Freedom of Information request 2013-2296

Received 16th May 2013 Published 20th June 2013

Information request

I refer to the release yesterday of an Ad-hoc analysis on the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) sanctions and disallowances, where a decision has been made, in each month from 1st April 2000 to 21st October 2012 by Jobcentre Plus Group/District/Office and decision. The release is at http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis.

These figures are of little value unless scaled by the number of JSA claimants in each Jobcentre area. I obtained these claimant figures from Nomis (with a view to making an analysis for the latest complete year I downloaded the average no. of JSA claimants Nov 2011 - Oct 2012), but it quickly became apparent that Nomis is using an out-of-date set of Jobcentre boundaries. We are not talking about a minor mismatch - it's something like one third, particularly affecting the big cities such as London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow etc.

Data on JSA claimants are not available by Jobcentre from the DWP Tabtool.

I would be grateful if you would supply me with the figures for total JSA claimants by Jobcentre, using the same boundaries as in the sanctions release of 15 May. Preferably this would be month-by-month for the whole period Apr 2000 - Oct 2012, but if this is not possible then my priority is the 12 months ending October 2012.

DWP response

In response to your question the available information can be found in the attached document (FOI 2013-2296 Response.xls) which gives the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants by Jobcentre Plus Group/District/Office and Caseload Month: March 2008 - October 2012.

Please ensure you read the following notes before using and interpreting this data.

The figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They have been created by matching data derived

from the Jobseeker's Allowance Payment System (JSAPS) and the Labour Market System (LMS). These systems are used to administer the claim process and are subject to user imputation errors. Therefore matching between these two data sources can result in incorrect or non-matches. They should therefore be treated with caution.

The following should also be noted if a comparison is made between these figures and published figures on the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) sanctions and disallowances. The number of sanctions and disallowance referrals in each month is taken from the date on which the decision was made. For a number of reasons the claimant may no longer be claiming JSA at this point therefore a direct comparison may not be valid.

There will also be differences between the caseload figures provided and those produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) from the claimant count. This is for the following reasons:

- The claimant count includes claims which are processed clerically, whereas the DWP JSA statistics only include computer processed claims.
- Claimant count statistics allow approximately 3 weeks for late processed claims to be input onto the DWP computer systems, whereas DWP JSA statistics allow at least 9 weeks.
- The claimant count measures 'live' claimants on the second Thursday of the month, whereas DWP JSA statistics measures 'live' claimants on the last day of the month.

On the 1 April 2013, the following changes occurred:

- The number of districts in Southern England Group reduced from 6 to 5
- Hampshire & the Isle of Wight and Wessex districts merged to become a new district called Greater Wessex.
- Devon and Cornwall district has been renamed Devon, Cornwall and Somerset district.
- Swindon has moved from Wessex district to Thames Valley district.

However, the office structure will still sit under the pre-2011 districts. There are no changes to Surrey and Sussex district and Gloucestershire and West of England district. Please note the figures provided are based on the pre-April 2013 Jobcentre Plus geographies.

I can confirm that the Department does hold some information falling within the description specified in your request prior to March 2008. However to provide this information would require us to commission an external contractor to retrieve and extract the data. We therefore estimate that the cost of fully complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600.

The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing this part of your request further.