



BRIEFING PAPER

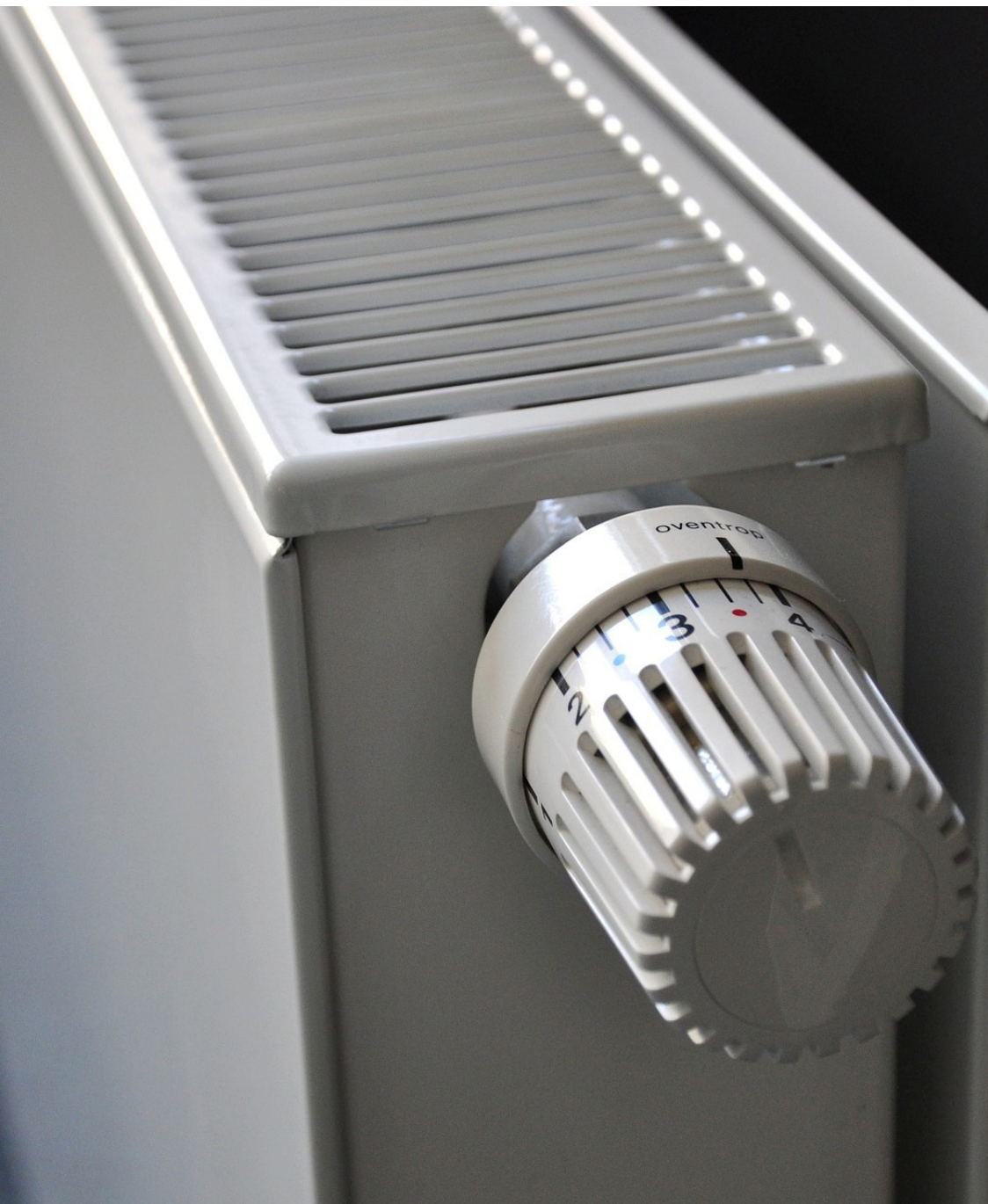
Number 8254, 30 April 2018

Cold Weather Payments for winter 2017-2018

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Summary

Cold Weather Payments are made from the Social Fund to certain recipients of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit or Pension Credit during periods of very cold weather. To "trigger" the payments, the average temperature at a specified weather station must be recorded as, or forecast to be, 0°C or below for seven consecutive days. The scheme runs from 1 November to 31 March each year.

The payment is a fixed amount for each week of cold weather. For many years this was set at £8.50 a week but the Labour Government increased the rate to £25 a week as a temporary measure for winters 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. In 2010, the Coalition Government made the £25 rate permanent.

Payments are made automatically to those entitled to them; there should be no need to make a claim. People who think they may be entitled but do not receive a payment should contact [Jobcentre Plus](#), the [Universal Credit helpline](#), or a [pension centre](#).

In the four winters preceding the 2017-18 winter (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17), relatively mild weather meant that far fewer Cold Weather Payments were made compared with previous years. Winter 2013-14 was exceptionally mild; payments "triggered" in one area only in one week, resulting in expenditure of £27,500. The highest annual expenditure during this period was £10.6 million in 2014-15; between 2008-09 and 2012-13, by comparison, annual expenditure never fell below £129 million.

Winter 2017-18 was colder than the four winters preceding it and this resulted in a greater number of Cold Weather Payments. Over the winter, there were 140 "triggers", resulting in an estimated 4.75 million payments and estimated expenditure of £118.7 million. The impact of the spell of cold weather at the end of February and into March 2018 can be clearly seen; between 17 February and 9 March there were 90 triggers, which resulted in an estimated 3.9 million payments and estimated expenditure of £98.2 million.

Further background on the Cold Weather Payments scheme can be found in Library Briefing Paper SN/SP/696, [Cold Weather Payments](#). Information is also available at [GOV.UK](#), and the DWP has a series of [Frequently Asked Questions on Cold Weather Payments](#). There is also a [search facility](#) showing when payments have been triggered at particular postcodes.

Cold Weather Payments are entirely separate from both the [Winter Fuel Payments](#) scheme and the annual "[Christmas Bonus](#)" paid to pensioners and claimants of certain other benefits.

This briefing covers the Cold Weather Payments scheme in Great Britain. A separate but equivalent scheme exists in [Northern Ireland](#). Cold Weather Payments, together with the other benefits which comprise the regulated Social Fund – Winter Fuel Payments, Funeral Payments and the Sure Start Maternity Grant – were devolved to the Scottish Government under the [Scotland Act 2016](#). More information regarding the new powers and information on how the Scottish Government intends to use the powers is available in section 1.4 of the briefing.

1. Cold Weather Payments: a short introduction

[Cold Weather Payments](#) are a fixed payment of £25 made from the Social Fund to certain benefit claimants during periods of cold weather. The scheme runs from 1 November to 31 March each year (the Cold Weather Payment season).

1.1 When are payments triggered?

Every day during the Cold Weather Payment season, the Met Office records the average daily temperature from each of a network of 94 weather stations in Great Britain. The Met Office uses these daily averages to produce a single average for each weather station covering the last seven days. It also forecasts what the seven day average will be over the next seven days.

Each residential postcode area is linked to one of the 94 weather stations. When an area's station records or forecasts an average temperature of zero degrees or lower over seven consecutive days a payment of £25 is automatically triggered to eligible benefit claimants in the area.

Box 1: Overlapping periods of cold weather

There are some fairly complicated rules about payments where there are overlapping periods of cold weather. Broadly, if a day has been used once in a calculated period of cold weather, it cannot be used again. Thus, if a week of cold weather is recorded ending on a particular day a second payment cannot be awarded until a further complete week had passed, even if the intervening days have "triggered".¹

Under the *Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Regulations 1988*, as amended, the Secretary of State is required to designate a primary weather station for each postcode district for the purposes of Cold Weather Payments and to review the designations annually.² They are also required to publish details of the designations.³

Background information on Cold Weather Payments published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides further detail on how postcodes are linked to weather stations:

The scheme links postcode districts to weather stations that report to the Met Office on a daily basis. The Met Office takes account of topography, the extent of built-up areas and the distance from available weather stations. Each postcode district is assigned to a weather station with the most similar climate in terms of 1981-2010 average winter temperature.

¹ The rules on overlapping periods are described in greater detail in Vol 7 paras 39700-39714 of the DWP [Decision Maker's Guide](#)

² The regulations also provide for data from specified secondary stations, or the nearest alternative station to be used if data from the primary station is not available (paragraphs 2(1A) and 2A).

³ Prior to 2016, the list of weather stations and their associated postcodes for a particular winter was provided through amendments to the 1988 regulations. See CBP 7826, [Cold Weather Payments for winter 2016/17](#) for further information.

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The final postcode listings are agreed by DWP and this postcode to weather station mapping will be used throughout the Cold Weather Payment season and will not be reviewed further until the following year.⁴

The list of weather stations and their associated postcodes for the 2017-18 winter is available at: [Cold Weather Payment estimates: 2017 to 2018](#); it is also included as an Appendix to this briefing.

1.2 Which benefit claimants are eligible?

A person is eligible for a Cold Weather Payment if there is a period of cold weather where they live (see above) and they were in receipt of **Pension Credit** for at least one day during the period of cold weather.

A person can also qualify for a Cold Weather Payment if they were in receipt of **Income Support (IS)**, **income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)**, or **income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)** for at least one day during the period of cold weather and:

- they are responsible for a child under five; or
- their IS or JSA includes a disability premium, any one of the pensioner premiums, or a disabled child premium.
- their ESA includes a severe or enhanced disability premium, or pensioner premium, of they are in the work-related activity group or the support group; or
- they are entitled to Child Tax Credit for a child or qualifying young person who is disabled or severely disabled.

Universal Credit (UC) can also act as a gateway to Cold Weather Payments, but, reflecting the existing restrictions outlined above, not all UC claimants are eligible. Recipients of UC are eligible for a Cold Weather Payment if they have a disabled or severely disabled child element within their assessment. They are also eligible if they are not employed or self-employed and:

- they or their partner receive either a "limited capability for work" element or a "limited capability for work related activity" element; or
- they are responsible for a child under five.⁵

The Coalition Government estimated that it would cost around an additional £320 million a year to extend Cold Weather Payments to all claimants of UC once the new benefit is fully introduced, and stated that it had no intention of doing so.⁶

People living in a care home, Abbeyfield home or an independent hospital are excluded from Cold Weather Payments, unless they have a child under five or are getting Child Tax Credit which includes a disabled or severely disabled child element.

⁴ Department for Work and Pensions, [Social Fund Cold Weather Payment Estimates for Great Britain, 2017-18](#), January 2018, p3.

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions, [Advice for decision making: staff guide, Chapter L4](#), paras L4091-L4094.

⁶ HC Deb 3 July 2014 c757w

Further information on the eligibility criteria for Cold Weather Payments is available in the DWP's *Decision Makers' Guide* ([vol 7, chapter 39](#)) and, for Universal Credit, in DWP's *Advice for Decision Makers* ([chapter L4](#)).

1.3 How are payments made?

Payments should be made automatically to all those who are entitled to them; there should be no need for an individual to make a claim. When Cold Weather Payments are “triggered”, it normally takes three working days for payment to be made into the accounts of eligible benefit claimants.⁷ A [search facility](#) is available on GOV.UK which indicates when Cold Weather Payments have been triggered for particular postcodes.

People who think they may be entitled but do not receive a payment should contact [Jobcentre Plus](#), the [Universal Credit helpline](#), or a [pension centre](#).

Claimants who feel they may have qualified for a payment over the Cold Weather Payments season (1 November until 31 March) but did not receive it (e.g. because the birth of a child was not notified to the Department at the time) can make a claim for a backdated payment, provided they do so within 26 weeks of the end of the season. The Government argued that this rule – introduced in 2010 – “strikes the right balance between giving the customer time to inform the Department of their circumstances after receiving their winter fuel bills and the administrative cost of retaining records on forecasted and actual periods of cold weather.”⁸

1.4 Devolution of Cold Weather Payments to Scotland

Cold Weather Payments, together with the other benefits which comprise the regulated Social Fund – Winter Fuel Payments, Funeral Payments and the Sure Start Maternity Grant – were devolved to the Scottish Government under the *Scotland Act 2016*.

A “split competence” approach is being used to devolve powers over these benefits. Under this approach, legislative competence transferred on 17 May 2017, allowing the Scottish Parliament to legislate in this area. Executive competence – i.e. responsibility for delivering the benefits – will, however, remain with UK Ministers until the Scottish Government are ready to take on responsibility for them, or by 1 April 2020 at the latest. Until the transfer of executive competence, the DWP will continue to set the rules for these benefits in Scotland, and funding for them will also remain with the DWP until this time.⁹

⁷ HC Deb 11 January 2010 c651w. For the small number of benefit claimants whose claims are maintained clerically, payment takes slightly longer.

⁸ [Explanatory Memorandum to The Social Fund Cold Weather Payments \(General\) Amendment Regulations 2010](#), para 7.4

⁹ [Letter from the Rt Hon Damian Green, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in relation to the Committee's joint meeting with the Scottish Parliament's Social Security Committee](#), 20 April 2017; SPICe Briefing, [Social Security \(Scotland\) Bill](#), 31 August 2017, pp6-7.

The Scottish Government's approach

The [Social Security \(Scotland\) Bill](#), which is currently before the Scottish Parliament, sets out principles and a general framework for Scottish social security following the devolution of powers over some benefits by the *Scotland Act 2016*. The Bill provides for a form of assistance – Cold-spell Heating Assistance – to replace the current Cold Weather Payments System in Scotland. The eligibility rules and the specific type of assistance to be given will be set out in regulations.

In its consultation, [A New Future for Social Security](#), published in August 2016, the Scottish Government stated that it wanted to “understand how [Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments] can be used to tackle fuel poverty more effectively.” With regards to Cold Weather Payment specifically, the consultation stated that the Government was “aware that the current temperature threshold doesn’t recognise weather conditions in certain parts of Scotland, for example wind chill factor. We would look to work with rural stakeholders and the Met Office to identify trigger points more suitable to Scottish conditions.”¹⁰

In its [report](#) on the Social Security Bill published in December 2017, the Scottish Parliament’s Social Security Committee said it is not clear when specific proposals relating to Cold-spell Heating Assistance will be brought forward.¹¹ In its [response to the Committee’s report](#) the Scottish Government stated:

As with the other types of assistance, the Scottish Government's primary focus in relation to Cold-spell heating assistance is the safe and secure transfer of the existing benefit, and this must always remain the number one priority. That is why the Scottish Government believes that a phased approach is the right way to bring over the benefits. Timings, for the delivery of a new, Scottish Cold-spell heating assistance will depend on the implementation and testing of the new social security system's operations. Once implemented, the Scottish Government will protect the current Cold Weather Payment eligibility and ensure that those people currently in receipt of this important support do not lose out.¹²

Further information is available in briefings on the social security bill produced by the [Scottish Parliament’s Research Service](#) (SPICe) and the [Scottish Parliament’s Social Security Committee](#).

¹⁰ The Scottish Government, [A New Future for Social Security](#), August 2016, p60.

¹¹ Social Security Committee, [Stage 1 Report on the Social Security \(Scotland\) Bill](#), December 2017, pp64-65.

¹² Scottish Government, [Stage one report on the Social Security \(Scotland\) Bill: Scottish Government response](#), December 2017, p36.

2. Expenditure on Cold Weather Payments

While changes to postcode-weather station linkages may have an impact on the amounts paid out, the main factor determining expenditure on Cold Weather Payments is the weather.

Between 1995 and 2007 the Cold Weather Payment was £8.50 a week for eligible claimants, but it was increased to £25 for the 2008-09 winter and has remained at this rate since. Further information is available in section 4 of CBP 7828, [Cold Weather Payments for winter 2016/2017](#).

The table opposite gives the total expenditure on Cold Weather Payments for each winter since the weekly rate was increased to £25 in 2008-09 until 2016-17. The impact of the exceptionally mild winter of 2013-14 can be seen clearly; payments were triggered in one area only for one week (postcodes linked to the Braemar weather station), and a total of 1,100 payments were made. The following three winters were also all mild, with annual expenditure never exceeding £10.6 million.

2.1 2017-18 winter

Weekly statistical reports on Cold Weather Payments in the 2017-18 winter are available at: [Cold Weather Payment estimates: 2017 to 2018](#).

The 2017-18 winter was clearly colder than the preceding four winters. Over the winter there were 140 triggers, resulting in an estimated 4.75 million and estimated expenditure of £118.7 million. The impact of the spell of cold weather at the end of February and into March 2018 is evident; between 17 February and 9 March there were 90 triggers, which resulted in an estimated 3.9 million payments and estimated expenditure of £98.2 million.

CWP expenditure 2008-09 to 2016-17
£ millions, cash

Winter	Expenditure
2008-09	210
2009-10	290
2010-11	431
2011-12	129
2012-13	146
2013-14	0.03
2014-15	10.6
2015-16	3.9
2016-17	4.1

Source: *Social Fund Annual Report*, various years

Estimated weekly Cold Weather Payments, Winter 2017-18

Week ending	Triggers	Payments	Expenditure (£)
3 November 2017	0	-	-
10 November 2017	0	-	-
17 November 2017	0	-	-
24 November 2017	0	-	-
1 December 2017	0	-	-
8 December 2017	11	64,000	1,600,000
15 December 2017	16	655,000	16,400,000
22 December 2017	0	-	-
29 December 2017	2	1,000	-
5 January 2018	5	11,000	300,000
12 January 2018	2	20,000	500,000
19 January 2018	7	49,000	1,200,000
26 January 2018	0	-	-
2 February 2018	0	-	-
9 February 2018	4	6,000	200,000
16 February 2018	3	13,000	300,000
23 February 2018	33	813,000	20,300,000
2 March 2018	38	1,995,000	49,900,000
9 March 2018	19	1,119,000	28,000,000
16 March 2018	0	-	-
23 March 2018	0	-	-
30 March 2018	0	-	-
Winter 2017-18	140	4,747,000	118,700,000

Notes: Volumes are rounded to the nearest 1,000, all expenditure to the nearest £100,000.

These are estimates produced by DWP and do not, for example, include payments made to some Universal Credit claimants. For further information see DWP's: *Background and methodology: Cold Weather Payment estimates*.

Source: DWP, *Cold Weather Payment estimates: 2017 to 2018*

Appendix: Cold Weather Payment areas and weather stations for 2017-18

Weather Station	Postcode Sectors Covered
Aberporth	SA35-48, SA64-65.
Aboyne	AB30-34, AB38, AB51-55, DD8-9.
Achnagart	IV40-49, IV51-56, PH36, PH38-41.
Albemarle	DH1-7, DH9, DL4-5, DL14-17, NE1-13, NE15-18, NE20-21, NE23, NE 25-46, SR1-7, TS21, TS28-29.
Andrewsfield	CB1-5, CB10-11, CB21-25, CM1-9, CM11-24, CM77, CO9, RM4, SG8-11.
Auchincruive	DG9, KA1-26, KA28-30, PA20.
Aultbea	IV21-22, IV26.
Aviemore	AB37, IV13, PH19-26.
Bainbridge	BD23-24, DL8, DL11-13.
Bedford	MK1-19, MK40-46, NN1-16, NN29, PE19, SG5-7, SG15-19.
Bingley	BB4, BB8-12, BB18, BD1-22, HD3, HD7-9, HX1-7, LS21, LS29, OL13-14, S36.
Boscombe Down	BA12, RG28, SO20-23, SP1-5, SP7, SP9-11.
Braemar	AB35-36, PH10-11, PH18.
Brize Norton	OX1-6, OX8, OX10-14, OX18, OX20, OX25-29, OX33, OX44, SN7.
Capel Curig	LL24-25, LL41.
Cardinham (Bodmin)	PL13-18, PL22-35, TR9.
Carlisle	CA1-8, DG12, DG16.
Cassley	IV27-28, KW11, KW13.
Charlwood	BN5-6, BN44, GU5-6, ME6, ME14-20, RH1-20, TN1-20, TN22, TN27.

Charterhall	NE71, TD1-6, TD8, TD10-15.
Chivenor	EX23, EX31-34, EX39.
Coleshill	B1-21, B23-38, B40, B42-50, B60-80, B90-98, CV1-12, CV21-23, CV31-35, CV37, CV47, DY1-14, LE10, WS1-15, WV1-16.
Crosby	CH41-49, CH60-66, FY1-8, L1-40, PR1-5, PR8-9, PR25-26.
Culdrose	TR1-8, TR10-20, TR26-27.
Dunkeswell Aerodrome	DT6-8, EX13-15,TA21.
Dunstaffnage	PA30-31, PA34-35, PA37-38, PA62-65, PA67-75, PA80.
Dyce	AB10-16, AB21-25, AB39, AB41-43.
Edinburgh Gogarbank	EH1-42, EH47-49, EH51-55, FK1-7, FK9-10, KY3, KY11-12.
Eskdalemuir	DG3-4, DG10-11, DG13-14, ML12, TD7, TD9.
Exeter Airport	EX1-5, EX8-12, EX24, EX6-7, TQ1-6, TQ9,TQ12,TQ14.
Filton	BS1-11, BS13-16, BS20-24, BS29-32, BS34-37, BS39-41, BS48-49, GL11-13, NP16, NP26.
Fylingdales	YO13, YO18, YO21-22, YO62.
Bishopston	G1-5, G11-15, G20-23, G31-34, G40-46, G51-53, G60-62, G64, G66, G69, G71-78, G81-84, ML4-5, PA1-19, PA21-27, PA32.
Gravesend	BR5-8, CM0, DA1-18, ME1-5, ME7-8, RM1-3, RM5-20, SS0-17.
Hawarden Airport	CH1-8, LL11-14, SY14.
Heathrow	BR1-4, CR0, CR2-9, E1-18, E20, EC1-4, EN1-5, EN7-11, HA0-9, IG1-11, KT1-24, N1-22, NW1-11, SE1-28, SLO, SL3, SM1-7, SW1-20, TW1-20, UB1-11, W1-14, WC1-2, WD1-2.
Hereford-Credenhill	GL1-6, GL10, GL14-20, GL50-53, HR1-9, NP7-8, NP15, NP25, SY8, WR1-11, WR13-15.
Herstmonceux West End	BN7-8, BN20-24, BN26-27, TN21, TN31-40.
High Wycombe	HP5-23, HP27, OX9, OX39, OX49, RG9, SL7-9.
Hurn	BH1-25, BH31, DT1-2, DT11, SP6.
Isle of Portland	DT3-5.

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Keele	CW1-3, CW5, CW12, ST1-8, ST11-12, ST14-21.
Kinloss	AB44-45, AB56, IV1-3, IV5, IV7-12, IV15-20, IV30-32, IV36.
Kirkwall	KW15-17.
Lake Vyrnwy	LL20-21, LL23, SY10, SY15-17, SY19, SY21-22.
Langdon Bay	CT1-21, ME9-13, TN23-26, TN28-30.
Leconfield	DN14, HU1-20, YO11-12, YO14-17, YO25.
Leek	DE4, DE45, S32-33, SK13, SK17, SK22-23, ST9-10, ST13.
Lerwick	ZE1-3.
Leuchars	DD1-7, DD10-11, KY1-2, KY6-10, KY15-16, PH12, PH14.
Linton on Ouse	DL1-3, DL6-7, DL9-10, HG1-5, LS1-20, LS22-28, TS9, TS15-16, YO1, YO7-8, YO10, YO19, YO23-24, YO26, YO30-32, YO41-43, YO51, YO60-61.
Liscombe	EX16, EX35-36, TA22, TA24.
Little Rissington	CV36, GL54-56, OX7, OX15-17, WR12.
Llysdinam	LD1-8, SA19-20, SY7, SY9, SY18.
Loch Glascarnoch	IV4, IV6, IV14, IV23-24, IV63.
Loftus	SR8, TS1-8, TS10-14, TS17-20, TS22-27.
Machrihanish	KA27, PA28-29, PA41-49, PA60.
Marham	CB6-7, IP24-28, PE12-14, PE30-38.
Mona	LL33-34, LL42-49, LL51-78.
Morpeth, Cockle Park	NE22, NE24, NE61-70.
North Wyke	EX17-22, EX37-38, PL19-21, TQ10-11, TQ13.
Nottingham Watnall	CV13, DE1-3, DE5-7, DE11-15, DE21-24, DE55-56, DE65, DE72-75, LE1-9, LE11-14, LE16-19, LE65, LE67, NG1-22, NG25, NG31-34.
Pembrey Sands	SA1-8, SA14-18, SA31-34, SA61-63, SA66-73.
Plymouth	PL1-12, TQ7-8.

Redesdale	CA9, DH8, NE19, NE47-49.
Rhyl	LL15-19, LL22, LL26-32.
Rochdale	BL0-9, M24, M26, OL1-12, OL15-16, SK15.
Rostherne	CW4, CW6-11, M1-9, M11-23, M25, M27-35, M38, M40-41, M43-46, M50, M90, PR7, SK1-12, SK14, SK16, WA1-16, WN1-8.
Rothamsted	AL1-10, EN6, HP1-4, LU1-7, SG1-4, SG12-14, WD3-7, WD17-19, WD23-25.
St. Athan	CF3, CF5, CF10-11, CF14-15, CF23-24, CF31-36, CF61-64, CF71-72, NP10, NP18-20, SA10-13.
St. Bees Head	CA13-15, CA18-28.
Salsburgh	EH43-46, G65, G67-68, ML1-3, ML6-11.
Scilly St. Marys	TR21-25.
Shap	CA10-12, CA16-17, LA8-10, LA21-23.
Shawbury	SY1-6, SY11-13, TF1-13.
Sheffield	DN1-8, DN11-12, HD1-2, HD4-6, S1-14, S17-18, S20-21, S25-26, S35, S40-45, S60-66, S70-75, S80-81, WF1-17.
South Farnborough	GU1-4, GU7-35, GU46-47, GU51-52, RG1-2, RG4-8, RG10, RG12, RG14, RG18-27, RG29-31, RG40-42, RG45, SL1-2, SL4-6, SO24.
Stonyhurst	BB1-3, BB5-7, LA2, LA6-7, PR6.
Stornoway	HS1-9.
Strathallan	FK8, FK11-19, G63, KY4-5, KY13-14, PH1-7, PH13.
Thorney Island	BN1-3, BN9-18, BN25, BN41-43, BN45, PO1-22, PO30-41, SO14-19, SO30-32, SO40-43, SO45, SO50-53.
Threave	DG1-2, DG5-8.
Tibenham	NR1-35.
Tiree	PA61, PA66, PA76-78, PH42-44.
Trawsgoed	LL35-40, SY20, SY23-25.
Tredegar	CF37-48, CF81-83, NP4, NP11-13, NP22-24, NP44, SA9.
Tulloch Bridge	FK20-21, PA33, PA36, PA40, PH8-9, PH15-17, PH30-35, PH37, PH49-50.

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Waddington	DN9-10, DN13, DN15-22, DN31-41, LN1-13, NG23-24, PE10-11, PE20-25.
Walney Island	LA1, LA3-5, LA11-20.
Wattisham	CB8-9, CO1-8, CO10-16, IP1-23, IP29-33.
Westonbirt	BA1-3, BA11, BA13-15, GL7-9, RG17, SN1-6, SN8-16, SN25-26.
Wick	IV25, KW1-3, KW5-10, KW12, KW14.
Wittering	LE15, NN17-18, PE1-9, PE15-17, PE26-29.
Yeovilton	BA4-10, BA16, BA20-22, BS25-28, DT9-10, SP8, TA1-20, TA23.

Source: [Cold Weather Payment estimates: 2017 to 2018](#)

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