

Freedom of Information request 2015-1744

Date received 27 April 2014

Date of response 21 May 2014

Information request

I am interested in benefit sanctions and how they are applied to people in Scotland. The information I would like access to is supplied for Great Britain in the Freedom of information requests reference numbers 2014-79 and 2014-2282. I wish to request similar data for Scotland and have adapted the wording from those Freedom of Information requests.

For each month from October 2008 to August 2014 inclusive, please give the number of adverse ESA sanctions decisions against claimants in Scotland, broken down by the Summary International Classification of Diseases (i.e. ESA Total; Other; Mental and Behavioural Disorders; Diseases of the Nervous System; Diseases of the Circulatory or Respiratory System; Diseases of the Musculoskeletal system and Connective Tissue; and injury, Poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes) so that the total in each month matches the adverse decisions figures given in Table 2.1 in the DWP sanctions statistics release of Feb 2015.

DWP response

Benefit sanctions are only used as a last resort and the overwhelming majority of claimants do not receive a sanction. The recent independent Oakley review confirmed that sanctions are vital to a properly functioning welfare system.

When a sanction is applied to someone's benefit it is only the personal allowance element of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) which is affected. Any child-related premiums they receive are unaffected. Those receiving housing benefit will continue to do so throughout a sanction period provided they continue to meet the ESA conditions.

ESA claimants do not face sanction for not finding work and are not required to apply for or take up specific jobs. Sanctions are only imposed where a claimant does not engage with the support on offer which is designed to improve their chances of finding or preparing for work. Claimants are encouraged to discuss the impact of their condition on their support needs, and work coaches are well-placed to understand and reflect the needs of claimants, identifying the type of work-related activity that will help them successfully move towards employment. It is worth noting that the vast

majority of ESA claimants are not sanctioned; in any given month only around 1% receives a sanction.

The information requested is shown in the table below which includes the number of adverse ESA sanction decisions in Scotland by the Summary International Classifications of Diseases for the period October 2008 to August 2014.

Please note that with respect to more recently published data, care must be taken in using and interpreting the data as the figures are subject to a high degree of revision. Please ensure you read the 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 should therefore be treated with caution.**

The number of adverse Employment and Support Allowance sanction referral decisions, by ICD (disease) Summary Code, Scotland: October 2008 - August 2014

Month	Diseases of the Circulatory or Respiratory System	Diseases of the Musculoskeletal system and Connective Tissue	Diseases of the Nervous System	Injury, Poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes	Mental and Behavioural Disorders	Other/ Missing	Total
Oct-08	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nov-08	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec-08	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jan-09	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb-09	0	0	0	0	11	6	19
Mar-09	0	0	6	0	15	13	38
Apr-09	0	5	0	7	40	35	89
May-09	0	7	0	8	27	35	78
Jun-09	0	5	6	5	62	79	157
Jul-09	6	16	0	14	74	96	206
Aug-09	5	14	7	11	83	67	189
Sep-09	0	20	6	15	92	84	217
Oct-09	5	22	7	11	79	75	199
Nov-09	7	21	6	13	72	73	191
Dec-09	0	18	0	25	104	73	224

Jan-10	15	31	7	22	116	88	281
Feb-10	7	23	7	18	89	76	219
Mar-10	10	19	0	26	121	84	261
Apr-10	6	21	8	23	80	55	189
May-10	9	15	5	7	95	58	193
Jun-10	0	22	8	15	74	48	174
Jul-10	6	15	0	7	43	35	108
Aug-10	0	18	7	14	48	43	124
Sep-10	6	7	0	18	25	27	82
Oct-10	6	16	0	9	31	24	85
Nov-10	5	5	0	0	21	19	55
Dec-10	0	11	0	0	26	12	51
Jan-11	5	0	6	5	33	13	59
Feb-11	0	0	0	0	12	8	27
Mar-11	0	0	0	0	7	0	18
Apr-11	0	0	0	0	6	9	15
May-11	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Jun-11	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Jul-11	0	0	0	0	7	0	8
Aug-11	0	6	0	0	8	0	16
Sep-11	0	0	0	6	5	0	9
Oct-11	0	6	0	0	14	0	26
Nov-11	0	0	0	0	34	9	55
Dec-11	0	5	5	0	35	12	55
Jan-12	0	6	5	7	44	0	62
Feb-12	0	8	0	6	36	14	61
Mar-12	7	6	0	5	47	13	80
Apr-12	7	10	0	6	62	13	98
May-12	0	9	0	6	45	14	78
Jun-12	0	5	0	7	41	14	64
Jul-12	6	10	7	8	80	15	127
Aug-12	0	0	0	6	47	8	70
Sep-12	6	5	0	6	26	12	57
Oct-12	5	8	5	20	87	28	151
Nov-12	8	12	5	8	89	32	158
Dec-12	6	9	0	13	63	9	96
Jan-13	5	14	9	0	81	25	138
Feb-13	0	11	0	8	51	16	91
Mar-13	5	10	7	7	50	19	95
Apr-13	5	13	7	7	72	32	127
May-13	7	22	10	13	75	28	150
Jun-13	8	17	11	8	96	16	147

Jul-13	6	18	11	9	93	20	153
Aug-13	5	11	6	5	82	34	133
Sep-13	12	16	7	7	119	30	188
Oct-13	8	16	6	10	115	35	197
Nov-13	5	19	6	8	154	37	233
Dec-13	7	24	0	15	137	43	229
Jan-14	6	16	0	14	125	39	206
Feb-14	7	22	11	10	161	42	245
Mar-14	7	22	14	17	165	43	273
Apr-14	10	16	6	7	131	36	211
May-14	8	18	12	14	179	40	273
Jun-14	0	29	12	18	149	44	253
Jul-14	8	18	8	7	140	46	223
Aug-14	6	22	13	9	126	35	203

Source: DWP WPLS and ESA Sanctions data

Notes:

1. Cells in this table have had statistical disclosure control applied to avoid the release of confidential data therefore totals may not be the sum of the individual cells.
2. Figures are given to August 2014 and use the data available at the time of the request. Data for the most recent months will be subject to revision as numbers of sanction decisions and decision outcomes can change due to reconsidered decisions and appeals.
3. ICD (disease) summary code: ICD (disease) code Causes of incapacity are based on the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, published by the World Health Organisation. Medical condition is based on evidence provided at the start of the claim and so may not represent a claimant's most recent medical condition. The "Other" category includes claimants with an unknown medical condition. Please also note that where someone has more than one diagnosis or disabling condition only the predominant one is used.
4. A medical condition does not confer entitlement to Employment Support Allowance and the decision on entitlement is based on the claimant's ability to carry out the range of activities related to physical and mental function, assessed by the Work Capability Assessment.
5. For ESA claimants, data on medical condition is only available from February 2010 onwards so the medical condition shown above prior to this date may not have been the condition at the time the sanction decision was made.
6. The low numbers in 2011 are a result of previous employment programmes ending.
7. Adverse: An adverse decision is a decision to apply a sanction i.e. a decision found against the claimant so a sanction is applied.

- 8. The figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.**