

# Freedom of Information request 2691/2011

**Received** 12 September 2011

**Published** 17 November 2011

## Information request

- 1] Does the DWP have a policy 'banning' Facebook' and similar social networking sites from its offices and workplaces?
- 2] Please can you advise if government employees using state owned computers and resources for personal applications face ANY disciplinary code, and if so, please can you quote the specific DWP terms of employment in relation to this?
- 3] If the answer to '2' above is affirmative, please can you advise how many DWP staff have been subject to disciplinary proceedings in relation to the use of social networking sites during, for example, the month of August 2011?
- 4] In any event, and with regard to the TOTAL number of disciplinary hearings at the DWP for ANY and ALL infractions (NOT just social network access on work computers, but ANY disciplinary event), please can you advise the TOTAL number of Disciplinary Warnings and Disciplinary Hearings that were made by the DWP for example, during the month of August 2011?

## DWP response

DWP has an Electronic Media Policy informing staff of their responsibilities in the use of the internet.

Access to Facebook is blocked on the Department's PCs, but we do not have a policy to block social media sites.

The Department manages access to websites based on categories of content. Facebook is blocked as it falls into a blocked category. However, access has been provided to a small number of staff in communications roles where their roles justifiably involve use of social media on behalf of the Department.

Other social media sites fall into categories which we do not block and are therefore available. Staff are expected to abide by the terms of the DWP Electronic Media Policy and DWP Standards of Behaviour Policy when using such sites.

The DWP Standards of Behaviour Policy also outlines the standards expected of civil servants. It allows employees to use the internet or e-mail facilities for reasonable personal use in their own time and providing it does not interfere with their work. Employees must take care not to represent themselves as DWP employees or disclose any official information.

They must not access any information on the internet that is offensive or could be an embarrassment to the Department.

Disciplinary action is taken for breaches of policy for example for discussing sensitive official information on line or posting derogatory comments and opinions about the department, customers or fellow employees.

DWP records disciplinary action under a series of broad headings. Disciplinary action for breaches of policy involving social media would be categorised under computer misuse and then either breach of the Electronic Media Policy or internet abuse. The figures for these two categories are shown below:

Computer Misuse cases 1 to 31 August	
Secondary reason	Total
Any other breach of the Electronic Media Policy	7
Internet Abuse	1
Grand Total	8

The statistics for all disciplinary action is as follows and includes oral and written warnings:

Total Discipline Cases recorded 1 to 31 August 2011	
Reason	Total
Bringing the Organisation into disrepute	9
Bullying	1
Computer Misuse	43
Disclosure of Information	71
Failure to follow procedures	38
Fraud Theft and loss of official Funds	1
Harassment	4
Serious Criminal Offence	2
Unauthorised absence	3
Grand Total	172

DWP currently employs over 100,000 staff and the number of cases should be viewed in the context of being a small percentage of our total workforce.

The statistical information provided within this reply was retrieved from the DWP personnel computer system on 20 September 2011. This is the latest information available at this time, for the month of August 2011, as requested.

Disciplinary cases are entered onto our personnel computer retrospectively by line managers and as managers input information daily, the figures provided are subject to change.