

# Freedom of Information request

## 2310/2011

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### Information request

I would like to request some regional figures on the number of people that have undergone their Work Capability Assessments, since the rollout began earlier this year.

Please could you provide the figures requested below for each of the following counties:

Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Dorset, Wiltshire, West Sussex

How many people in each county have undergone Work Capability Assessments in 2011?

How many in each of the above counties were found 'Fit for work'?

Of the number found 'Fit for Work', how many had previously been classed as 'Long term unemployed'?

Of the number found 'Fit for Work', how many are appealing their decision?

### DWP response

The reassessment of existing incapacity benefits customers using the Work Capability Assessment was rolled out nationally from February 2011.

The Department currently does not hold data that can be broken down to county level so where information is available, national figures have been given, and have been rounded to the nearest 100 claimants.

Information from the Department's Management Information System indicates that since national rollout began, 45,100 claimants in England, 7,300 in Scotland and 3,900 in Wales have undergone a Work Capability Assessment. This includes those assessed face-to-face, cases assessed on paper scrutiny and therefore not requiring a face-to-face Work Capability Assessment, and

those that have had a recommendation based on their non-compliance with the assessment process.

Due to the overall length of the reassessment process, information on the entire incapacity benefits reassessment process including the final outcomes and subsequent destinations of claimants being reassessed is not yet available. Data are being collected, but it will take time to complete because of the overall length of the reassessment process.

The Department will publish data on the outcomes of the reassessment process once it has been quality assured and is considered robust.

As the statistics are intended for future publication this information is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act. 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 until a full sample of data is available the results will be skewed and misleading, also, 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 I have explained above, statistics on this issue will be published in due course.