

Freedom of Information request IR 536/2013

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Information request

I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Work and Pensions's handling of my FOI request 'Falsifying unemployment figures – Cost to Taxpayer'.

I don't consider "being forced" is an inappropriate expression when referring to reapplying to be registered for Jobseeker's Allowance as a consequence of a disallowance. It's unlikely s/he would have ended a claim voluntarily in these circumstances.

In regards the request, it seems the questions have not been understood as I was hoping to obtain data specifically relating to the number of claimants who had been made to jump through hoops because of having to re-apply for Jobseeker's Allowance as a consequence of a disallowance. The term "jumping through hoops" I believe is the correct expression, as the claimant is entitled to reapply for this which in effect puts him back to the position he was in before the coercive action was taken.

I believe an option exists where the claimant may reapply within a month of the decision being taken to disallow a claim. It appears standard practice for JCplus staff to hand out the relevant form as a matter of course at this time. This was the information I was hoping for and detailed in question 2.

"2- The number reapplying within the specified allowable time"

The hope was to establish the unnecessary expense for the taxpayer caused by the estimated £500 cost to re-administer each claim it ends. This seems to be the amount which the government is willing to exchange of taxpayer's money for each person less it can claim makes up the unemployment figures.

Maintaining a constant turn over of disallowing claimants ensures that at any one time (a snap-shot) there will be thousands not counted as unemployed because of this strategy which must be costing the taxpayer £millions. Given the circumstances where claimants are having to reapply for Jobseekers Allowance, unemployment numbers will be affected by these disallowances and can be said is a price the taxpayer is paying for the government's election campaign.

In regards exceeding the appropriate limit of £600, it seems particularly ironic that a one off cost to provide a figure of expenditure incurred by the taxpayer

for Appealing decisions and Tribunals is considered excessive whilst the figure subject to the request is likely to be millions of pounds.

A full history of my FOI request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address:

http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/falsifying_unemployment_figures

DWP response

I have read both the original request for information from 24th May 2013, the reply from the FOI team and the grounds for the review. Under the initial request I feel that DWP Central FOI Team was right in stating the cost of the request would exceed £600 and therefore under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act no response was given.

In relation to your original question, we are clear that no-one is forced to reapply for JSA. Data on the number of people who reapply for JSA within the specified time period after disallowance is not readily available. We estimate that merging the relevant datasets to produce this number would exceed the appropriate limit of £600 set for central Government and therefore under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the right to refuse providing the information was the correct one.