

Freedom of Information request 2015-1776

Date received 29 April 2015

Date of response 29 May 2015

Information request

I should like to request the following information:

A graph showing the employment and support allowance sanctions by disability over the last five years up to today (or as most recently as possible).

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It would be helpful if you were to provide any brief notes which might be necessary to understand the context of the information provided, although I recognise that you are not obliged to do this.

DWP response

Benefit sanctions are only used only as a last resort and the overwhelming majority of claimants do not receive a sanction. The recent independent Oakley review confirmed that they are vital to a properly functioning welfare system.

When a sanction is applied to someone's benefit it is only the personal allowance element of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) which is affected. Any child-related premiums they receive are unaffected. Those receiving housing benefit will continue to do so throughout a sanction period provided they continue to meet the ESA conditions.

ESA claimants do not face sanction for not finding work and are not required to apply for or take up specific jobs. Sanctions are only imposed where a claimant does not engage with the support on offer which is designed to improve their chances of finding or preparing for work. Claimants are encouraged to discuss the impact of their condition on their support needs, and work coaches are well-placed to understand and reflect the needs of claimants, identifying the type of work related activity that will help them successfully move towards employment. It is worth noting that the vast majority of ESA claimants are not sanctioned; in any given month only around 1% receives a sanction.

In response to your query the information you require is shown in the attached document (FOI 2015-1776 Response graphs.pdf), which contains a graph of the number of adverse ESA sanction decisions by month by Summary International Classifications of Diseases (ICD). The data covers the period January 2010 to September 2014, which is the latest available at the time of request. Please note with respect to the data in more recently published

months care must be taken in using and interpreting this as these are subject to a high degree of revision.

Please ensure you read the notes before using and interpreting this graph.

The figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.

They should therefore be treated with caution.

For context we have also supplied, in the same document as above, a graph showing quarterly figures for the numbers of ESA claimants in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) as only those in the WRAG can be sanctioned. Whilst the quarterly numbers of individuals in receipt of ESA WRAG are not directly comparable with the monthly number of sanctions, they do show a similar increase since 2011.