

Freedom of Information request 2014-4539

Date received 10 October 2014

Date of response 10 November 2014

Information request

1. How many benefit claimants in Clacton have been sanctioned since May 2010?
2. How many benefit claimants in Clacton have been affected by the bedroom tax since May 2010?
3. How many benefit claimants in Heywood and Middleton have been sanctioned since May 2010?
4. How many benefit claimants in Heywood and Middleton have been affected by the bedroom tax since May 2010?

DWP response

In response to your questions 1 and 3 regarding Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) sanctions, Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act allows us to direct you to information which is already reasonably accessible to you.

The Department releases statistics on JSA and ESA sanction decisions via Stat-Xplore. These statistics contain a wide set of geographical breakdowns including parliamentary constituency and further information can be found via the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions>

For your convenience we have extracted the figures for you as requested. These can be found in the table below along with figures for Income Support Lone Parent (ISLP) sanctions. Further information on ISLP can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/income-support-lone-parent-regime-figures-on-sanctions-and-work-focused-interviews--2>

Number of individual benefit recipients with adverse sanction decisions for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support for Lone Parents (ISLP) in Clacton and Heywood and Middleton Parliamentary Constituencies: May 2010 to March 2014

Parliamentary Constituency	Individuals with an adverse JSA sanction decision	Individuals with an adverse ESA sanction decision	Individuals with an adverse ISLP sanction decision
Clacton	2,559	108	310
Heywood and Middleton	3,877	246	420

Sources: Decision Making and Appeals System (DMAS), via Stat-Xplore
Income Support Computer System (ISCS)

Notes

1. JSA and ESA sanctions: Cells have had statistical disclosure control applied to avoid the release of confidential data.
2. ISLP sanctions: Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Income Support Lone Parents receive a fixed sanction of 20% of the personal allowance rate of a single claimant [not aged less than 25] for each failure to attend/participate in a Work Focused Interview until 10 pence is left in payment. This sanction lasts until the individual attends and participates in a Work Focused Interview. In the case where there is more than one sanction in place the claimant need only attend/participate in one Work Focused Interview in order for all related sanctions to be removed from their benefit.
3. The table shows a count of how many individuals have received an adverse sanction decision, i.e. decision to apply a sanction, in each parliamentary constituency, within the time period. As individuals may receive more than one sanction decision, an individual would be counted once in a cell but could appear more than once in the table e.g. if sanctioned in both Clacton and Heywood and Middleton parliamentary constituencies an individual would be counted once in each.
4. Users should not sum the cells in a table to obtain the overall number of individuals as an individual may appear in a table more than once.
5. The date of decision has been used to allocate to a time period. If a case was referred in one period but not decided until the next, then it will be counted in the decision period.
6. Information is provided from 1 May 2010 to 31 March 2014, which is the latest data available for sanction decisions.

In response to your questions 2 and 4 regarding the removal of the spare room subsidy and all affected benefit claimants, we can confirm that the Department does hold some information falling within the description specified in your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with 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 (FOIA) the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing your request further.

Under section 16 of the FOIA we are obliged to assist you in providing options to narrow your request, by reforming or refocusing it, so that it will fall beneath the cost limit. In this case our advice would be to narrow your question so that it only asks for information on the number of Housing Benefit claimants affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy. Please note that this policy was not introduced until April 2013.