

# First Release

24<sup>th</sup> August 2011

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) data.*

The Housing Benefit Recovery and Fraud statistics are full 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 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This data 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.

This publication includes all Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud data covering a period from April 2008 to March 2011

## Key findings

The key findings are based on comparisons between the last quarter of 2009/10 and 2010/11 unless otherwise stated.

- The total value of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments outstanding stood at £968m; an 18% increase
- The value of HB overpayments identified during the quarter increased by 4.8%
- The value of HB overpayments recovered has increased by 9.2%
- The value of HB overpayments written off has reduced by 20.4%
- At March 2011 there were 1,251.2 full time equivalent fraud investigators dealing with 72,060 fraud referrals issued for investigation during the quarter; 41,215 cases were closed
- The number of full time equivalent fraud investigators has reduced by 5.1%
- There has been an increase of 12.8% in the number of cases referred for fraud investigation
- The number of cases subject to investigation by the fraud section that were closed has increased by 6.7%; the number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* has increased by 3.4%
- The number of cautions offered and accepted has increased by 12.3%
- The number of cases relating to administration penalties offered and accepted has reduced by 2.2%; the number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* has increased by 30%
- There were 2,005 cases accepted for prosecution an increase of 15.9%; the number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* increased by 20.6%
- There were 1,955 prosecutions resulting in guilty outcomes an increase of 12.7%; the number of cases with a DWP benefit interest\* increased by 29%

**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions

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### Next publication:

To be confirmed<sup>7</sup>

\* DWP benefit includes Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Pension Credit, Incapacity Benefit, and Employment Support Allowance (when introduced).

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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. 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.<sup>3</sup>

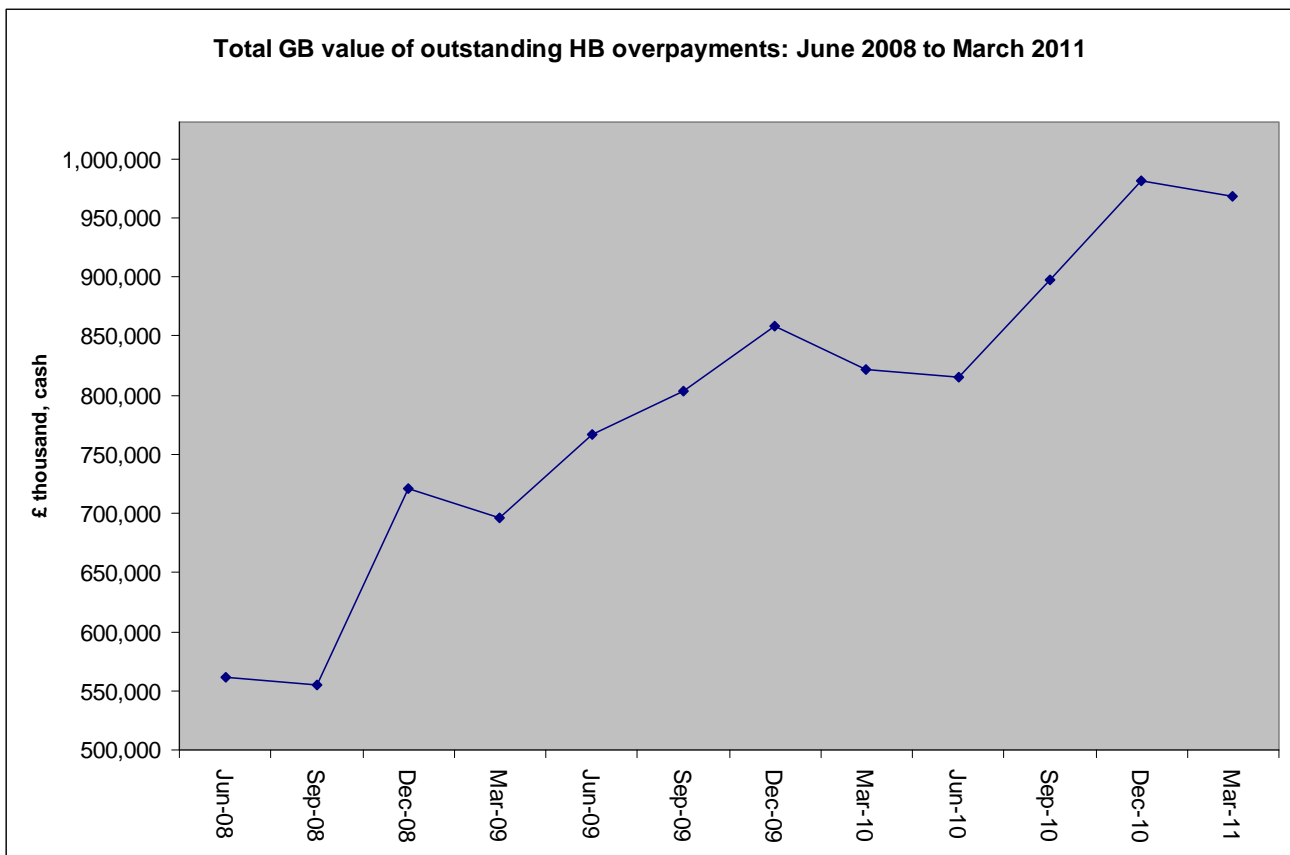
The data will also be used to feed into a range of briefings for Ministers and other senior officials on fraud and error issues and will be used to answer Parliamentary Questions. It will also be used for other policy functions including monitoring the impact of changes to sanctions policy and informing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

**Average Return Rates**

Collection Period	Average Return Rate
2008 – 2009	89.7%
2009 – 2010	99.2%
2010 – 2011	99.5%

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.

Returns for the first two collection periods were approximately 82% and therefore this data should be used with caution as it does not represent a full national data return. Returns for the remaining quarters have been significantly higher reaching almost 100% of all Local Authorities.



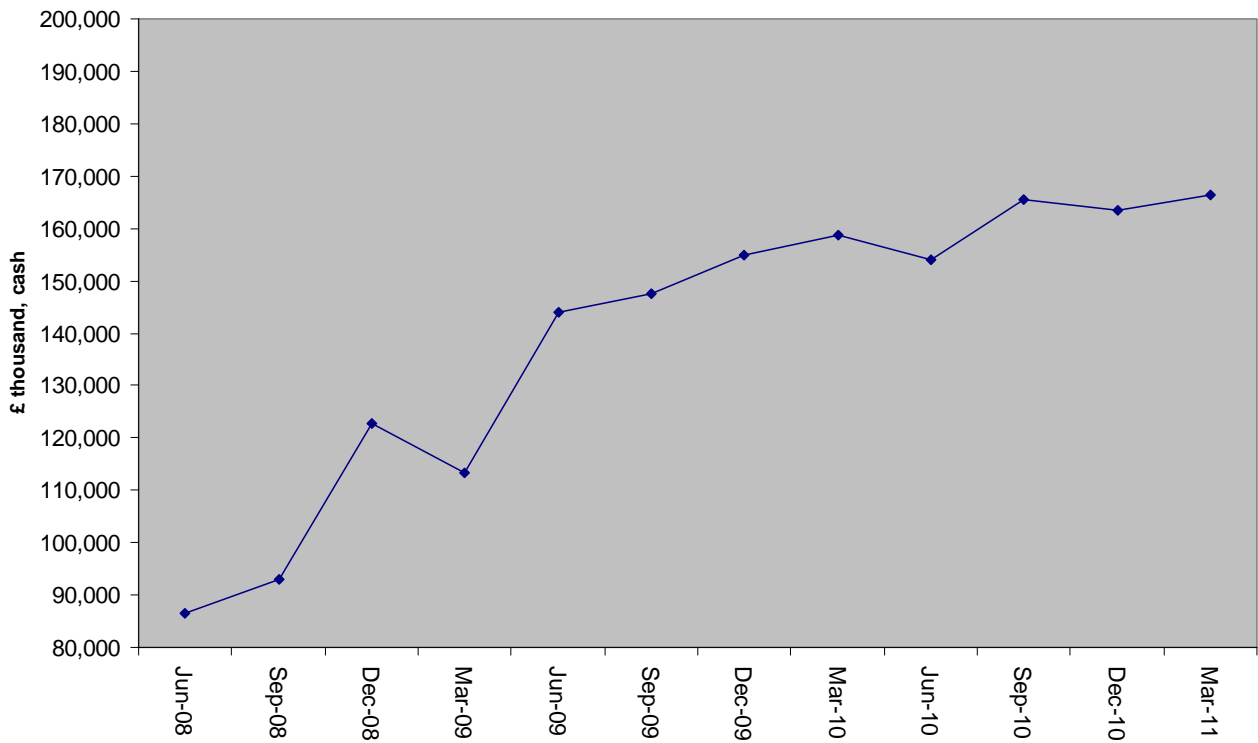
The total value of outstanding overpayments peaked in December 2010 at over £981m and now currently stands at £968m a reduction of 1.4%.

88.2% of current outstanding overpayment is based in England

3.3% of current outstanding overpayment is based in Wales

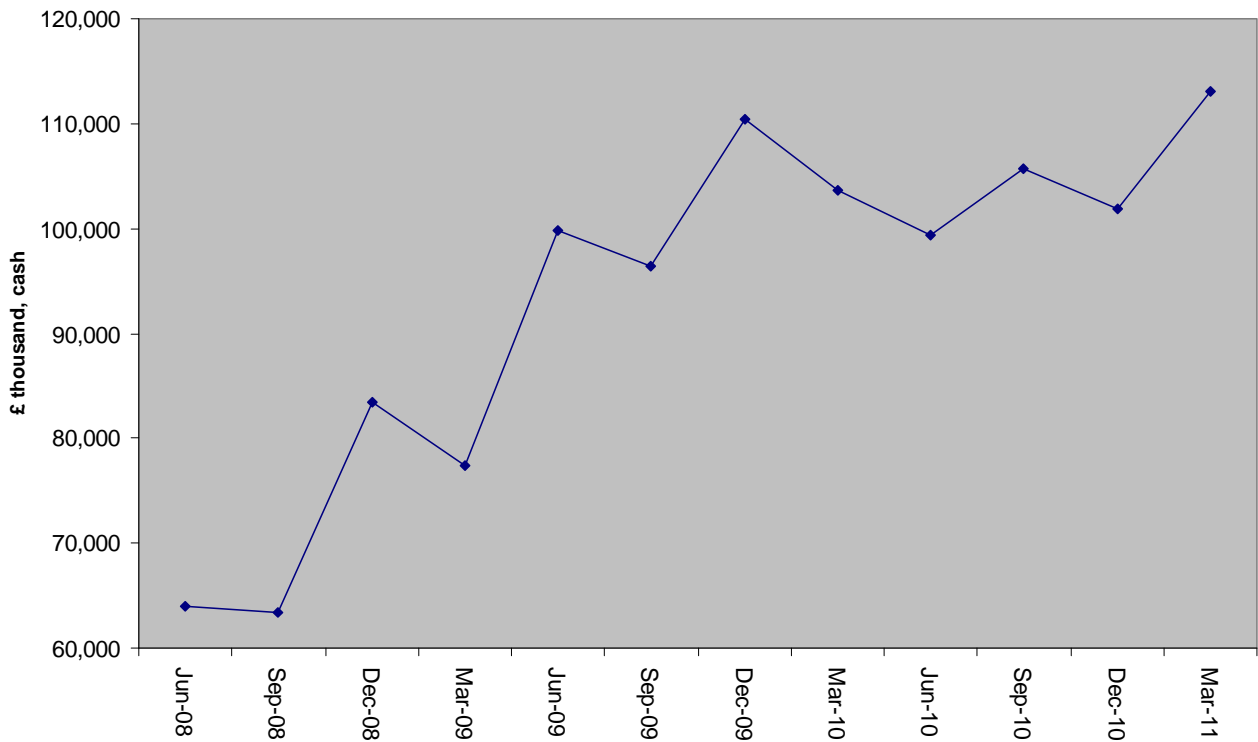
8.5% of current outstanding overpayment is based in Scotland

**Total GB value of HB overpayments identified: June 2008 to March 2011**



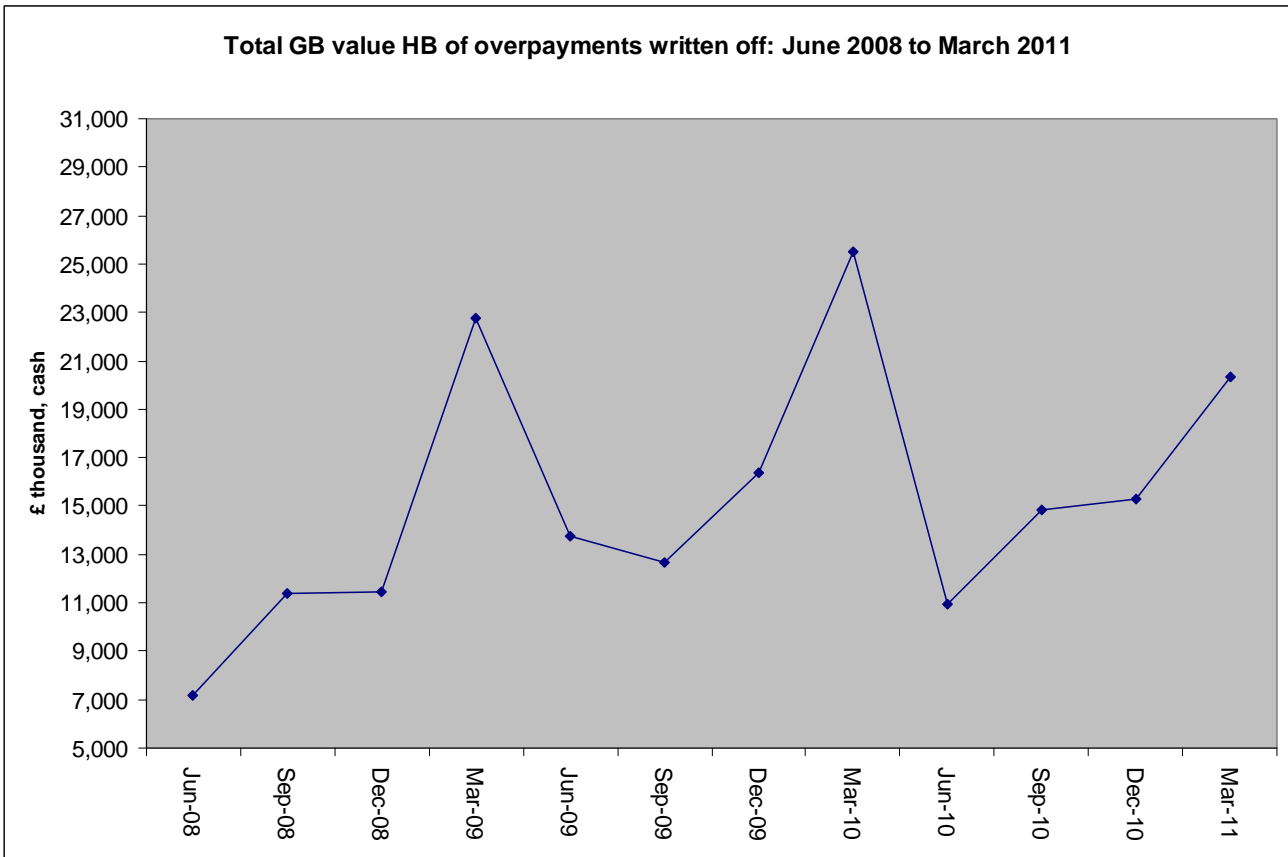
There is an upward trend in the total value of overpayments identified peaking in March 2011 at over £166m an increase of 1.7% from December 2010.

**Total GB value of HB overpayments recovered: June 2008 to March 2011**



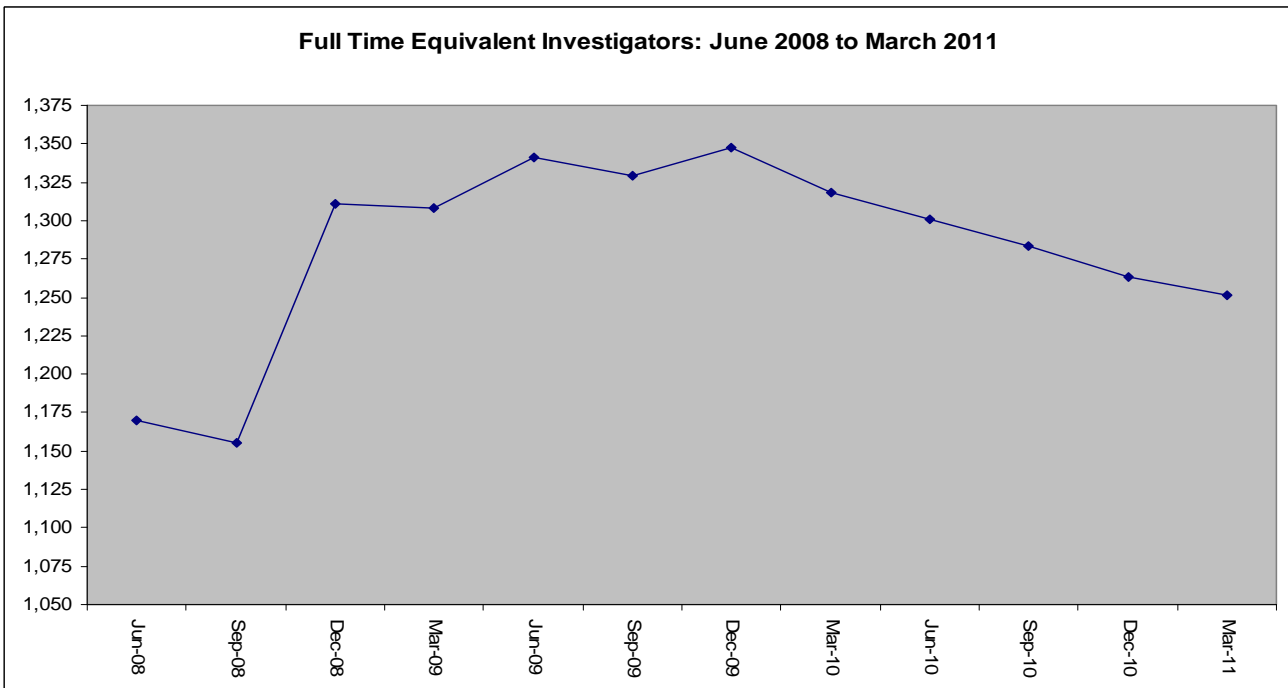
The total value of overpayments recovered has peaked in March 2011 at over £113m an 11% increase from December 2010.

**Total GB value HB of overpayments written off: June 2008 to March 2011**



The total value of overpayments written off is generally highest in the fourth quarter (March) of each collection year, peaking in March 2010 at over £25m and now currently stands at £20m a 20% reduction.

**Full Time Equivalent Investigators: June 2008 to March 2011**



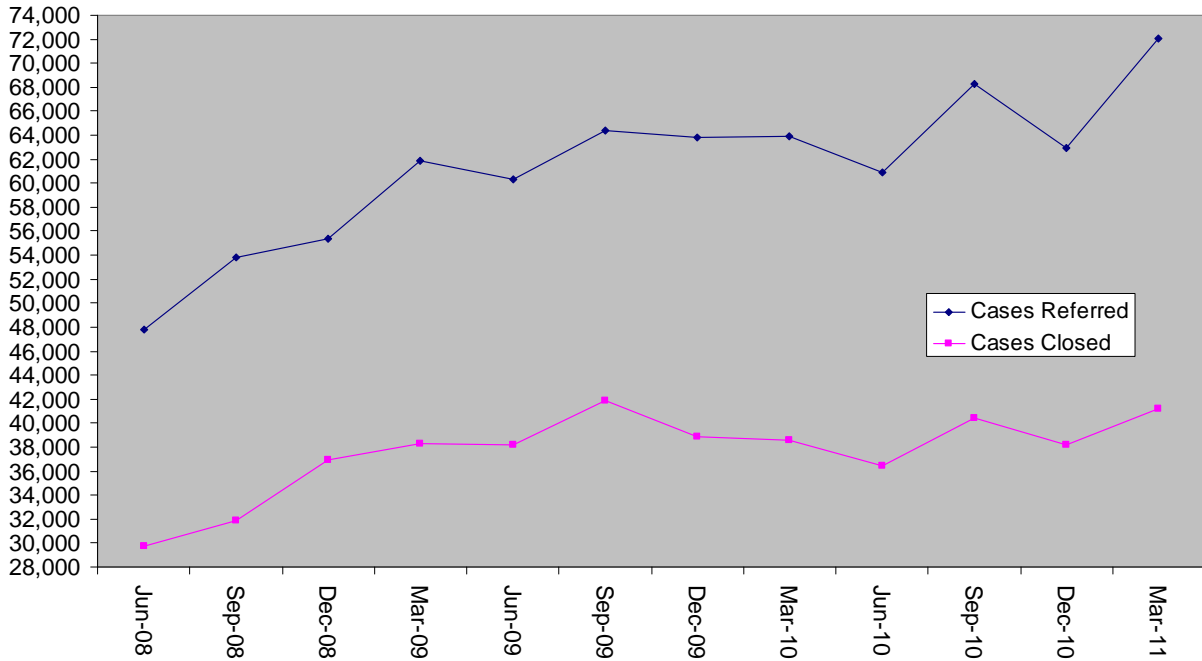
The number of full time equivalent fraud investigators peaked in December 2009 at 1347.9. The number of fraud investigators has reduced each quarter since December 2009 and currently stands at 1251.2, a reduction of 7.2%.

84.9% of FTE Fraud investigators are currently based in England

5.6% of FTE Fraud investigators are currently based in Wales

9.5% of FTE Fraud investigators are currently based in Scotland

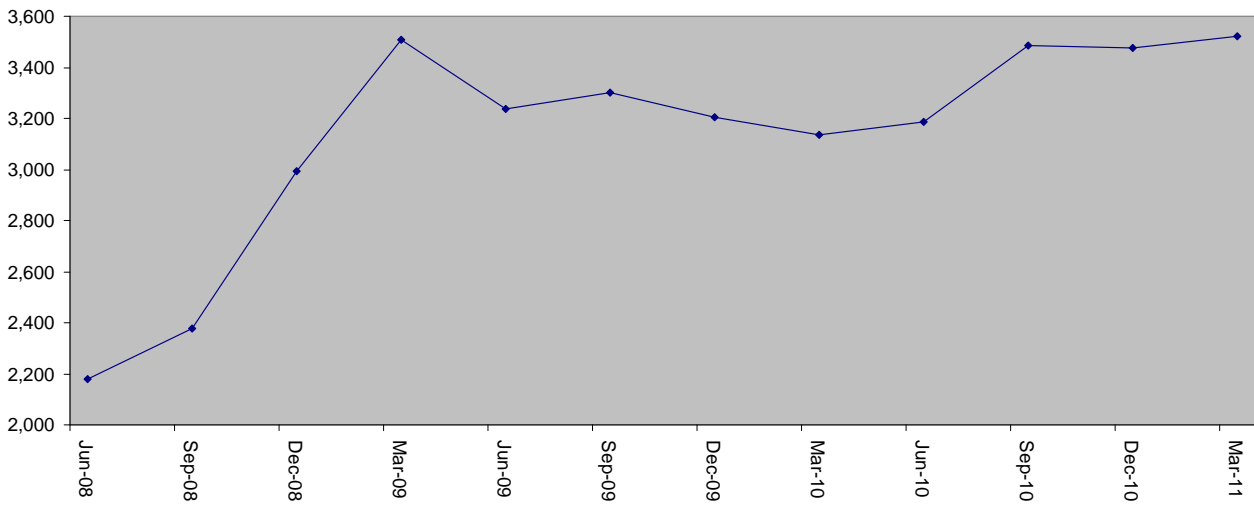
**Number of cases referred and closed: June 2008 to March 2011**



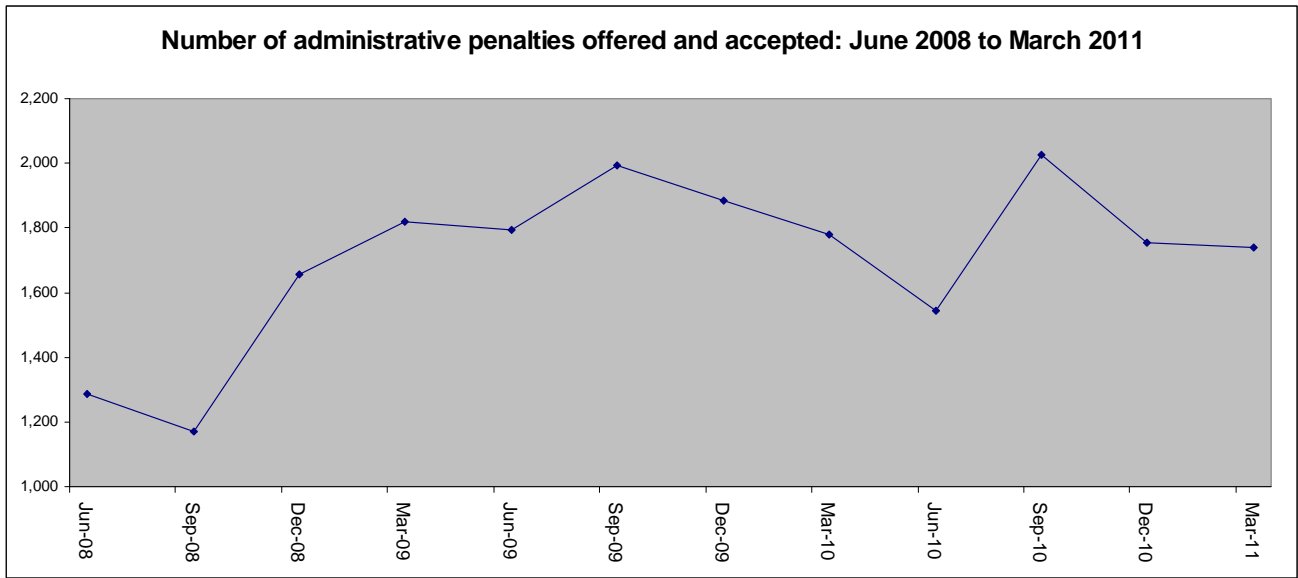
The number of cases referred to Local Authority fraud investigation peaked in March 2011 with 72,060 cases, despite the number of FTE fraud investigators reducing at this time. The number of cases closed during this period stood at 41,215.

Whilst the number of cases referred and closed tends to fluctuate between periods the total numbers seem to be on an upward trend.

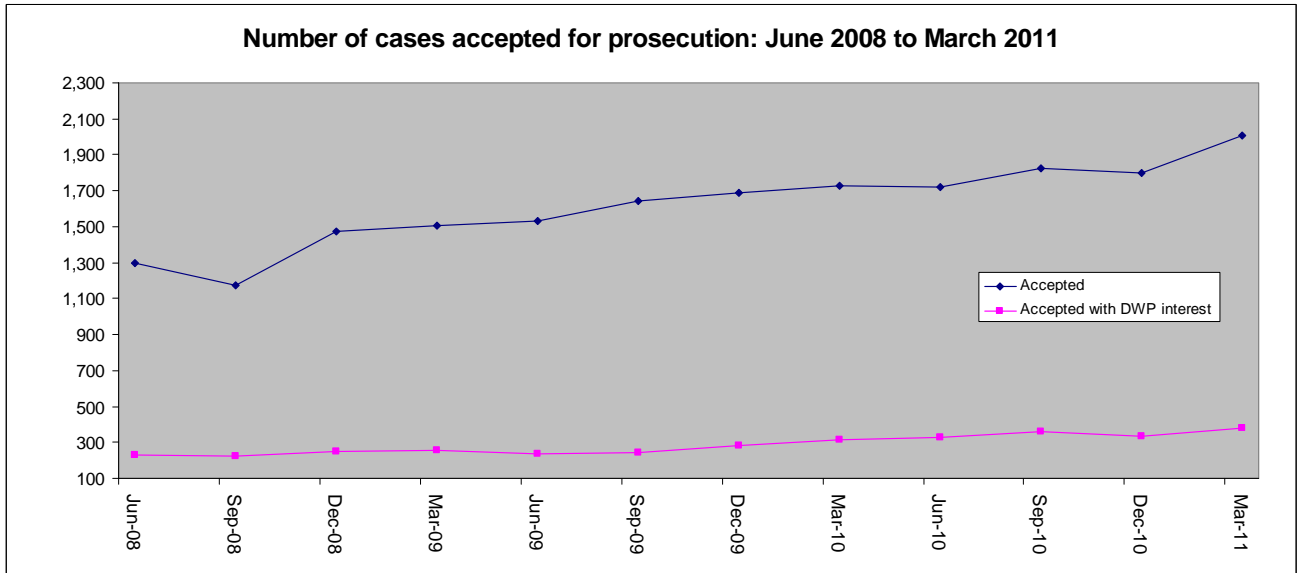
**Number of cautions offered and accepted: June 2008 to March 2011**



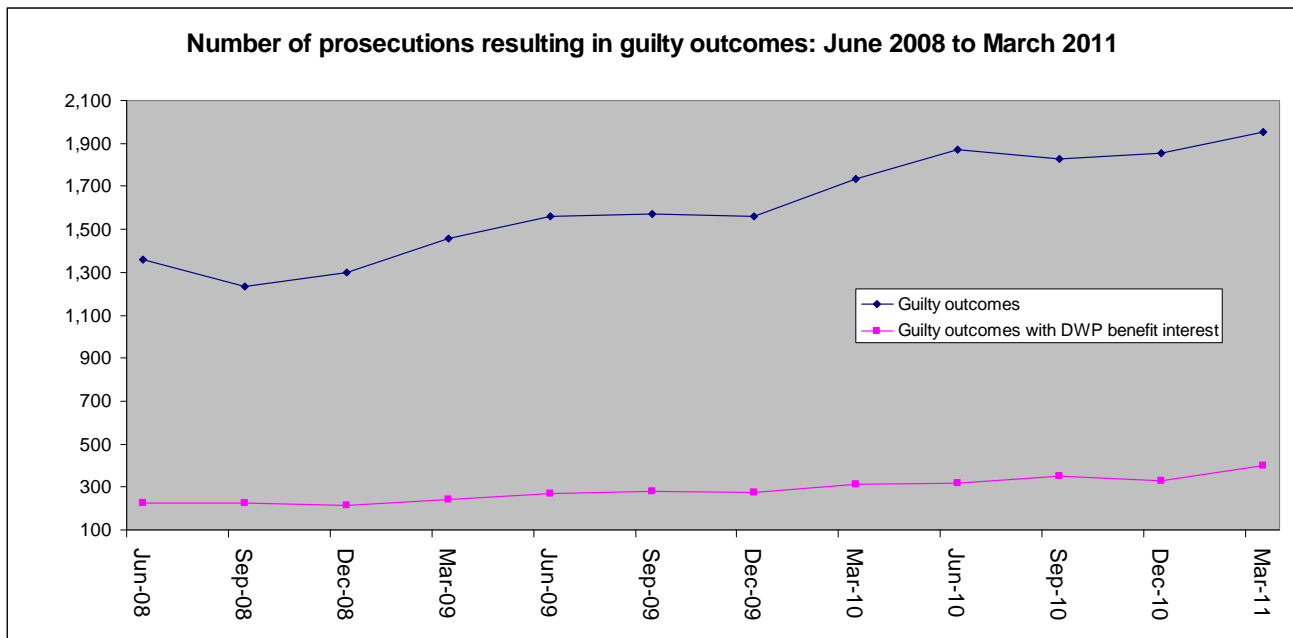
The number of cautions offered and accepted appears to be following a similar trend to that of the number of referrals.



The number of administrative penalties offered and accepted appears to be following a similar trend to that of the number referrals.



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.



The number of successful prosecutions has increased throughout the period. The cases with a DWP benefit interest are following a similar trend to the number of guilty outcomes.

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

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



## 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 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 National Statistics Code of Practice 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 the Statistical First Release can be found at:

- [Quality and Methods](#)
- [Uses and Users](#)
- [Ad hocs and pricing](#)

### 3. Overpayments

An issue with the overpayments data which previously prevented this information from being included as part of the first publication on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011 has now been resolved. All overpayment data collected from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 has now been published.

### 4. 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)

### 5. Other National Statistics issued by the Department for Work and Pensions

Abstract of Statistics for Benefits and Contributions and Indices of Prices and Earnings (annual) – *provides a reference source for those people interested in the main aspects of benefits, contributions and indices of prices and earnings. Latest published figures:* <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=abstract>

Child Support Agency Quarterly Summary of Statistics – *provides statistics on the Child Support Agency. Latest published figures:* <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=csa>

Family Resources Survey (annual) - *provides information on the incomes and circumstances of private households in the United Kingdom:* <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/index.php?page=intro>

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>

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit Quarterly Summary of Statistics – *provides statistics on people in receipt of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, new claims and newly diagnosed prescribed diseases. Latest published figures: <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=iidb>*

National Insurance numbers allocated to overseas nationals (Previously migrant workers statistics – quarterly) *provides statistics on migrant workers. Latest published figures: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino\\_allocation](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation)*

Neighbourhood Statistics – *Quarterly ward and Lower Super Outputs Area caseloads for Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefits, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit and State Pension are available from: <http://83.244.183.180/NESS/page1.htm>*

Pensioner Income Series (annual) - *examines the levels, sources and distribution of pensioners' incomes and the position of pensioners within the population income distribution. Latest published figures: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=pensioners\\_income](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=pensioners_income)*

National Insurance Contributions & Qualifying Years and Second Tier Pension Provision (annual) – *contains analysis of National Insurance contributions and contracted out pension schemes. Latest published figures: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=stpp\\_cq](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=stpp_cq)*

Tax/Benefit Model Tables (annual) – *designed to illustrate the weekly financial circumstances of a selection of hypothetical local authority and private tenants. Latest published figures: <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tbmt>*

## **6. Other statistical outputs issued by the Department for Work and Pensions**

Benefit Expenditure Tables - *financial year historic information on benefit expenditure and caseloads, along with forecasts are available from: <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd4/index.php?page=expenditure>*

Employment and Support Allowance - *work capability assessment statistics. Latest published figures: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa\\_wca](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_wca)*

Pathways to Work Officials Statistics - *a comprehensive range of support and provision designed to improve customers' prospects of returning to work. Latest published figures: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=ib\\_ref\\_p2w](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=ib_ref_p2w)*

Six Month Offer Statistics - *a support package offering up to 500,000 opportunities for Jobseeker's Allowance customers reaching six months unemployment. Latest published figures: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=6month\\_offer](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=6month_offer)*

## **7. Next Publication**

Communities and Local Government have created a single data list which details all of central departments' data requirements from local authorities in 2011-2012 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/singledatalist/>. There is a commitment to reducing the burden of data collection and items on this list will be challenged further during 2011. Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud data is included within this list and is currently being reviewed. Following the conclusion of this review the Department for Work and Pensions will then be able to determine the next publication date.