

Freedom of Information request 2007/2013

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Information request

Please provide a breakdown of the weekly costs used to determine the applicable amount used when calculating benefit claims.

For example, the applicable amount for a couple claiming income related ESA is approximately £111 per week. This is the "money the government says you need to live on".

How is this amount calculated in terms of expected weekly expenditure on individual expenses such as food, power, transport, clothing and so on?

DWP response

In response to your question, Income-related benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance are paid at a rate set by Parliament each year. The amount is intended to cover all normal day to day living expenses. The amount of benefit payable depends on the individual circumstances of the claimant and their family, but the basic personal allowance for working age income related benefits in 2012/13 is:

- £71.70 for single person, 25 and over,
- £56.80 for those under 25
- £112.55 - couple, both 18 and over

There are variants for couples please see attached for further information:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp035.pdf>

The levels of benefit need to take account of the competing demands on public expenditure and work incentives. Benefits are not made up of separate amounts for specific items of expenditure such as food or fuel charges, and beneficiaries are free to spend their benefit as they see fit, in the light of their individual needs and preferences.