



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

BACKGROUND, DOCUMENT

Discretionary assistance fund: quality report

The Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) was established on April 1st 2013 to create a Wales-wide replacement to parts of the Social Fund run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

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Introduction

The DAF provides two types of payment

- Emergency assistance payment (EAP) used to pay for essential costs (such as food, electricity, clothing etc) if the recipient is experiencing extreme financial hardship.
- Individual Assistance Payment (IAP) used to pay for items (e.g. fridge, cooker, bed, chairs etc) that allow the recipient to live independently in their home.

The **DAF** is administered by NEC Software Solutions UK (previously Northgate Public Services) on behalf of Welsh Government with the assistance of two lead partners: Family Fund Trading Limited (FFT) and Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) and various Delivery Partners. The DAF also works with a network of delivery partners, typically charities, that signpost recipients to the DAF and where necessary assist in the application process.

Source of data and methodology

Data relating to the DAF is collected by NEC Software Solutions UK from the administrative systems used to process applications. This data is aggregated and provided to Welsh Government on a quarterly basis. The data includes the number and value of EAPs and IAPs paid in Wales each month as well as breakdowns by local authority of residence and age group of the applicant. Other information collected during the application process (such as gender) is not routinely provided to Welsh Government. All statistics relate to the number of payments made not the number and value of applications.

All DAF figures are a measure of volumes rather than unique users, as up to

three successful applications can be made by an individual in a 12-month period. For the full list of restrictions please see the [eligibility criteria section of the Discretionary Assistance Fund application form](#).

COVID-19

From March 2020, EAPs could be claimed for reasons relating to COVID-19 such as experiencing delays in Universal Credit payments or other DWP claims as a result of the pandemic, and to cover the withdrawal, in October 2021, of the uplift of £20 per week in Universal Credit payments introduced during Covid-19. From 1 April 2023, COVID-19 is no longer available to be selected as a reason for applying for an EAP.

Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's [Statement of compliance](#).

These statistics are not classed as official statistics. However, we have applied the principles of the Code of Practice for Statistics as far as possible during development.

The database from which these statistics are drawn is primarily used to manage the DAF applications and payments (in real time) and so does not undergo any formal validation processes. Because of this these statistics are not fully compliant with Welsh Government's [Statement of compliance](#).

We have therefore voluntarily applied the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) as follows.

Trustworthiness

The data have been extracted from operational systems and tabulated by external contractors with extensive experience in analysing and presenting such information, and which include professional statisticians. The release has been produced with statisticians who work under the supervision of the Welsh Government Chief Statistician to ensure that the statistics, data and explanatory material is presented impartially and objectively.

Publications have been pre-released four weeks ahead of publication and made available to all users at the same time. Welsh government does not have access to non-aggregated DAF data which could be used to identify individuals.

Value

To meet need expressed by users, publications released from 2024 onwards have included breakdowns on the age of recipient and local authority the applicant was resident in. Publications from this time have also included an HTML release in addition to tables presented on [StatsWales \(Discretionary Assistance Fund \(DAF\)\)](#) in order to highlight significant changes and improve accessibility.

Quality information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, and comparability.

Relevance

These statistics are used within Welsh Government to monitor the number of people in acute financial need. They are also published on [StatsWales \(Discretionary Assistance Fund - Weekly data \(March 2020 to October 2023\)\)](#) on a quarterly basis to allow external users to view the data.

Some of the main users are:

- Senedd Members and researchers at Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament
- social/policy researchers for the Welsh government
- students, academics and universities
- charities and NGOs

Accuracy

Monetary values are rounded to the nearest pound. The number of payments is not rounded. The data does not go through any formal validation processes and therefore is not published as [Accredited Official Statistics \(Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)\)](#).

The DAF statistics are taken from a live database of applications and are therefore a snapshot of the DAF at the time they were accessed. Applications may be revoked or altered (even after the payment was made) therefore the

total value and number of EAP or IAP applications for a given period is subject to change. These revisions are generally made on a case-by-case basis and therefore have only a minimal impact and do not bias the data.

Data published on [StatsWales](#) is updated to show any revisions and so contains the most up-to-date figures available. Data published in [the quarterly reports](#) shows the figures as they were at time of publication and are not updated to reflect minor revisions to the number or value of payments.

Occasionally there may be a backlog in processing resulting in larger than expected numbers of payments in a given period. Information on any such issues will be highlighted to users at the time via notes in tables and reports.

Timeliness and punctuality

This statistical release is published quarterly (with releases typically occurring in January, April, July and October) and covers the preceding 3 months.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the [Welsh Government website](#). The underlying data for this release are available on [StatsWales \(Discretionary Assistance Fund \(DAF\)\)](#).

Coherence and comparability

In addition to the regular statistics on payments, in October 2023 Welsh Government published an [analytical report](#) looking into more detail at:

- the recipients of DAF in terms of their age, how individuals access DAF

- payments and the number of times the DAF is used per individual
- the DAF payments in the 22 local authorities in Wales to see if there are any emerging patterns in specific economic indicators that might help explain the number of payments in each local authority

Please note that the more detailed datasets summarised in that report cover different periods and were extracted at different time points than the regular statistics, therefore there may be small differences in numbers.

Figures for the DAF are not directly comparable with the similar **Scottish Welfare Fund, Discretionary Support (in Northern Ireland)** or Local Authority schemes (in England)

due to differences in policy aims and eligibility criteria.

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