

Freedom of Information request 2013-5387

Date received: 8th November

Date of response: 6th December 2013

Information request

Can you please supply me with the figures & statistical information referring to adverse sanctions imposed on ESA claimants in Sefton for the period Dec 2012 - June 2013. I request a breakdown of all sanctions by severity of time of sanction imposed.

DWP response

I can confirm that the Department does hold some information on the **“severity of time of sanction imposed”** (the term sanction has been used here to mean both sanctions and disallowances). This includes the date the sanction was applied but we do not hold readily available information on the actual duration of the sanction applied.

In order to provide an answer we would need to combine data on multiple sanctions and overlapping decisions, accounting for differences in dates (e.g. when a claim ends during a sanction; when a sanction is reserved for application against a future claim; when circumstances change during or after a sanction). We therefore 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 it further

However, information that is available within cost is the number of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants who have received a sanction referral where an adverse decision has been made for the new sanctions regime which started on 3rd December 2012. This information for your requested area is available in the table below:

Number of ESA claimants who have received a sanction referral where an adverse decision has been made in Bootle and Southport Jobcentre Plus offices: 3rd December 2012 – 30th June 2013

	Number of Sanctions		
	1	2	3 or more
Bootle	20	-	-
Southport	10	-	-

Source: DWP Information Directorate: Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten. "-" denotes nil or negligible. Some additional disclosure control has been applied.
2. If an individual is sanctioned within more than one level they will appear within each applicable level.
3. Data to 30th June 2013 is the latest available information. The new sanctions regime started on 3rd December 2012 for ESA.
4. **Jobcentre Plus Office:** For this piece of analysis we have classified the Jobcentre Plus offices in Sefton as: Bootle and Southport

From 3rd December 2012 a revised sanctions regime for ESA claimants who are in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) was introduced. Under the system prior to 3rd December 2012 claimants in the WRAG who fail to attend or participate in a work focused interview, or who fail to carry out work related activity agreed with their adviser, received an open ended sanction. The sanction amount was 50 per cent of the work related activity component, increasing to 100 percent of the component after four weeks. The sanction was lifted when they re-complied.

Under the new rules ESA claimants in the WRAG who fail to comply with the conditions for receiving benefit receive an open- ended sanction, followed by a fixed period sanction when they re-comply. The fixed period sanction will be one week for a first failure, two weeks for a second failure and four weeks for a third and subsequent failures in a 52 week period. Claimants who are sanctioned will lose all of their personal allowance, but their work related activity component will not be affected.