

Freedom of Information request 0614/ 2011

Received: 01/03/2011

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Information requested

The number of investigations into benefit fraud initiated by the Fraud Investigation Service in the last 3 financial years (2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 (incomplete)). Please include open cases.

For each financial year please detail:

1. How many are open/closed?
2. Of the closed cases; how many led to a prosecution? How many led to a conviction?
3. In how many of the closed cases was money recovered? Please disclose the total amount recovered from these closed cases in each of the last 3 financial years (2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 (incomplete)).

DWP response

1. The table below details the number of investigations into benefit fraud initiated by the Fraud Investigation Service in the financial year (2008/09) and since April 2010 for open and closed cases.

Year	Number of Cases Opened*	Number of Cases Closed*
2008/09	156,089	161,411
April 2010 to February 2011	173,568	100,479

*We have provided the number of cases opened and closed for the periods requested, although the number of closed cases may not necessarily relate to the same year in which they were opened and therefore cannot be directly compared with the number of cases opened.

You have also asked for information for the financial year 2009/10. This request appears to be a duplicate of an earlier request from you dated 24

September 2010. Under Section 14(2) of the Freedom of Information Act we are under no obligation to answer identical or substantially similar requests made by the same person.

2. The table below details the prosecution and convictions rates for 2008/09 and April 2010 to February 2011.

Year	*Number of Cases Prosecuted	*Number of Cases Convicted
2008/09	8,819	6,700
April 2010 to February 2011	9,019	7,639

*These cases may not relate to the open and closed data above as the investigation may have started prior to the year in which they were prosecuted and therefore can not be directly compared.

The number of cases prosecuted in court may not directly relate to the number of convictions in the same year and therefore the data cannot be directly compared. This is due to the length of time it can take for some cases to conclude which may span more than one tax year. Also the above figures do not include people who have admitted an offence in an interview under caution or accepted an administrative penalty.

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3. We are not able to state how much has been recovered from people that have been prosecuted as they are not classified as a separate category. The Department categorise overpayments under various criteria. Overpayments of benefit can occur in a number of ways. In the main they are due to customer, system or official error. They fall into two groups:

- Those where recovery is specifically provided for under Social Security legislation;
- Those where recovery is not specifically provided for under Social Security legislation but the Secretary of State may in some cases seek recovery.

Fraud is defined as being where a customer has been successfully prosecuted, admitted an offence in an interview under caution or accepted an administrative penalty.

The Department cannot provide details of recovery on Fraud debts specific to *prosecuted* cases as not all Fraud debts will have actually been prosecuted (e.g. Administrative Penalties).

The total recovered across all categories of outstanding debt for 2008/09 and 2010 to January 2011 is as follows:-

2008/09: £280.9m.

2010/11: £258.3m (as at 31/01/11). Statistics for February 2011 are not currently available.

These include recoveries by the Department of both DWP and Local Authority administered benefits.

You have also asked for information for the financial year 2009/10. This request appears to be a duplicate of an earlier request from you dated 24 September 2010. Under Section 14(2) of the Freedom of Information Act we are under no obligation to answer identical or substantially similar requests made by the same person.