

Freedom of Information request 2683/2011

Received 9 September 2011

Published 9 November 2011

Information request

- Please provide the DWP policy on the payment of sick pay.
- How much was paid to staff in sick pay for the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011?
- How many staff were absent through sickness for eight days or longer for the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011?

DWP response

Staff who are unable to work due to illness or injury are entitled to receive full pay for the first six months and half pay for a further six months subject to a maximum of 12 months paid sick leave in any four year period.

When sick leave entitlement on full and half pay has been exhausted, further sick leave is unpaid. Where a return to work is planned, and staff have two or more years service, there is discretion to pay sick pay at the pension rate.

When normal full and half sick pay has expired due to a long absence and the officer has returned to work, managers may consider an extension of paid sick leave of up to 40 calendar days for further absences relating to:

- minor ailments unrelated to the original illness or injury
- continuing treatment of the original illness or injury, which requires time off work to administer
- debilitating side effects, recovery from which requires time off work.

In addition to the initial 40 days extension, up to a further 20 calendar days paid leave may be allowed for continuing treatment of the original illness or injury.

Extensions are subject to a maximum of 60 days paid sick leave within a four year period starting from the date of return to work from the original long illness.

The statistical information provided within this reply was retrieved from the DWP personnel computer system on 16 September 2011. This is the latest information available at this time; however as managers input information daily this information is subject to change.

DWP currently employs over 100,000 staff. In the last financial year, 2010/11, 22,457 of our people had a cumulative sickness absence of eight days or longer. This was 18.2 per cent of the workforce.

This figure includes staff that had eight days or more continuous sickness and those who were sick through multiple short periods totalling eight days or more e.g. three spells of three days sickness.

The annual sick pay bill for 2010/11 was £62.9 million which accounted for 1.79 per cent of the department's total salary bill.

Over the past four years, the department has applied strenuous efforts to reduce sickness absence; cutting its annual sick pay bill from £90.5 million in the year to March 2007 to £62.9 million for the year to March 2011. In this time the Department has achieved an overall reduction of 29 per cent of actual working days lost through sick absence per member of staff from 11.1 days in March 2007 to 7.9 days currently.