

Freedom of Information request 413/2013

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Information request

“1. What estimates has the Department of Work and Pensions made of the number of Romanians who may migrate to Britain and begin to claim benefits after the controls are lifted? Which benefits is it anticipated will be claimed? What is the estimated cost? What time frame do these estimates cover?”

DWP response

The Home Office monitors and analyses overall migration data to help inform policy decisions. They have advised the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that it is not credible to accurately forecast likely inflows from Romania and Bulgaria once restrictions are lifted, because it is dependent on too many uncertainties to draw robust conclusions.

This concurs with the independent Migration Advisory Committee who concluded in 2011, ‘it would not be sensible or helpful to policymakers, for us to attempt to put a precise range around this likely impact’. Therefore we have not made estimates.

“2. What estimates has the Department of Work and Pensions made of the number of Bulgarians who may migrate to Britain and begin to claim benefits after the controls are lifted? Which benefits is it anticipated will be claimed? What is the estimated cost? What time frame do these estimates cover?”

The answer for Romania also applies to Bulgaria.

“3. What measures are being considered to curb the numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians who may be eligible to claim benefits after moving to the UK when the controls are lifted?”

From the 1st January 2014 Romania and Bulgarian nationals will have the same benefit entitlement as other migrants who are a ‘qualified person’ from the European Union – i.e. they exercise a right to reside as a worker; a self-employed person; a job seeker; a self-sufficient person or a student.

Contributory benefits, such as contribution based Jobseekers Allowance, are payable to anyone who satisfies the contribution and other conditions for the benefit, regardless of nationality.

For income related benefits each claimant must satisfy the Habitual Residence Test before they are eligible to claim means-tested benefits. The Habitual Residence Test has two elements: a legal right to reside and an objective assessment of factual evidence of habitual residence. Any national from the European Economic Area can satisfy the right to reside if they can demonstrate they are a qualified person for the purpose of benefit receipt. Decision Makers assess a wide variety of factors to determine whether someone is factually habitually resident. These include evidence of intention to remain and attachment to the UK. Each case is treated on its own merits, in the light of the person's individual circumstances.