

Freedom of Information request 2013 - 4789

Date received 7th October 2013

Date of response 4th November 2013

Information request

I would like to find out the following.

1. In Southampton and Eastleigh how many JSA claimants have been sanctioned in 2013 and had their benefit removed.
2. What are the various reasons for this.
3. What are the figures for those sanctioned in 2013, can you find me how many people were sanctioned in 2012 and 2011 in Hampshire.
5. What percentage of those sanctioned have successfully claimed hardship payments

DWP response

For your first three questions relating to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) sanctions in 2013, DWP plan to release official statistics on JSA Sanction decisions at 9.30am on Wednesday 6th November 2013. These statistics will include JSA sanction decisions under the new JSA sanctions regime, implemented from 22 October 2012. Further information can be found here:

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

Therefore the statistics you have requested are intended for future publication so this information is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act (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 we have explained above, statistics on this issue will be published in due course and further information can be found here:

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

For the remaining parts of question 3 relating to JSA sanctions in 2011 and 2012, the information that is available can be found in the table below.

Number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who had a sanction applied² by year of decision³ and area: 1st January 2011 – 31st May 2012

Area	Year of Decision ³	
	2011	2012
Hampshire ⁵	8,660	4,210

Source: DWP Information, Governance and Security Directorate: JSA Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten and include individuals who have a sanction applied in more than one year e.g. if an individual has had a sanction applied in 2011 and also in 2012 then they will appear in each year
2. **Sanctions applied:** The number of sanctions applied is the number of Varied, Fixed Length and Entitlement Decision referrals where the decision was found against the claimant.
3. **Year of Decision:** The year in which the decision to apply a sanction was made. The latest data available is up to and including the 31st of May 2012, which is the latest data available for these geographical areas.
4. **Local Authority:** On April 1st 2009 structural changes to the Local Authorities of England took effect. Changes are reflected from April 2009 in this table.

5. **Hampshire:** consists of the following Local Authorities: Basingstoke & Deane, East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Hart, Havant, New Forest, Rushmoor, Test Valley, Winchester and Portsmouth and Southampton Unitary Authorities.
6. **Varied Length sanctions:** A sanction of between 1 week and 26 weeks is imposed for leaving employment voluntarily without just cause, refusing employment without good cause, or losing employment through misconduct. The actual period in each case is at the discretion of the Adjudication Officer who makes the decision.
7. **Fixed Length sanctions:** A sanction of between 1 week and 26 weeks is imposed for refusal, without good cause, to attend an employment programme or carry out a Jobseeker's Direction. Payment of benefit continues in full pending the Adjudication Officer's decision on a sanction question.
8. **Entitlement Decisions:** These are questions on which entitlement to JSA depends. For example, if there is doubt around whether the Jobseeker's agreement (JSAg) is suitable, whether they are actively looking for work or making themselves available for work. In most cases payment of JSA will be suspended by benefit processing until the doubt is resolved.

With regards to question 5, we can confirm that the Department does hold some information on the number of hardship payments claimed. 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 FOIA the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing this part of your request further.

You may however be interested in the following published FOI response which contains information on the number of JSA (Income-Based) claimants in receipt of a hardship

Payment:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobseekers-allowance-claimants-with-a-sanction-or-disallowance-1-january-2005-to-21-october-2012>