

Freedom of Information request 1949/2011

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Information request

Under the previous Work Step scheme an employer could receive a financial incentive for employing a disabled person. They would be assessed, and if there was a difference between the amount of work that the disabled person could do, compared to an average worker, then a subsidy was paid to make up the difference. For example, if the disabled person could only work at half the pace of an average worker, 50 per cent of their wages could be made up in subsidies paid to the employer.

1. I want to know how many people were in jobs because of this scheme, before the payments to employers began to be reduced, and then finally ended last year.
2. I also want to know how many of those people are still employed, now that these financial incentives are no longer available,
3. If you have specific figures for people with learning difficulties /mental health problems, I would like these to be included separately in addition to the general figures.

I know that a DWP impact assessment was carried out before these changes were introduced, and there was also a survey in January 2010, so I believe these figures are available to the DWP. See below;

9.6 There is a risk that a better resourced and reformed programme does not target the support it provides at groups of disabled people with the greatest need. Around 8% and 36% of customers on WORKSTEP were people whose disability was respectively; poor mental health or a learning disability. Both groups are disadvantaged by particularly poor work opportunities

DWP response

It may help if I explain that although there was some flexibility within the WORKSTEP programme for employers providing work placements to receive some financial support, this was a discretionary payment made by providers. However, WORKSTEP was not designed as a work subsidy programme and any financial support provided should have been time-limited.

With Work Choice (which has replaced the WORKSTEP scheme), customers get more consistent, quality support from providers based on their individual

needs, to help them find work and progress in the workplace and, where it is appropriate for the individual, enables them to move into unsupported employment.

For ease I will answer your questions in the order in which you have raised them.

Firstly you ask how many people were in jobs because of this scheme, before the payments to employers began to be reduced, and then finally ended last year.

Departmental records show that there were a total of 5,671 financial incentives in payment in April 2010 for WORKSTEP participants. These financial incentives did not end last year as Work Choice providers are required to continue payment of any **protected** financial incentive in payment, at the time of transfer from WORKSTEP to Work Choice for agreements made by WORKSTEP providers prior to 18 May 2009. **Protected** means a financial incentive that is not part of the exclusions detailed below where the participant:

- a) works, whether as a permanent civil servant or as a placement in the Civil Service in a Government Department or one of its agencies in a Government Department;
- b) is employed by or placed in a supported business; or
- c) is employed by or placed in a local authority, (these are excluded over time).

Secondly you ask how many of these people are still employed, now that these financial incentives are no longer available.

We do not hold information about individuals who are still employed now that these financial incentives are no longer available. I can however confirm that in June 2011 there were 4,391 financial incentives paid for Work Choice participants.

Finally, you ask if the Department has specific figures for people with learning difficulties/mental health problems and that you would like these to be included separately in addition to the general figures.

We do not hold specific information in relation to people with learning difficulties/mental health problems.