

Housing benefit and the spare room subsidy withdrawal, May 2016

Claims for housing benefit and council tax support

The Gov.uk website contains information for people wishing to claim [housing benefit](#), and the [benefits adviser web page](#) has an online facility for checking benefit entitlement.

Summary for May 2016

In the year to May 2016, housing benefit claimant numbers fell by 3.4% within Great Britain to 4,681,714 claimants. In the Lancashire-14 area, the number declined by 4.8% to 105,821. Claimants moving over to universal credit is having an impact on the reduction.

Yearly percentage reductions in the number of housing benefit claimant were in excess of the -3.4% recorded in Great Britain in every authority in the Lancashire-14 area, ranging from -3.9% in Blackpool, to -7.5% in Burnley. This may be a result of the North West being the first region where the universal credit system was rolled out in the second half of 2014.

The greatest numeric reductions in housing benefit claimants in the Lancashire-14 area over the previous year were registered in Blackpool (-752), Burnley (-653), Blackburn with Darwen (-571), Lancaster (-532), Preston (-461) and West Lancashire borough (416). The lowest numeric reductions were recorded in Rossendale (-199), Fylde district (-194) and Ribble Valley (-133).

Spare room subsidy

Housing Benefit can be reduced if claimants live in council or social housing and have a spare bedroom.

In May 2016 there were 432,363 housing benefit claimants in Great Britain, or 9.2% of the total number of housing benefit claimants, who had had the spare room subsidy reduction applied. The average amount of the reduction for Great Britain was £15.21.

The spare room subsidy withdrawal affected 7,395 (7.0%) housing benefit claimants across the Lancashire-14 area. Blackpool had by far the largest number of HB recipients in the Lancashire-14 area, but it also had the smallest proportion (2.5%) who were affected by the spare room subsidy. This was because over 70% of its claimants rent privately, so the subsidy does not apply.

West Lancashire (13.4%), Blackburn with Darwen (10.3%), Preston (10.0%) and Chorley (9.9%) had percentages in excess of the GB percentage average (9.2%) of HB claimants affected by the spare room subsidy.

Blackburn with Darwen (1,232), Preston (1,095), West Lancashire (877), Chorley (569), Burnley (530) and Lancaster (519) had the greatest number of HB claimants who had had the spare room reduction applied. Fylde (186) and Ribble Valley (110) had the lowest numbers.

Introduction

This short article draws from [housing benefit statistics](#) published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

People are eligible for housing benefit (HB) if they are on a low income and are liable to pay rent (or are treated as if they were so liable) in respect of the dwelling they occupy. The amount of benefit depends on eligible rent, income, deductions in respect of any non-dependants, and deductions for food, fuel and water.

Housing benefit is one of six benefits that will be replaced over time by universal credit. People claiming universal credit get help paying for housing with their universal credit payment.

If a claimant lives with a partner, only one person can get housing benefit. Any claimant who is single and under 35, can only get housing benefit for bed-sit accommodation, or for a single room in shared accommodation.

The national context

In May 2016, an average of £96.03 per week in housing benefit was paid out to 4.681,714 claimants in Great Britain. The number of claimants was 3.4% less than in May 2015. The GB figure rose from around 4.172 million in November 2008 to a peak of 5.079 million in February 2013. The introduction of the universal credit benefit has been a factor behind the subsequent fall in housing benefit numbers.

Local authorities within the Lancashire-14 area

Table 1 lists the housing benefit details in May 2016 for the authorities in the Lancashire-14 area. The number of housing benefit claimants in each authority ranged from a substantial 18,413 households in Blackpool to just 1,750 in Ribble Valley. In total, the Lancashire-14 area had 105,821 HB claimants in May 2016.

Table 1: Housing benefit (HB), May 2016

Area	HB Claimants	HB % change, Feb 2015 to Feb 2016	Private rented	% private rented	Social rented sector
Burnley	8,112	-7.5%	4,066	50.1%	4,045
Chorley	5,731	-5.3%	1,761	30.7%	3,966
Fylde	4,410	-4.2%	2,620	59.4%	1,787
Hyndburn	6,494	-5.0%	3,342	51.5%	3,154
Lancaster	8,995	-5.6%	4,712	52.4%	4,285
Pendle	6,236	-4.3%	3,218	51.6%	3,014
Preston	10,915	-4.1%	3,485	31.9%	7,434
Ribble Valley	1,750	-7.1%	661	37.8%	1,086
Rosendale	4,568	-4.2%	1,721	37.7%	2,847
South Ribble	4,772	-4.3%	1,539	32.3%	3,228
West Lancashire	6,552	-6.0%	1,881	28.7%	4,670
Wyre	6,949	-4.3%	4,142	59.6%	2,809
Lancashire-12 area	75,484	-5.1%	33,148	43.9%	42,325
Blackburn with Darwen	11,924	-4.6%	4,393	36.8%	7,530
Blackpool	18,413	-3.9%	13,251	72.0%	5,160
Lancashire-14 area	105,821	-4.8%	50,792	48.0%	55,015
North West	570,003	-5.1%	189,017	33.2%	380,975
Great Britain	4,681,714	-3.4%	1,467,762	31.4%	3,211,262

Source: [Department for Work and Pensions](#)

In the year to May 2016, housing benefit numbers declined in every authority in the Lancashire-14 area. The total number of claimants of housing benefit in Great Britain fell by -3.4% (-164,493), from 4,846,207 in May 2015, to 4,681,714 in May 2016. Yearly percentage reductions were in excess of the -3.4% recorded in Great Britain in every authority in the Lancashire-14 area, ranging from -3.9% in Blackpool, to -7.5% in Burnley. The greatest numeric reductions in housing benefit claimants in the Lancashire-14 area over the year to May 2016 were registered in Blackpool (-752), Burnley (-653), Blackburn with Darwen (-571), Lancaster (-532), Preston (-461) and West Lancashire borough (416). The lowest numeric reductions were recorded in Rossendale (-199), Fylde district (-194) and Ribble Valley (-133).

Under Occupancy of Bedrooms

Housing Benefit can be reduced if claimants live in council or social housing and have a spare bedroom.

The reduction is:

- 14% of the 'eligible rent' for one spare bedroom
- 25% of the 'eligible rent' for two or more spare bedrooms

The DWP publishes data that includes figures for the [average weekly spare room subsidy amount withdrawal](#). Figures are available for each of the 14 local authorities in the Lancashire-14 area, and show the total number with award reduction, and the average weekly amount of reduction.

Table 2: Spare room subsidy withdrawal, May 2016

Area	HB Claimants with reduction applied	Number of reductions as a % of all HB recipients	Average weekly reduction
Burnley	530	6.5%	15.20
Chorley	569	9.9%	14.47
Fylde	186	4.2%	15.67
Hyndburn	383	5.9%	12.81
Lancaster	519	5.8%	14.06
Pendle	371	5.9%	14.31
Preston	1,095	10.0%	15.03
Ribble Valley	110	6.3%	15.51
Rossendale	292	6.4%	13.90
South Ribble	399	8.4%	14.97
West Lancashire	877	13.4%	14.37
Wyre	376	5.4%	16.00
Lancashire-12	5,707	7.6%	-
Blackburn with Darwen	1,232	10.3%	£14.47
Blackpool	456	2.5%	£13.85
Lancashire-14	7,395	7.0%	-
North West	62,903	11.0%	£14.73
Great Britain	432,363	9.2%	£15.21

Source: [Department for Work and Pensions](#)

In Great Britain in May 2016, 432,363 housing benefit claimants, or 9.2% of the total number of housing benefit claimants, had had the spare room subsidy reduction applied.

The spare room subsidy withdrawal affected 7,395 (7.0%) housing benefit claimants across the Lancashire-14 area. Blackpool had by far the largest number of HB recipients in the Lancashire-14 area, but it also had the smallest proportion (2.5%) who were affected by the spare room subsidy. This was because over 70% of its claimants rent privately, so the subsidy does not apply to them. West Lancashire (13.4%), Blackburn with Darwen (10.3%), Preston (10.0%) and Chorley (9.9%) had percentages in excess of the GB percentage average (9.2%) of HB claimants affected by the spare room subsidy.

Blackburn with Darwen (1,232), Preston (1,095), West Lancashire (877), Chorley (569), Burnley (530) and Lancaster (519) had the greatest number of HB claimants who had had the spare room reduction applied. Fylde (186) and Ribble Valley (110) had the lowest numbers.

The average amount of housing benefit reduction applied was the greatest within the Lancashire-14 area in Wyre (£16.00), Fylde (£15.67) and Ribble Valley (£15.51). These figures were above the GB average of £15.21. Amounts were below £14.00 in Rossendale (£13.90), Blackpool (£13.85) and Hyndburn (£12.81).

Last updated September 2016 by Paul Ayre.