

# Freedom of Information request 3097/2012

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## Information request

1. How much money was paid out in fraudulent claims across Scotland in each of the last five years, broken down by type of benefit (council tax benefit, housing benefit, income support, disability living allowance) and geographical area (Ayrshire, Lothian, Dumfries and Galloway etc).
2. How many people do the fraudulent claims relate to?
3. How many people were subsequently convicted?
4. How much of the money paid out in fraudulent claims was recovered?

## DWP Response

1/2. The Department does not collate benefit payments or overpayments by geographical area therefore figures for Scotland only are not available.

I am able to provide national figures for new fraud debt. The following two tables detail the value and volume of new fraud debts for the UK excluding Northern Ireland.

The figures for the volumes of new debts do not represent actual numbers of customers as one customer could have more than one debt.

New Fraud Classified debts 2007 to 2012 Excluding Northern Ireland:

Financial Year	New Debt Amount	Volume of New Debts
2007-08	£36m	18.7k
2008-09	£28m	13.5k
2009-10	£10m	6.3k
2010-11	£18m	9.4k
2011-12	£8m	6.6k

3. We do not hold information on the number of people convicted by geographical location or by benefit type as it is not routinely collated. We estimate that the cost of complying with this request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the Department for Work and Pensions holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the

Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing this part of your request further.

However, we can provide you with the number of people convicted in Scotland for benefit fraud.

The table below shows the total number of people convicted in Scotland from April 2007 until March 2012. This information is derived from operational processes and systems designed solely for the purposes of helping the Department to manage its business. As it was never the Department's intention to put this information into the public domain, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. As the Department holds the information, we have released it.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of people convicted in Scotland for benefit fraud</b>
2007/2008	117
2008/2009	119
2009/2010	524
2010/2011	557
2011/2012	692

Note: This information relates to DWP prosecutions, which may include joint prosecutions with FIS and Local Authorities but does not include Local Authority only prosecutions.

4. The following table details the national recoveries made against fraud debts.

Recoveries on Fraud Currently Classified debts 2007 to 2012 Excluding Northern Ireland:

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Recovery Amount</b>
2007/2008	£27m
2008/2009	£26m
2009/2010	£27m
2010/2011	£34m
2011/2012	£40m
<b>£154m</b>	

Please note:

Systems define new Fraud classified debt as that which enters the Department's Debt Management system classified as Fraud at the point it is entered onto the system. However, the Department only classifies an overpayment as Fraud related when a customer is convicted of an offence in court, admits the offence in an interview under caution or agrees to accept a financial penalty. Therefore a significant proportion of debts will only be

classified as Fraud related at some point after it has been entered on system, and will thus have been recorded as due to Customer error when first put on system.

Customer error categorisation includes all overpayments determined as recoverable under Social Security legislation, and will include errors by the customer and cases that are subsequently determined as due to fraud following the procedures set out above.

The figures above showing cases categorised as Fraud new debt will therefore not reflect the total of debt identified in year as due to Fraud as defined above.

The recoveries figures show recoveries from all debts from the point they have been classified as Fraud.

Please note that one customer could have multiple debts. Therefore the figure for New Debts does not necessarily reflect the actual number of customers.

Because of the definition of fraud applied by the Department, we cannot provide details of recovery on Fraud debts specific to **prosecuted** cases as not all Fraud debts will have actually been prosecuted (e.g. Administration Penalties or cases which fall below the minimum amount for prosecution).