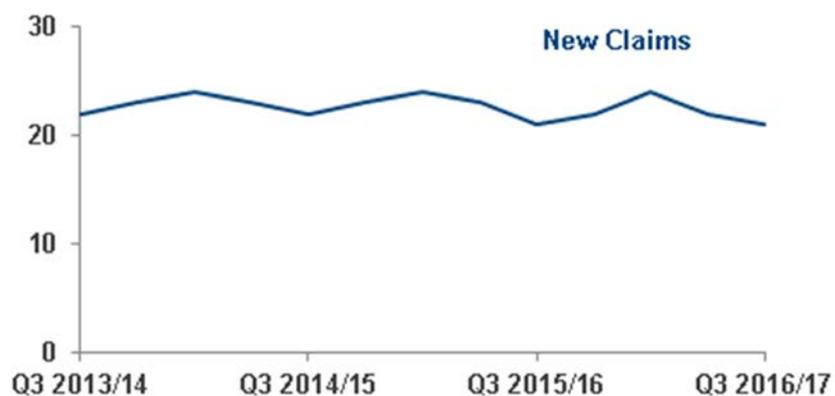


Housing Benefit is an income related benefit that is intended to help meet housing costs for rented accommodation. Speed of processing relates to the average time taken to process new claims and change of circumstances for this benefit. The average time is measured in calendar days, rounded to the nearest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

Main stories

21 days to process new Housing Benefit claims in the third quarter of 2016/17.

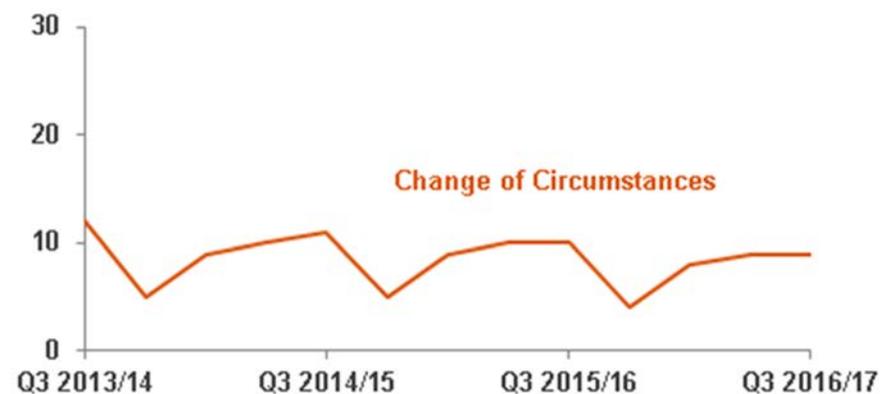
Average Processing Time per Quarter



The average time taken to process new claims is fairly consistent over time. Processing time in the third quarter of 2016/17 is the same as in the third quarter of 2015/16.

9 days to process Change of Circumstance on existing Housing Benefit claims in the third quarter of 2016/17.

Average Processing Time per Quarter



The average speed of processing varies throughout the year, but is fairly consistent over time. Processing time in the third quarter of 2016/17 is on average 1 day lower than in the same quarter of 2015/16.

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Published 26 April 2017

Next edition 26 July 2017

ISBN: 978-1-78425-917-4

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What you need to know

These statistics were released on 26 April 2017 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This means that the [Official Statistics](#).

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

This release contains Official Statistics on Speed of Processing of Housing Benefit (HB) claims for quarter 3 of 2016/17.

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

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

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

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

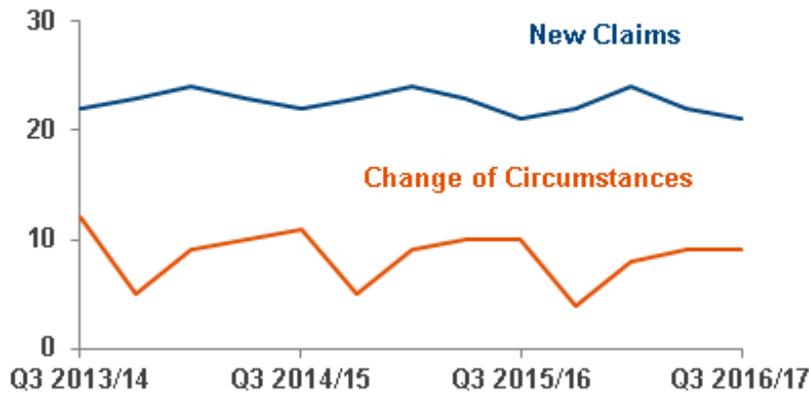
From April 2013, [Universal Credit](#) (UC) was introduced and will replace HB as it is rolled out. It is now available in all Jobcentre Plus offices to single claimants, and is being expanded across the country to include all claimant types via the Full Service. The roll out schedule for Full Service can be found [here](#).

New HB claims are no longer accepted from working-age claimants in some UC areas. This has an impact on the Speed of Processing figures at the local authority level; the number of new claims will fall in these areas and the processing days for new claims may change. The impact will be greater in areas where UC is more established, such as the North West, or in areas that have implemented the Full Service, which is taking claims from all claimant types. Due to this care should be taken when interpreting the data, particularly when comparing different local authorities.

The next release is planned to be in July 2017. As well as data for quarter 4 of the 2016/17 financial year (January 2017 to March 2017) this will also contain totals for the year 2016/17 both at local authority and national level.

Average Housing Benefit Speed of Processing

Average Processing Time per Quarter



The average time taken to process new HB claims in quarter 3 of 2016/17 is 21 calendar days. This is the same as in quarter 3 of 2015/16.

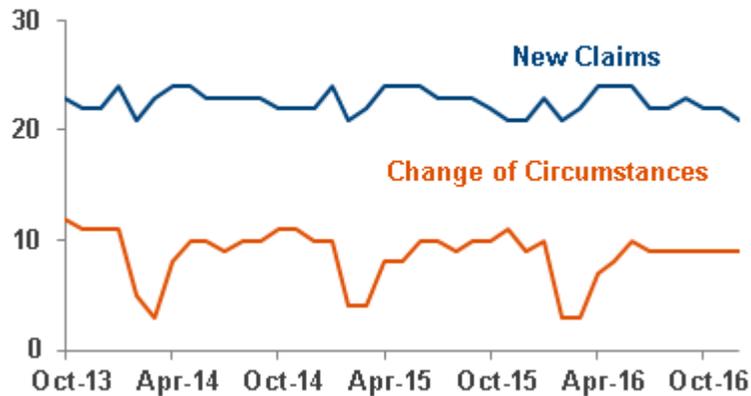
In quarter 3 there were 277 thousand new HB claims. This represents a decrease of 8 thousand (2.9%) since the last quarter and a decrease of 39 thousand (12.3%) since quarter 3 of 2015/16.

The average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims for quarter 3 of 2016/17 is 9 calendar days. This is 1 day lower than it was in quarter 3 of 2015/16.

For quarter 3 there were 2.51 million changes of circumstances to HB claims. This is a decrease of 86 thousand (3.3%) cases from quarter 3 of 2015/16.

There are decreases in processing time in Q4 each year that are explained by the decreases in February and March that are described below.

Average Processing Time per Month



The average time taken to process new HB claims is: 22 calendar days for October; 22 calendar days for November and 21 calendar days for December.

In quarter 3 2016/17 there were 277 thousand new HB claims:

- 96 thousand in October
- 102 thousand in November
- 79 thousand in December

The average time taken to process change of circumstances to HB claims is: 9 calendar days for October; 9 calendar days for November and 9 calendar days for December.

At quarter 3 2016/17 there were 2.52 million changes of circumstances to HB claims:

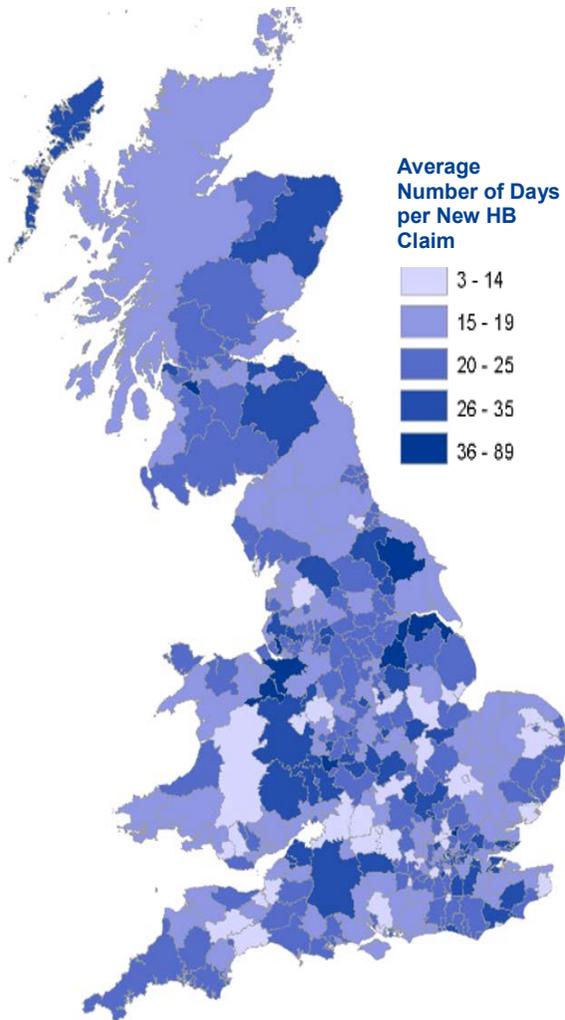
- 0.92 million in October
- 0.93 million in November
- 0.67 million in December

The average time taken to process change of circumstances tends to decrease in February and/or March. This may be due to the increase of resources to deal with bulk change of circumstances, and often uprating activity, at the end of the financial year.

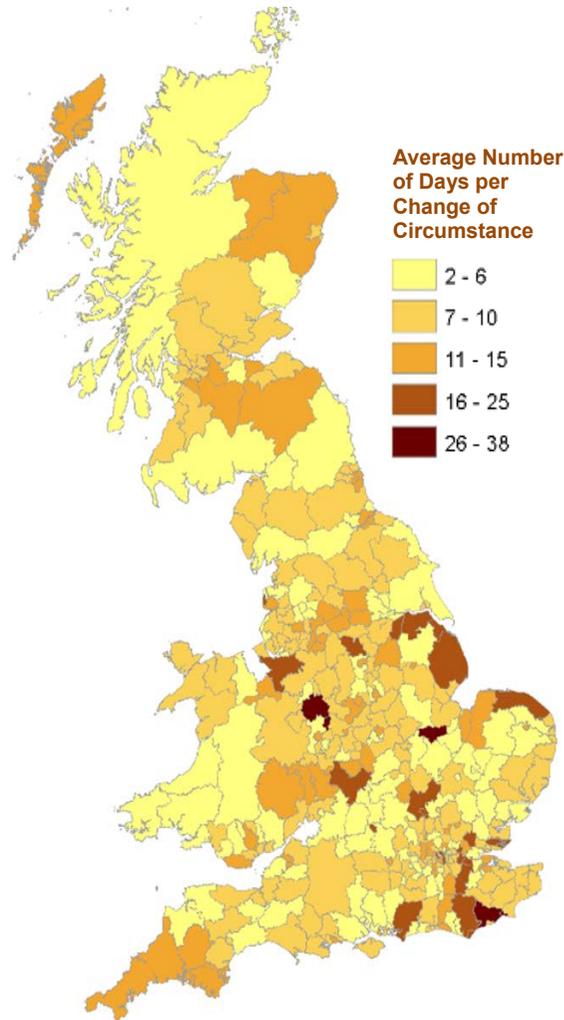
Please note: The monthly figures may not sum to the quarterly ones. Local authorities with one or more months of missing data are excluded from the quarterly total.

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

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



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

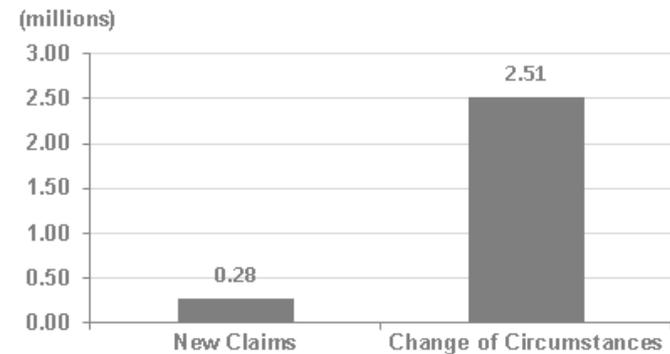


The maps show the average number of days taken to process a HB new claim or change of circumstance. The average number of days taken to process either a new claim or a change of circumstance varies widely between LAs, with those LAs that take longer to process a claim or change being represented by a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

On average a new claim takes longer to process than a change of circumstance. This can be seen by comparing the two maps. The change of circumstance map contains more light areas, indicating shorter processing times per change, compared to the new claims map where there are more dark areas, showing longer processing times per claim.

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

New Claims and Change of Circumstances processed in Great Britain (Q3 2016/17)



There were 2.51 million change of circumstances and 0.28 million new claims processed in Great Britain during Q3 2016/17.

Where to find out more

The historical [Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit Claims Administration Quarterly Performance Data](#) which is available to 2007/08 are based on clerical returns made by individual local authorities. Breakdowns of new claims and changes in processing times are available historically, and the new claims processing times are broadly comparable over time. However, a change in definition for change of circumstances between 2007/08 and 2009/10 means that direct comparison of this element with Speed of Processing statistics is not meaningful.

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

Policies and procedures on DWP National and Official Statistics, including a Quality Guideline, Confidentiality and Access Policy Statement, Pre-release Access arrangements and Statement of Administrative Sources: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-statistical-summary-policies-and-statements>

Other National and Official Statistics

Details of other National and Official Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions can be found on the Gov.uk website via the following link:

- A schedule of statistical releases and a list of the most recent releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>

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

Feedback

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

An on-going questionnaire, enabling DWP to target future consultations at interested users; shaping the future direction of statistics development to address user needs; and helping ensure value for money, whilst giving users a structured way of expressing their views is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-statistics-on-speed-of-processing-questionnaire>

Completed questionnaires can be returned by e-mail to stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by post to the following address:
Dissemination Team, Data and Analytics, Department for Work and Pensions, Room BP5201, Benton Park Road, Longbenton, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE98 1YX

Users can also join the “Welfare and Benefit Statistics” community at: <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk>. DWP announces items of interest to users via this forum, as well as replying to users’ questions.