

Freedom of Information request 2014-722

Date received: 14 February 2014

Date of response: 11 April 2014

Information request

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide me with copies the following:

1. A table of the number of people with autism or Asperger's syndrome receiving each welfare programme.
2. The employment rate of those with autism or Asperger's syndrome.

To clarify my request, I was referring to welfare benefits, like PIP and the Disability Living Allowance.

DWP response

In response to your first query, the statistics we have available are given below in tables 1 and 2. Please note that due to the way the information is held on our system this is the lowest level of detail available.

Table 1 shows the number of people claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement Allowance (IB/SDA) with a recorded medical condition of "Pervasive Development Disorders". This includes Asperger's Syndrome (AS) and Autism in addition to other PDDs. We are unable to separate those cases with AS or Autism from this group.

Table 2 shows the number of people claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) (both cases in payment) with main disabling conditions of "Asperger's Syndrome", "Autism" and "Other learning difficulties". From October 2008 the way in which disabling condition is recorded on the live system changed. Previously AS and Autism cases were recorded under the general heading of "Learning Difficulties". Although AS and Autism cases are now recorded separately, many people are still recorded under the general heading of "Learning Difficulties". The figures given are therefore the new cases recorded under Asperger's Syndrome and Autism, and also the old cases which cannot be separated. These are the number of people whose main disabling condition is recorded as "Learning Difficulties" which includes: Down's Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, Other Learning Disability, Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and Retts Disorder.

Table 1: ESA and IB/SDA Caseload with medical condition of Pervasive Development Disorders, Great Britain: August 2013

	ESA	IB/SDA
Total benefit caseload	1,871,070	602,350
Pervasive Development Disorders	6,730	1,280

Source: DWP Information Governance and Security: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Notes:

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. Data is at 31 August 2013, which is the latest available.
3. Great Britain total includes a small number of cases who are resident abroad.
4. To qualify for IBSDA, claimants have to undertake a medical assessment of incapacity for work called a Personal Capability Assessment. Under the ESA regime, new claimants have to undergo the Work Capability assessment. From April 2011 IBSDA recipients will begin also to undertake this assessment.
5. The medical condition recorded on the claim form does not itself confer entitlement to IBSDA or ESA. So, for example, a decision on entitlement for a customer claiming IBSDA or ESA on the basis of Autism would be based on their ability to carry out the range of activities assessed by the Personal / Work Capability Assessment; or on the effects of any associated health problems.
6. Incapacity Benefit was replaced by Employment Support Allowance (ESA) from October 2008.

Table 2: DLA and AA (cases in payment) by specified Main Disabling Conditions, Great Britain: August 2013

	DLA	AA
Total benefit caseload	3,292,360	1,497,270
Asperger's Syndrome	36,870	30
Autism	92,080	70
Other Learning Difficulties (inc. Asperger's Syndrome and Autism)	298,960	1,410

Source: DWP Information Governance and Security: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Notes:

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. Data is at 31 August 2013, which is the latest available.

3. Great Britain total includes a small number of cases who are resident abroad.
4. Totals show the number of people in receipt of an allowance, and exclude people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital.
5. Where more than one disability is present only the main disabling condition is recorded.
6. From October 2008 the way in which disabling condition is recorded on the live system changed. Previously Asperger's Syndrome and Autism cases were recorded under the general heading of "Learning Difficulties". Although Asperger's Syndrome and Autism cases are now recorded separately, many people are still recorded under the general heading of "Learning Difficulties". The figures given are the new cases recorded under Asperger's Syndrome and Autism, and also the old cases which cannot be separated. These are the number of people whose main disabling condition is recorded as "Learning Difficulties" which includes: Down's Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, Other Learning Disability, Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and Retts Disorder.
7. A diagnosed medical condition does not mean that someone is automatically entitled to DLA/AA. Entitlement is dependent on an assessment of how much help someone needs with personal care and/or mobility because of their disability. These statistics are only collected for administrative purposes.

In response to your queries on Personal Independence Payment, the Department plans to release official statistics on this subject. As the statistics are intended for future publication this information is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the FOIA. This exemption is qualified, and is therefore subject to a public interest test. The public interest test is where the Department considers whether the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding or disclosing the information requested.

Arguments in favour of disclosure: There are public interest arguments in favour of disclosure of this information at the present time. Disclosure would for example improve transparency in the operations of the Department.

Arguments against disclosure: There are public interest arguments against disclosure of this information at the present time. These arguments include that it is in the public interest to adhere to the existing publication process for official statistics, which includes time for the data to be collated and properly verified.

It is also in the public interest to ensure that the publication of official information is a properly planned and managed process, to ensure that the

data are accurate once placed into the public domain. It is also in the public interest to ensure that the information is available to all members of the public at the same time, and premature publication could undermine the principle of making the information available to all at the same time through the official publication process.

On this occasion, the balance of the public interest test falls in favour of withholding this information. As I have explained above, statistics on this issue will be published in due course.

The Department is working to guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we are able to publish statistics that meet high quality standards at the earliest opportunity. We intend to publish Official Statistics on Personal Independence Payment from Spring 2014 aligned to the Disability Living Allowance National Statistics release. The Personal Independence Payment Release Strategy can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/personal-independence-payment-statistics>

You may be interested to know that an ad-hoc statistical release of [Personal Independence Payment: Management Information](#) was published on 11 February 2014 and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-management-information>

In response to your second query regarding employment rates; the Department does not hold this information. The responsibility for employment statistics lies with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Information on how to submit a freedom of information request to ONS can be found via the link below.

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/FOI/how-to-make-a-foi-request/index.html>