

Freedom of Information request 5584/2013

Received 21 November 2013

Published

Information request

Given that when a claim for Jobseekers Allowance is processed, the claimant receives an 'award letter' which states the amount of Jobseekers Allowance. After informing one of the amount, it then states that 'this is the amount that the government has decided you need to live on'. I require to know how the government has decided that this is the amount that a claimant, such as myself, can live on?

I would expect that some attempt has been made to estimate the necessary costs and expenses of living on the bread line in arriving at the amount awarded and I need to know how this has been done, what costs and expenses have been taken into consideration, and how much of the total amount awarded should be allocated to each cost and expense ?

For example, how much of the total is to be allocated towards accommodation, council tax, energy and utility bills, food, clothing, communication and transport?

DWP response

The phrase "the amount the law says you need to live on" in fact refers to the "applicable amount" of benefit, laid down in law, that can be awarded if a person satisfies the conditions of entitlement. This amount may not be the amount that is actually awarded as it may be reduced by any income, savings or capital that any person in that award has. It can be further reduced if a claimant fails to comply with the conditions attached to receiving that benefit, this is known as a sanction or penalty, or if deductions are made direct to third parties such as housing, fuel or maintenance charges.

The benefit rates do not reflect, nor are they made up of, specific items of household and other expenditure such as food or fuel charges. The Government has not prescribed what expenses the personal allowances cover as it is for each individual or family unit to decide how to spend their benefit.