

Freedom of Information request 918/2011

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Information request

Could you please provide the number of cases where DWP employees have been arrested on suspicion of any type of payment irregularities linked to their place of work from 1st January 2009 till 25th March 2011?

Could you also provide the location where these irregularities took place, the date of arrest and the suspected offence?

Could you also state in each case, where applicable, whether charges were brought?

If the charges were successful, can you specify the amount of money believed to have been taken?

DWP response

The term 'payment irregularities' is quite broad. For the purposes of this response, we have defined this term as referring to irregularities where the member of staff has been directly responsible for the fraudulent processing, authorising or actual payment of monies whilst employed by DWP. This definition includes the diversion of payments; misuse of the Government Procurement Card and employees making fraudulent payments to associates.

DWP employs over 100,000 staff and made over £150 billion in benefit payments during 2010-11. Instances of employees committing fraud are extremely rare. Where we identify, or allegations are made of, potential cases of employee fraud, these are investigated thoroughly and disciplinary action taken where appropriate.

The table below details the cases involving payment irregularities during 1st January 2009 to 25th March 2011, where prosecution action has been concluded. In 6 of the 7 cases, the individuals were dismissed, and in the remaining case the employee resigned.

Location	Date of Arrest	Offence	Charges Brought	Outcome	Amount of Loss
Caerphilly	14/07/2009	Fraudulent payment of Crisis Loans	5 counts under Sections 1 & 2 of the Fraud Act 2006 and 1 count under sections 1 & 4 of the Fraud Act 2006	Sentenced to 24 weeks' imprisonment suspended for 2 years	£1,680
Chorlton	03/04/2010	Fraudulent payment of Crisis Loans	Conspiracy to defraud under Theft Act	Sentenced to 45 weeks imprisonment	£12,400
Warrington	26/05/2010	Fraudulent payments under the Travel to Interview scheme	Conspiracy to steal contrary to section 11 Criminal law Act 1977	Sentenced to 14 months imprisonment	£53,750
Newcastle upon Tyne	11/08/2010	Fraudulent diversion of benefit payments	One charge against Sections 1 & 2, and one against Sections 1 & 4 of the Fraud Act 2006	Sentenced to 12 months in prison	£44,540
Hanley	08/09/2010	Fraudulent diversion of benefit payments	Fraud by abuse of position, contrary to sections 1 and 4 of Fraud Act 2006	Sentenced to 17 weeks imprisonment suspended for 12 months, 12 months supervision, £100.00 costs	£2,306

Location	Date of Arrest	Offence	Charges Brought	Outcome	Amount of Loss
Exeter	10/11/2010	Fraudulent diversion of benefit payments	Charged with Fraud by abuse of position contrary to sections 1 and 4 of the Fraud Act 2006	Sentenced to 3 months imprisonment suspended for 12 months, plus 150 hours community service	£992
Wallsend	16/11/2010	Fraudulent use of Government Procurement Card	One charge of theft by an employee	Given a Community Order for 1 year, ordered to perform 190 hours unpaid work and to pay £75 court costs	£4,209

Section 30 (investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities) of the Freedom of Information Act creates an exemption from releasing information held at any time for the purposes of criminal investigation or criminal proceedings. Releasing information on cases that are still under investigation, or that have not been concluded through the courts, could prejudice the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. As we are satisfied that the public interest test (not to disclose) is suitably met, such cases have been exempted.