

Freedom of Information request 968/2011

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Information request

I note that Lord Freud recently referred to households in certain parts of London "claiming more than £100,000 a year in benefit" (in an interview on Housing Benefit reform, on World at One 1/4/11). I would therefore like to request the following information from the DWP:

1. What data does the DWP have on individuals or households claiming over £100,000/year in benefits? I would like to see a copy of these data, and the relevant metadata.
2. What data does the DWP have on individuals or households claiming over £100,000/year in Housing Benefit? I would like to see a copy of these data, and the relevant metadata.
3. How many individuals or households are known to claim over £100,000 per year in benefits?
4. How many individuals or households are known to claim over £100,000 per year in Housing Benefit?
5. What is the source of Lord Freud's claim that some families claim over £100,000/year in benefits?

DWP response

Section 21 of the Act allows us to direct you to information which is already reasonably accessible to you.

Information on the benefit system, the range of benefits available, the rates in payment and eligibility conditions are available on the [Directgov](#) website.

The Department regularly publishes National Statistics on its website at <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool> and on NOMIS, the Office for National Statistics official website of labour market statistics www.nomisweb.co.uk. Both websites allow you to construct tables to your own requirements.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit National Statistics are published on the Department's website at: http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/index.php?page=hbctb_arc and include various breakdowns. This information is sourced from the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE).

In response to your questions 2 and 4 which relate to the subject area Lord Freud was referring. At December 2010, there were around 10 Housing Benefit claimants eligible for £1,917 or more per week, which would equate to more than £100,000 per annum. This information is sourced from the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE).

You may also find it useful to view information published on the Department's website which shows Housing Benefit caseload by average yearly award: http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2011/hb_awards_march_2011.pdf. The table of estimated annual yearly awards is provided in the annex.

The supporting data that you have requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. This exemption covers personal information about a third party. Disclosure of this information would lead to a reasonable chance of individual claimants and their families being identified. This would breach the families' right to privacy contrary to the Data Protection Act.

Information about data sources and some metadata is included in the various documents referred to.

In response to question 5, the source is the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) at December 2010.

In response to your questions 1 and 3, not all benefits are administered by this Department, and we do not hold complete information on those administered by other Government Departments and organisations on our Administrative Computer Systems. For example child tax credit is administered by HM Revenue and Customs.

Information is available to help answer your question from the Family Resources Survey and is provided in the table below.

Number of households in receipt of benefits or Tax Credits

Value of benefits and tax credits (per year)	Estimate
Not in receipt of benefits or tax credits	7,800,000
In receipt of benefits or tax credits, below £100,000	18,600,000
In receipt of benefits or tax credits, £100,000 +	-

Entitlement to some benefits is based on the circumstances of an individual, whilst others (including tax credits) are based on the circumstances of a benefit unit, defined as "a single adult or a married or cohabiting couple and any dependent children". Benefit and tax credit entitlement is not calculated on the circumstances of a household. There will be some households that

contain more than one benefit unit where only one of them is in receipt of benefit. Therefore it is often more appropriate for the analysis requested to be presented at benefit unit level rather than household level, and this is included in the table below.

Number of benefit units in receipt of benefits or Tax Credits

Value of benefits and tax credits (per year)	Estimate
Not in receipt of benefits or tax credits	12,800,000
In receipt of benefits or tax credits, below £100,000	19,600,000
In receipt of benefits or tax credits, £100,000 +	-

Source: Family Resources Survey (FRS) 2008-09

Notes:

1. The FRS is a nationally representative sample of approximately 25,000 UK private households.
2. Data for 2008-09, the latest year available, was collected between April 2008 and March 2009.
3. The figures from the FRS are based on a sample of households which have been adjusted for non-response using multi-purpose grossing factors which align the estimates to Government Office Region populations by age and sex. Estimates are subject to sampling error and remaining non-response error.
4. A household is defined as a single person or group of people living at the same address as their only or main residence, who either share one meal a day together or share the living accommodation (i.e. a living room). A benefit unit is defined as a single adult or a married or cohabiting couple and any dependent children. An adult is defined as those individuals aged 16 or over, unless defined as a dependent child. An individual may be defined as a child if aged 16-19 years old and they are not married nor in a Civil Partnership nor living with a partner; and living with parents; and in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training. A working age adult is defined as an adult below state pension age.
5. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100,000. '-' indicates less than 50,000.
6. The FRS is known to under-record benefit receipt and so the estimates presented should be treated with caution. More information can be found at: http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/2008_09/chapter7.pdf
7. More information on the FRS can be found at: http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/2008_09/index.php?page=intro .
8. Each year the FRS database is deposited at the Data Archive at Essex University. Information on access to the FRS can be found at: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/index/index.php?page=datasets> .

Finally, information has been released under Freedom of Information that may be of interest and is available on the website at:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/freedom%2Dof%2Dinformation/information%2Dreleased%2Dunder/>

For example:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/foi-339-2011-benefits-over-25k.pdf>

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/information-released-under/aug-2010.shtml>

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/foi-hb-expenditure.pdf>

Annex: extract from ad hoc publication on Housing Benefit caseload and amounts.

Table 2: Housing Benefit caseload by average yearly award bands.

Average yearly amount of HB	November 2010 Caseload		November 2009 Caseload		November 2008 Caseload	
£0-£5,000	3,602,090	75%	3,515,530	77%	3,428,740	82%
£5,000-£10,000	1,001,800	21%	886,990	19%	613,770	15%
£10,000-£15,000	128,960	3%	106,110	2%	77,680	2%
£15,000-£20,000	34,610	1%	39,810	1%	31,970	1%
£20,000-£25,000	6,460	0%	6,090	0%	4,890	0%
£25,000-£30,000	3,250	0%	2,470	0%	1,100	0%
£30,000-£35,000	820	0%	730	0%	440	0%
£35,000-£40,000	920	0%	470	0%	180	0%
£40,000-£45,000	150	0%	200	0%	70	0%
£45,000-£50,000	70	0%	50	0%	40	0%
£50,000+	160	0%	100	0%	20	0%
Missing HB values	19,050	0%	20,620	0%	13,040	0%
Total	4,798,340	100%	4,579,180	100%	4,171,950	100%

Source: Single Housing Benefit Extract 100% individual level data (SHBE) November 08, November 09 and November 10.

Notes:

1. Recipients are as at second Thursday of the month.
2. Components may not sum to total due to independent rounding.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
4. SHBE is a monthly electronic scan of claimant level data direct from local authority computer systems. It replaces quarterly aggregate clerical returns. The data is available monthly from November 2008 and November 2010 is the latest available.