with a DWP benefits interest (included in 11a) during the quarter



## 2 EXPERIMENTAL statistics showing totals for Great Britain, with imputations for missing Authorities

Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each Local Authority (LA). Some Authorities do not send forms every quarter, or cannot answer all the questions on the form. This produces missing data in the returns which, in turn, affects the reported Great Britain totals. Statisticians can fill the gap created by missing data by imputing or estimating what the missing value might have been.

The UK Statistics Authority report on compliance with the Code of practice for Official Statistics, published in June 2012 requires DWP to:

*“Review the methods used in HBRF to impute for non-response and other erroneous data, estimate the effect of this on published estimates, consider alternative approaches, and publish the outcome.”*  
Statistics on Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud, and the Abstract of Statistics on Benefits, Assessment Report 216, June 2012

In response to this requirement, this section produces experimental statistics showing the Great Britain totals for the HBRF forms, including estimates for Authorities who did not respond. For each question on the form, this section shows the raw GB total (i.e. excluding non-responding Authorities) and the total following imputation. These numbers are given in a table and graphically. The percentage difference between the imputed and non-imputed totals is shown.

In some cases, the numbers presented in this section differ slightly from the previously published totals. This is due to a different approach to rounding at the Great Britain level.

For some of these questions, the amount of variation between Local Authorities is large. Hence, estimation at Local Authority level would be tricky and not particularly robust. Instead, DWP have used the Housing Benefit caseload for responding Authorities and the corresponding Housing Benefit caseload for non-responding Authorities to calculate a simple rating factor. These have been calculated separately for each question and quarterly form.

The statistics show that since 2009/10, the effect of non-responding Local Authorities has generally been small and has not affected the trends or conclusions from the statistics. In 2008/09, a much larger proportion of Authorities did not respond. As a result, the imputation has had a much larger effect for these quarters.

DWP propose that this imputation for missing Authorities will be used more widely in the 2012/13 issues of this publication. The use of GB totals excluding imputation will be dropped. If you have any comments on this new methodology or on the plans for 2012/13, please contact DWP at:

[stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

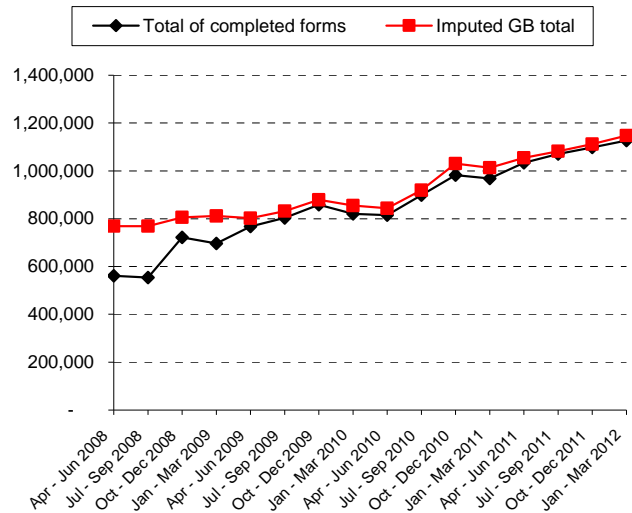
or by post to the following address:

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NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
NE98 1YX

**Total value of HB overpayments outstanding at the start of the quarter**

£, thousand

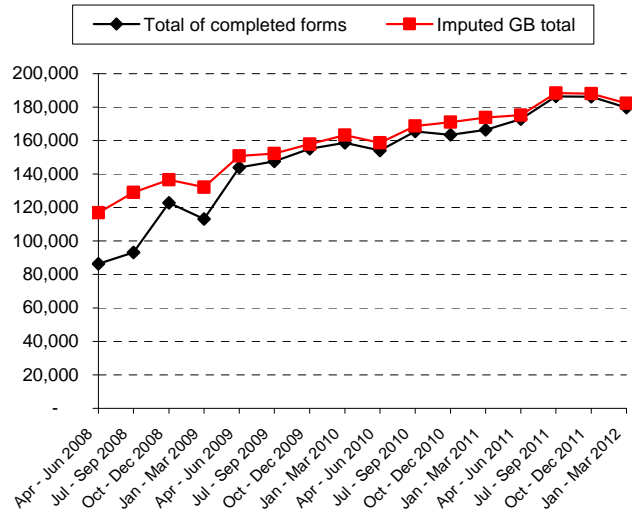
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	561,393	769,115	37%
Jul - Sep 2008	554,353	769,032	39%
Oct - Dec 2008	721,382	805,798	12%
Jan - Mar 2009	696,719	811,748	17%
Apr - Jun 2009	767,260	802,218	5%
Jul - Sep 2009	803,772	831,819	3%
Oct - Dec 2009	858,417	879,309	2%
Jan - Mar 2010	821,045	855,018	4%
Apr - Jun 2010	815,080	843,174	3%
Jul - Sep 2010	898,081	918,718	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	981,788	1,030,805	5%
Jan - Mar 2011	968,470	1,013,238	5%
Apr - Jun 2011	1,034,346	1,055,028	2%
Jul - Sep 2011	1,070,259	1,082,309	1%
Oct - Dec 2011	1,098,303	1,111,672	1%
Jan - Mar 2012	1,126,644	1,147,074	2%



**Total value of HB overpayments identified during the quarter**

£, thousand

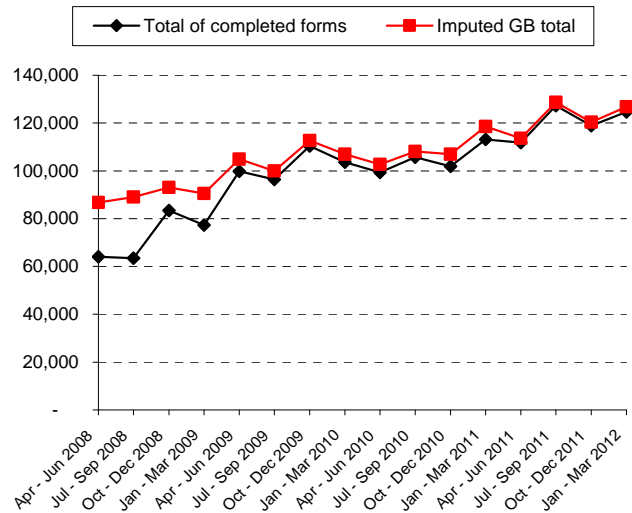
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	86,401	116,938	35%
Jul - Sep 2008	93,056	129,093	39%
Oct - Dec 2008	122,833	136,580	11%
Jan - Mar 2009	113,184	132,195	17%
Apr - Jun 2009	143,945	150,772	5%
Jul - Sep 2009	147,472	152,357	3%
Oct - Dec 2009	155,026	157,864	2%
Jan - Mar 2010	158,690	163,356	3%
Apr - Jun 2010	154,051	158,744	3%
Jul - Sep 2010	165,358	168,700	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	163,462	170,990	5%
Jan - Mar 2011	166,316	173,711	4%
Apr - Jun 2011	172,735	175,181	1%
Jul - Sep 2011	186,343	188,398	1%
Oct - Dec 2011	186,229	187,990	1%
Jan - Mar 2012	179,599	182,352	2%



**Total value of HB overpayments recovered during the quarter**

£, thousand

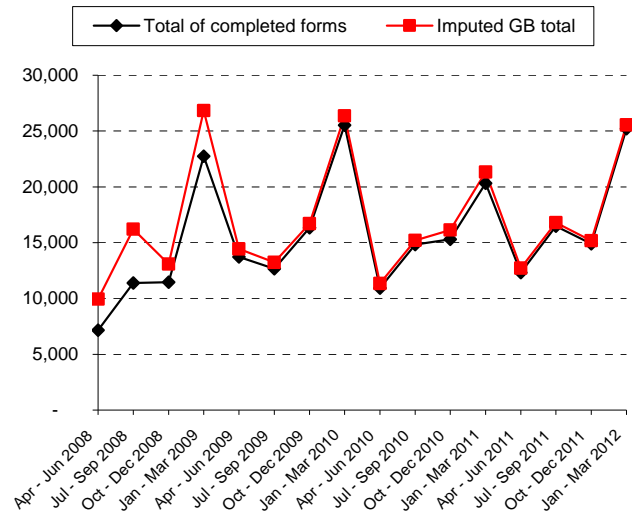
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	63,976	86,704	36%
Jul - Sep 2008	63,419	89,101	40%
Oct - Dec 2008	83,446	93,052	12%
Jan - Mar 2009	77,338	90,580	17%
Apr - Jun 2009	99,800	104,838	5%
Jul - Sep 2009	96,344	99,988	4%
Oct - Dec 2009	110,372	112,702	2%
Jan - Mar 2010	103,641	106,988	3%
Apr - Jun 2010	99,387	102,699	3%
Jul - Sep 2010	105,658	108,086	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	101,908	106,900	5%
Jan - Mar 2011	113,139	118,503	5%
Apr - Jun 2011	111,745	113,638	2%
Jul - Sep 2011	127,208	128,640	1%
Oct - Dec 2011	118,929	120,376	1%
Jan - Mar 2012	124,588	126,847	2%



**Total value of HB overpayments written off during the quarter**

£, thousand

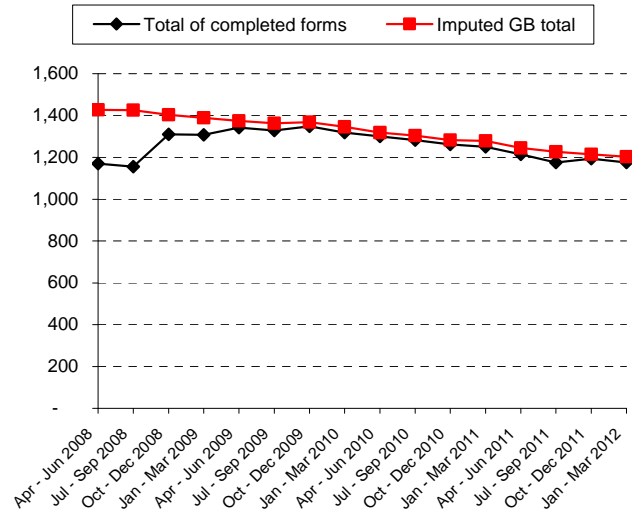
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	7,149	9,933	39%
Jul - Sep 2008	11,393	16,208	42%
Oct - Dec 2008	11,464	13,072	14%
Jan - Mar 2009	22,758	26,820	18%
Apr - Jun 2009	13,732	14,433	5%
Jul - Sep 2009	12,665	13,230	4%
Oct - Dec 2009	16,340	16,700	2%
Jan - Mar 2010	25,525	26,369	3%
Apr - Jun 2010	10,914	11,337	4%
Jul - Sep 2010	14,817	15,189	3%
Oct - Dec 2010	15,305	16,141	5%
Jan - Mar 2011	20,312	21,317	5%
Apr - Jun 2011	12,329	12,721	3%
Jul - Sep 2011	16,470	16,799	2%
Oct - Dec 2011	14,909	15,171	2%
Jan - Mar 2012	25,199	25,545	1%



**Fraud: Number of full time equivalent fraud investigators**

Number

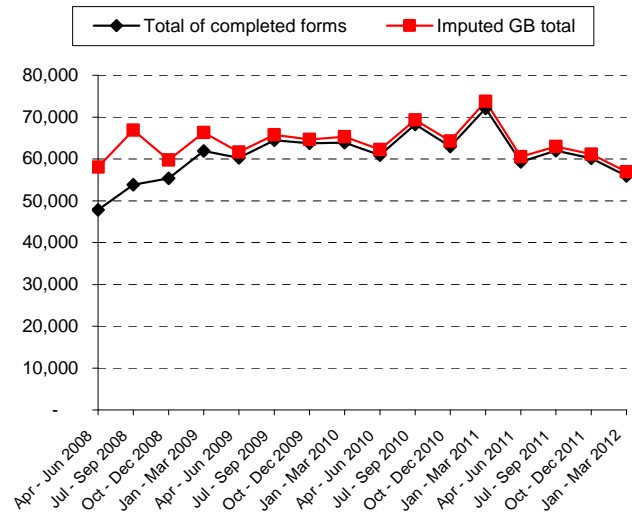
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	1,170	1,427	22%
Jul - Sep 2008	1,155	1,426	23%
Oct - Dec 2008	1,310	1,403	7%
Jan - Mar 2009	1,308	1,389	6%
Apr - Jun 2009	1,341	1,374	2%
Jul - Sep 2009	1,329	1,363	3%
Oct - Dec 2009	1,348	1,368	1%
Jan - Mar 2010	1,318	1,345	2%
Apr - Jun 2010	1,300	1,318	1%
Jul - Sep 2010	1,283	1,303	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	1,262	1,282	2%
Jan - Mar 2011	1,250	1,279	2%
Apr - Jun 2011	1,215	1,244	2%
Jul - Sep 2011	1,175	1,226	4%
Oct - Dec 2011	1,194	1,214	2%
Jan - Mar 2012	1,175	1,202	2%



**Fraud: Number of referrals**

Number

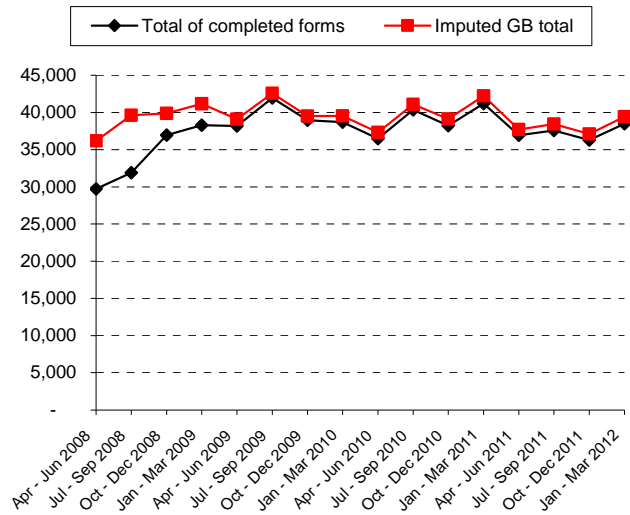
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	47,810	58,060	21%
Jul - Sep 2008	53,840	66,885	24%
Oct - Dec 2008	55,365	59,745	8%
Jan - Mar 2009	61,880	66,280	7%
Apr - Jun 2009	60,280	61,660	2%
Jul - Sep 2009	64,440	65,795	2%
Oct - Dec 2009	63,770	64,655	1%
Jan - Mar 2010	63,885	65,290	2%
Apr - Jun 2010	60,895	62,205	2%
Jul - Sep 2010	68,265	69,310	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	62,945	64,270	2%
Jan - Mar 2011	72,045	73,765	2%
Apr - Jun 2011	59,295	60,505	2%
Jul - Sep 2011	61,945	62,950	2%
Oct - Dec 2011	60,145	61,135	2%
Jan - Mar 2012	55,910	56,930	2%



**Fraud: Number of cases subject to investigation closed**

*Number*

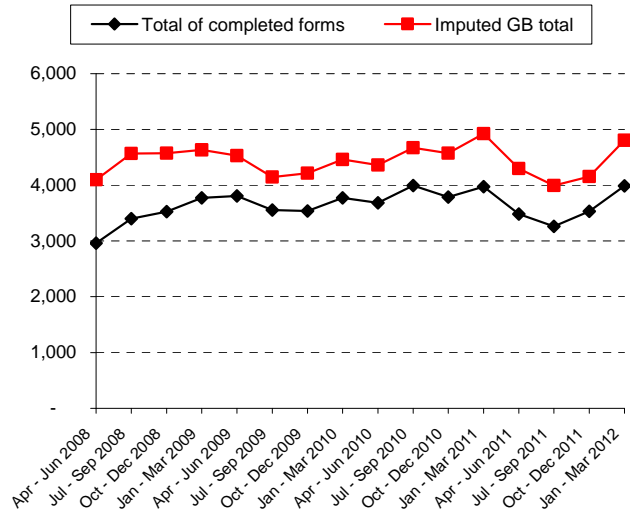
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	29,735	36,180	22%
Jul - Sep 2008	31,895	39,620	24%
Oct - Dec 2008	36,945	39,865	8%
Jan - Mar 2009	38,275	41,150	8%
Apr - Jun 2009	38,170	39,105	2%
Jul - Sep 2009	41,945	42,570	1%
Oct - Dec 2009	38,935	39,510	1%
Jan - Mar 2010	38,680	39,530	2%
Apr - Jun 2010	36,475	37,340	2%
Jul - Sep 2010	40,365	41,085	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	38,210	39,135	2%
Jan - Mar 2011	41,205	42,240	3%
Apr - Jun 2011	36,930	37,685	2%
Jul - Sep 2011	37,570	38,430	2%
Oct - Dec 2011	36,280	37,120	2%
Jan - Mar 2012	38,470	39,435	3%



**Fraud: Number of cases subject to investigation closed with a DWP interest**

*Number*

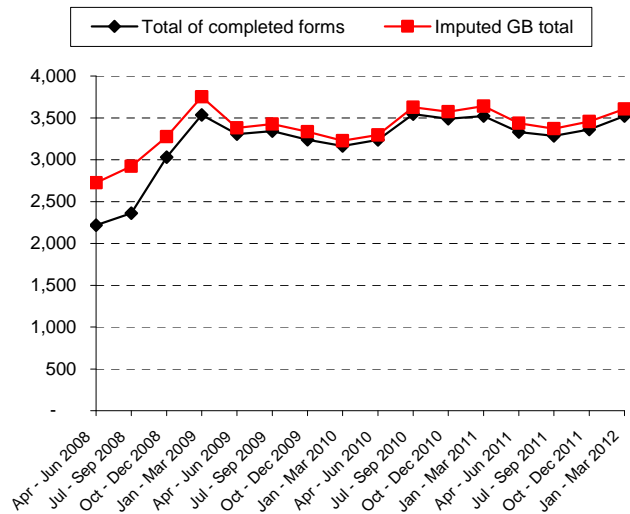
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	2,960	4,095	38%
Jul - Sep 2008	3,400	4,570	34%
Oct - Dec 2008	3,525	4,575	30%
Jan - Mar 2009	3,770	4,635	23%
Apr - Jun 2009	3,805	4,530	19%
Jul - Sep 2009	3,555	4,145	17%
Oct - Dec 2009	3,535	4,215	19%
Jan - Mar 2010	3,770	4,460	18%
Apr - Jun 2010	3,685	4,360	18%
Jul - Sep 2010	3,995	4,670	17%
Oct - Dec 2010	3,785	4,575	21%
Jan - Mar 2011	3,975	4,925	24%
Apr - Jun 2011	3,480	4,300	24%
Jul - Sep 2011	3,260	3,995	23%
Oct - Dec 2011	3,530	4,155	18%
Jan - Mar 2012	3,990	4,805	20%



**Fraud: Number of cautions offered and accepted**

*Number*

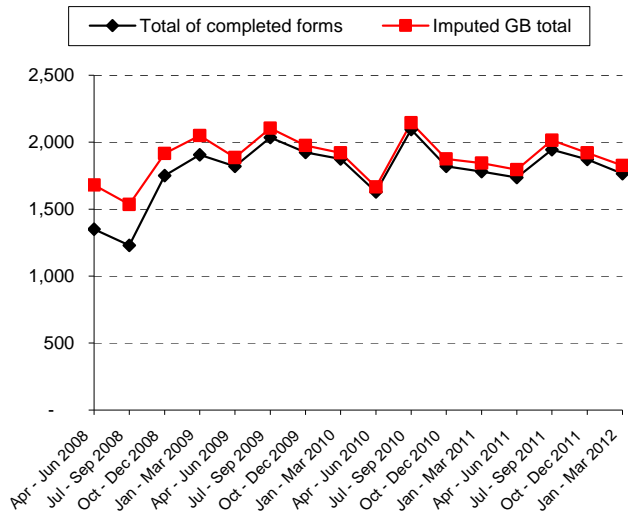
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	2,215	2,725	23%
Jul - Sep 2008	2,360	2,920	24%
Oct - Dec 2008	3,030	3,275	8%
Jan - Mar 2009	3,535	3,750	6%
Apr - Jun 2009	3,305	3,380	2%
Jul - Sep 2009	3,340	3,425	3%
Oct - Dec 2009	3,240	3,335	3%
Jan - Mar 2010	3,165	3,225	2%
Apr - Jun 2010	3,235	3,295	2%
Jul - Sep 2010	3,545	3,625	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	3,490	3,575	2%
Jan - Mar 2011	3,520	3,640	3%
Apr - Jun 2011	3,330	3,435	3%
Jul - Sep 2011	3,285	3,370	3%
Oct - Dec 2011	3,360	3,455	3%
Jan - Mar 2012	3,520	3,605	2%



**Fraud: Number of administrative penalties offered and accepted**

Number

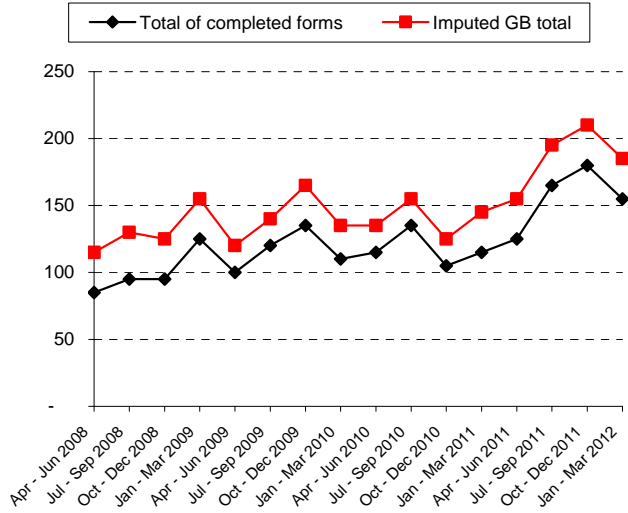
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	1,350	1,680	24%
Jul - Sep 2008	1,230	1,535	25%
Oct - Dec 2008	1,750	1,915	9%
Jan - Mar 2009	1,905	2,050	8%
Apr - Jun 2009	1,820	1,885	4%
Jul - Sep 2009	2,035	2,105	3%
Oct - Dec 2009	1,925	1,975	3%
Jan - Mar 2010	1,875	1,920	2%
Apr - Jun 2010	1,630	1,665	2%
Jul - Sep 2010	2,095	2,145	2%
Oct - Dec 2010	1,820	1,875	3%
Jan - Mar 2011	1,780	1,845	4%
Apr - Jun 2011	1,735	1,795	3%
Jul - Sep 2011	1,945	2,015	4%
Oct - Dec 2011	1,870	1,920	3%
Jan - Mar 2012	1,765	1,825	3%



**Fraud: Number of administrative penalties offered and accepted with a DWP benefit interest**

Number

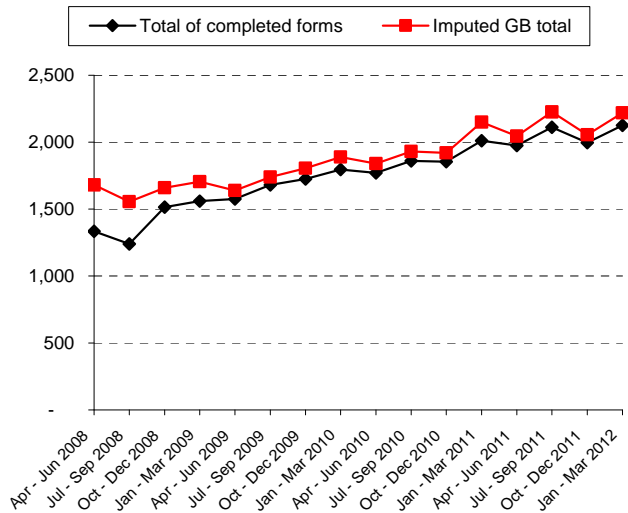
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	85	115	35%
Jul - Sep 2008	95	130	37%
Oct - Dec 2008	95	125	32%
Jan - Mar 2009	125	155	24%
Apr - Jun 2009	100	120	20%
Jul - Sep 2009	120	140	17%
Oct - Dec 2009	135	165	22%
Jan - Mar 2010	110	135	23%
Apr - Jun 2010	115	135	17%
Jul - Sep 2010	135	155	15%
Oct - Dec 2010	105	125	19%
Jan - Mar 2011	115	145	26%
Apr - Jun 2011	125	155	24%
Jul - Sep 2011	165	195	18%
Oct - Dec 2011	180	210	17%
Jan - Mar 2012	155	185	19%



**Fraud: Number of cases accepted for prosecution**

Number

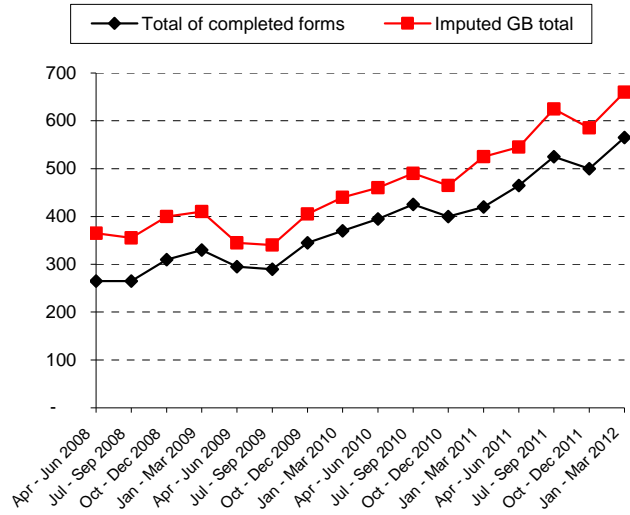
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	1,335	1,680	26%
Jul - Sep 2008	1,240	1,555	25%
Oct - Dec 2008	1,515	1,660	10%
Jan - Mar 2009	1,560	1,705	9%
Apr - Jun 2009	1,575	1,640	4%
Jul - Sep 2009	1,680	1,740	4%
Oct - Dec 2009	1,725	1,805	5%
Jan - Mar 2010	1,795	1,890	5%
Apr - Jun 2010	1,770	1,840	4%
Jul - Sep 2010	1,860	1,930	4%
Oct - Dec 2010	1,855	1,920	4%
Jan - Mar 2011	2,010	2,150	7%
Apr - Jun 2011	1,975	2,045	4%
Jul - Sep 2011	2,110	2,225	5%
Oct - Dec 2011	1,995	2,055	3%
Jan - Mar 2012	2,125	2,220	4%



**Fraud: Number of cases accepted for prosecution with a DWP interest**

*Number*

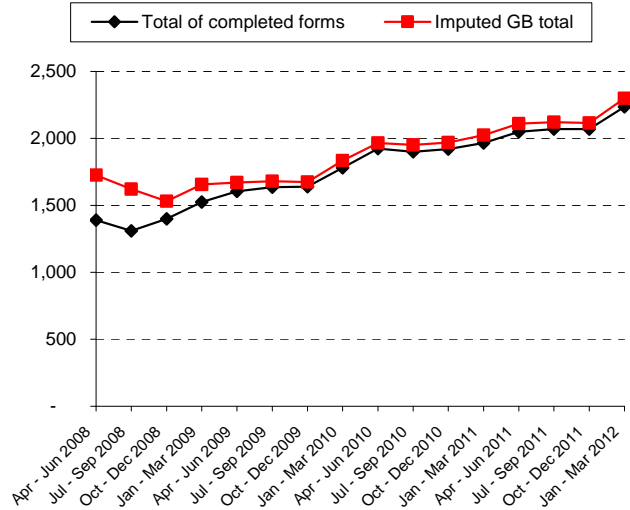
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	265	365	38%
Jul - Sep 2008	265	355	34%
Oct - Dec 2008	310	400	29%
Jan - Mar 2009	330	410	24%
Apr - Jun 2009	295	345	17%
Jul - Sep 2009	290	340	17%
Oct - Dec 2009	345	405	17%
Jan - Mar 2010	370	440	19%
Apr - Jun 2010	395	460	16%
Jul - Sep 2010	425	490	15%
Oct - Dec 2010	400	465	16%
Jan - Mar 2011	420	525	25%
Apr - Jun 2011	465	545	17%
Jul - Sep 2011	525	625	19%
Oct - Dec 2011	500	585	17%
Jan - Mar 2012	565	660	17%



**Fraud: Number of successful prosecutions**

*Number*

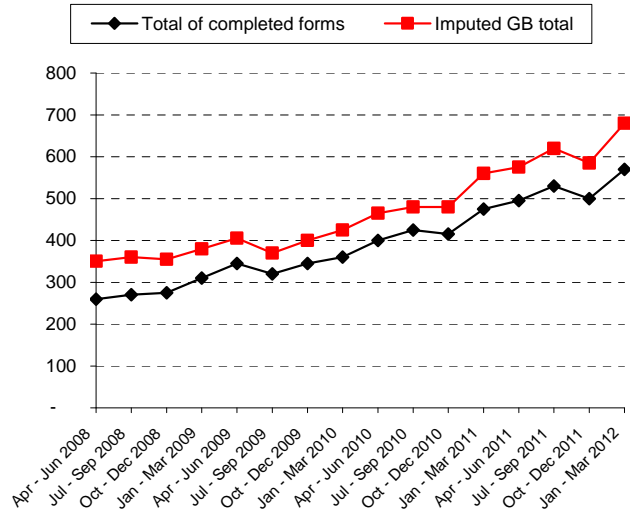
Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	1,390	1,725	24%
Jul - Sep 2008	1,310	1,620	24%
Oct - Dec 2008	1,400	1,530	9%
Jan - Mar 2009	1,525	1,655	9%
Apr - Jun 2009	1,605	1,670	4%
Jul - Sep 2009	1,635	1,680	3%
Oct - Dec 2009	1,640	1,675	2%
Jan - Mar 2010	1,780	1,835	3%
Apr - Jun 2010	1,925	1,965	2%
Jul - Sep 2010	1,900	1,950	3%
Oct - Dec 2010	1,920	1,970	3%
Jan - Mar 2011	1,965	2,025	3%
Apr - Jun 2011	2,050	2,110	3%
Jul - Sep 2011	2,070	2,120	2%
Oct - Dec 2011	2,070	2,115	2%
Jan - Mar 2012	2,235	2,300	3%



**Fraud: Number of successful prosecutions with a DWP interest**

*Number*

Date	Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
Apr - Jun 2008	260	350	35%
Jul - Sep 2008	270	360	33%
Oct - Dec 2008	275	355	29%
Jan - Mar 2009	310	380	23%
Apr - Jun 2009	345	405	17%
Jul - Sep 2009	320	370	16%
Oct - Dec 2009	345	400	16%
Jan - Mar 2010	360	425	18%
Apr - Jun 2010	400	465	16%
Jul - Sep 2010	425	480	13%
Oct - Dec 2010	415	480	16%
Jan - Mar 2011	475	560	18%
Apr - Jun 2011	495	575	16%
Jul - Sep 2011	530	620	17%
Oct - Dec 2011	500	585	17%
Jan - Mar 2012	570	680	19%



## NOTES

### 1. Background

In April 2008 DWP introduced a new, more efficient method for the collection of data from Local Authorities (LAs). The data is used to produce established statistics on measures of activity to detect fraud and to take action against those suspected of it. Also, since the introduction of the new collection method, it captures information on the amounts of benefit that are overpaid incorrectly to claimants. The new method for collecting this data is known as the Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) data collection system. Regular publication of these statistics was suspended in 2008, partly because of a government wide embargo on data transfers but also to allow the new collection methods to bed in.

The change to the way in which this data is collected was part of a much bigger exercise to transform the collection and production of core data from LAs. Once regular publication of LA data was suspended, priority was given to reinstating key statistics on Housing and Council Tax Benefit caseloads.

Housing Benefit fraud activity statistics were previously published as Housing Benefit Quarterly Fraud Performance Statistics. The last publication of these statistics was released in 2008, based on clerically collected data. Collection of the data and publication of the statistics were suspended from November 2007 to July 2008 due to a government wide data transfer embargo.

### 2. National Statistics Code of Practice

DWP complies with the Code of Practice for National/Official Statistics and supporting Principles. Detailed policy statements and statement of compliance with the pre-release access to official statistics order 2008 are given below:

[DWP policy statements](#)

Detailed policy and methodology relating to this First Release can be found at:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb\\_ctb/recoveries\\_and\\_fraud\\_data/hbrf\\_info.pdf](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/recoveries_and_fraud_data/hbrf_info.pdf)

### 3. Other Fraud and Error statistics

National Statistics are published presenting six-monthly estimates of fraud and error in claims for Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit, along with an annual estimate of the level of fraud and error in the benefit system as a whole. One-off benefit reviews have been carried out from time to time to estimate fraud and error in claims for other benefits. Reports can be found at

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd2/index.php?page=fraud\\_error](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd2/index.php?page=fraud_error)

### 4. Other Related Statistics issued by the Department for Work and Pensions

Households Below Average Income (annual) - *provides information on potential living standards as determined by disposable income, changes in income patterns over time and income mobility:*

<http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbai>

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Summary Statistics (monthly) – *provides caseload statistics. Latest published figures:* <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbctb>

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Speed of Processing - *provides information on the average times to process a new Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit claim or a change in circumstance of an existing Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit claim:*

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/sop/index.php?page=sop>

### 5. Known Issues, Changes and Revisions to these statistics

Where appropriate, we may contact individual Local Authorities early during our quality assurance period, providing them with the opportunity to correct inaccurate data before publication. It is also our policy to revise statistics where there has been an error attributed to DWP processing. However, erroneous figures due to the late or inaccurate receipt of information from Local Authorities after the quality assurance period has ended will unfortunately not be published. The full DWP policy on revisions can be found at: [http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/policy/DWP\\_Revisions\\_Policy\\_final.pdf](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/policy/DWP_Revisions_Policy_final.pdf).

The following changes have been made in this issue:

- Annual totals have been added to all relevant tables.

- Rounding policy has changed to perform all calculations on unrounded figures, before finally rounding the overall totals.
- Section 2 has been added to give users a chance to comment on the proposal to impute for missing values in next year's publications.
- Improved commentary

## **6. Notification of future changes to these statistics**

This publication will now be released on a six monthly cycle (each September and March) to improve our service to users. Future release dates will be announced via the [Hub](#).

We will also shortly be seeking user feedback around the possible uses of these statistics. This will be published alongside these statistics as soon as it is available.

Further information on HBRF policy context and processes will also be incorporated within future releases once this is available.

In the meantime, if you have any comments or queries about this publication then please send them to: [stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

or by post to the following address:

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## **7. Next Publication**

The next publication will be on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013 (covering Q1 and Q2 data).