

Freedom of Information request 2013-2339

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Information request

I am concerned at what I am hearing about DWP advisers I request to be given information regarding numbers of benefit claimants sanctioned in the last 2 years, by area, and month if possible, and if there are incentives /disciplinary consequences for DWP staff who do/do not sanction sufficient claimants. It would be handy to have a breakdown of statistics which indicate for what reasons claimants are sanctioned.

DWP response

In response to your first question please see the attached document (FOI 2013-2339 Response.xls) which gives figures the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Income Support for Lone Parents (ISLP) claimants with a sanction applied in Great Britain in each month in 2011 and 2012 by Jobcentre Plus Group, and the reason for applying a sanction.

Please note the latest available data for JSA sanctions is up to and including 21st October 2012.

I can confirm that the Department does information on the number of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants who have been sanctioned. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with this part of your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600.

The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with this part of your request and we will not be processing this further.

For information:

The sanctions regime for people on Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) changed from the beginning of December 2012. As a result of the changes to the regime, the Department for Work and Pensions has reviewed its methodology for publishing ESA sanctions official statistics with a view to ensuring the publication remains relevant whilst also seeking to maintain a consistent time series.

In comparing methodologies, an error was discovered in the current official statistics measure leading to double counting of some sanctions. For this reason, statisticians at the DWP have decided to suspend publication of ESA sanctions statistics based on the current method. The DWP are aiming to publish the first set of statistics for the new ESA sanctions regime by August 2013 alongside a revised historical series and a working paper explaining the differences between the methodologies. These statistics have been delayed from a May release to allow the new regime to bed-in and to allow sufficient quality assurance of the new methodology.

In response to the second part of your question, there are no targets or incentives for staff to sanction or refer claimants for a sanction decision. There is no specific disciplinary measure relating to this as there is no target for sanctions or referrals.

It is however part of an adviser's job to make sure that the conditionality regulations are adhered to and to make appropriate referrals when required. Failing to correctly apply conditionality could result in disciplinary action.

Managers monitor referral levels to make sure that conditionality is applied consistently across the Jobcentre network.

You may be interested to know that sanctions data is published here:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool>

You may also be interested to know that on 15th May 2013 the Department produced a publication with the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) sanctions and disallowances, where a decision has been made, in each month from 1st April 2000 to 21st October by Jobcentre Plus Office and decision outcome, and this can be found here:

http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis