

Freedom of Information request 2861/2011

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Information request

How many staff were suspended from the Department for Work and Pensions in each of the last three financial years (2010/11, 2009/10 and 2008/09)?

For each financial year, please also state:

- how much was paid to suspended staff during this time
- what they were suspended for (ie: gross misconduct)
- how many of these suspended staff were subsequently dismissed
- how many staff were suspended for more than three months. Of these, how long was each one suspended for and for what?
- how many staff were dismissed (without first being suspended)? What were they dismissed for (ie: gross misconduct)?

DWP Response

The DWP personnel computer manages personal information for over 100,000 staff. Relevant suspension and dismissal details are recorded on the DWP personnel computer, which I have used to answer your questions, to the extent that I am able from the recorded information.

The information provided within this reply was retrieved from the DWP personnel computer system on 4 October 2011. This is the latest information available at this time; however as managers input information daily this information is subject to change.

Q1 How much was paid to suspended staff during this time?

2008 - 2009 £165,489

2009 - 2010 £242,241

2010 - 2011 £243,972

Q2 What they were suspended for (e.g. gross misconduct)?

Although we record the number of suspensions on the department's personnel system, we do not record specific reasons for the suspension.

The DWP discipline policy is robust and allows managers to investigate allegations of misconduct fairly and as quickly as possible. Suspension from duty is a little used option of last resort in the DWP. It is a precautionary measure used during a 'fact finding' investigation into an allegation of misconduct if there is a possibility that the employees continued presence will, for example:

- affect the public interest
- risk the destruction of any available evidence
- give rise to a strong possibility of a repeat of the misconduct
- unduly influence witnesses
- prejudice any investigation
- have an adverse effect on the work of the office
- pose a risk to property or person

It may also be considered only when it is not appropriate or possible to transfer an employee to other duties or, exceptionally, to another office for the duration of the investigation. The cost of suspension from duty varies for each case. It is calculated using a daily rate and therefore influenced by the length of the absence, salary and the grade of the employee.

Initial Question and Q 3, 4 and 5

How many staff were suspended from the Department for Work and Pensions. How many of these suspended staff were subsequently dismissed. How many staff were suspended for more than three months. Of these, how long was each one suspended for and for what? How many staff were dismissed (without first being suspended)? What were they dismissed for (ie: gross misconduct)?

All suspensions from duty are recorded on the department's personnel system as an authorised paid absence.

The following table provides a breakdown of suspensions for the period requested:

	Number of Staff Suspended	Staff who have had a suspension and Dismissal recorded *	Staff who were Suspended > 3 months	Staff who have a Dismissal recorded with no Suspension
2008/09	35	17	17	971
2009/10	61	24	18	1,090
2010/11	58	22	13	1,257

*Please note that this data shows staff who have both a suspension and dismissal recorded within the financial year. As previously stated suspensions are recorded as authorised absence for fact finding purposes; and not part of the disciplinary process. We are, therefore, unable to correlate whether the suspension and dismissal are directly linked. I am unable to respond to your specific question on this.

Staff who are dismissed from the Department are recorded on our personnel computer under four categories:

- Unsatisfactory attendance
- Unsatisfactory Performance
- Gross misconduct
- Dismissal (other reasons)

Our personnel computer system does not break these categories down further.