

Freedom of Information request 2013-3819

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Information request

"I am the Socialist candidate for Canning Town North and I am writing to make a freedom of information request (The Freedom of Information Act gives you the right to ask any public sector organisation for all the recorded information they have on any subject) in regard to Sanctions and other relevant information in respect to the impact that Sanctions have on my potential constituents of the above mentioned electoral ward of Newham.

I would be grateful if you would be so kind as to furnish me with the following information under the above mentioned act.

This is the detailed description of the recorded information that I seek:

We have two Jobcentres that serve and perform duties for the DWP; one on Freemasons Road E16 and the other on Balaam Street E13.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 sets out the Government's intentions for a stronger and clearer system of conditionality sanctions.

Can you inform me and with as much detail as possible in regard to both Jobcentres; how many people have received a Sanction for the following years.

1) 2012

2) 2013 up till July

Can you inform me how many people have appealed against Sanctions for the following years.

1) 2012

2) 2013 up till July

Can you inform me how many people have won and lost an appeal for the following years.

1) 2012

2) 2013 up till July

Can you inform me how many people have been referred to a food bank following a Sanction, for the following years.

1) 2012

2) 2013 up till July

Can you tell me how many people have dependent children and have been Sanctioned.

Can you tell me what is the number of people on the longest Sanction at this current time.”

DWP response

In response to your question on how many people have (a) received a sanction (b) received a sanction and appealed the decision and (c) received a sanction and had the decision successfully overturned on appeal, the available information for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants for Canning Town and Plaistow Jobcentres from 1st January 2012 to 21st October 2012 is shown in the table below.

Number¹ of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants with a sanction referral by referral action², Canning Town and Plaistow Job Centres: 1st January 2012 – 21st October 2012⁶

Referral action ³	Job Centre Plus Office	
	Canning Town	Plaistow
Sanction:		
Applied	1,830	1,510
Appealed	120	80
Appeal (Successful)	20	20

Source: DWP Information, Governance and Security Directorate: JSA Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten and will include individuals who have had more than one referral action e.g. if an individual has a sanction applied and has also appealed a sanction then they will appear twice.
2. **Referral action:** The number of sanctions applied is the number of Varied³, Fixed Length⁴ and Entitlement Decision⁵ sanction referrals where the decision was found against the claimant. The decision to apply a sanction can be overturned following appeal.
3. **Varied Length sanctions:** A sanction of between 1 week and 26 weeks is imposed for leaving employment voluntarily without just cause, refusing employment without good cause, or losing employment

through misconduct. The actual period in each case is at the discretion of the Adjudication Officer who makes the decision.

4. **Fixed Length sanctions:** A sanction of between 1 week and 26 weeks is imposed for refusal, without good cause, to attend an employment programme or carry out a Jobseeker's Direction. Payment of benefit continues in full pending the Adjudication Officer's decision on a sanction question.
5. **Entitlement Decisions:** These are questions on which entitlement to JSA depends. For example, if there is doubt around whether the Jobseeker's agreement (JSAg) is suitable, whether they are actively looking for work or making themselves available for work. In most cases payment of JSA will be suspended by benefit processing until the doubt is resolved.
6. The 21st of October 2012 is the last date covered by the old sanctions regulations and is the latest date for which figures are available.

You may also be interested to know the Department published ad hoc statistics on the number of JSA sanctions and disallowances, where a decision has been made, in each month from 1 April 2000 to 21 October 2012 by Jobcentre Plus Group/District/Office and decision which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/number-of-jobseekers-allowance-sanctions-and-disallowances-where-a-decision-has-been-made-in-each-month-from-1-april-2000-to-21-october-2012>

The Department also publishes Official Statistics on the number of sanctions applied to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Income for Support for Lone Parent (ISLP) claimants which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-workpensions/series/employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-workpensions/series/incomesupport-lone-parent-regime-figures-on-sanctions-and-work-focused-interviews--2>

The latest available information for ESA claimants is to May 2012 and for ISLP claimants to December 2012.

The Department does hold some information ESA and ISLP sanctions by Jobcentre Plus Office. However the current methodology used in these publications does not allow a readily available breakdown to Jobcentre Plus Office level. We therefore estimate that the cost of retrieving the information requested would exceed the appropriate limit of £600.

In response to your question regarding more recent sanction referrals, the first set of statistics on the new JSA and ESA sanctions regimes are to be published in due course.

More information on the new JSA sanctions regime, introduced on the 22nd of October 2012, can be found at:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser/updates/jsa-sanction-changes/>

More information on the new ESA sanctions regime, introduced on the 1st of December 2012, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions>

As the statistics you have requested are intended for future publication this information is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act. This exemption is qualified, and is therefore subject to a public interest test. The public interest test is where the Department considers whether the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding or disclosing the information requested.

Arguments in favour of disclosure: There are public interest arguments in favour of disclosure of this information at the present time. Disclosure would for example improve transparency in the operations of the Department.

Arguments against disclosure: There are public interest arguments against disclosure of this information at the present time. These arguments include that it is in the public interest to adhere to the existing publication process for official statistics, which includes time for the data to be collated and properly verified.

It is also in the public interest to ensure that the publication of official information is a properly planned and managed process, to ensure that the data are accurate once placed into the public domain. It is also in the public interest to ensure that the information is available to all members of the public at the same time, and premature publication could undermine the principle of making the information available to all at the same time through the official publication process.

On this occasion, the balance of the public interest test falls in favour of withholding this information. As we have explained above, statistics on this issue will be published in due course.

A proposed publication date will be announced in advance via <https://www.gov.uk/> and <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk/Home/> in the "Welfare and Benefits" community.

In response to your question on **"Can you inform me how many people have been referred to a food bank following a Sanction"** this information is not held by the Department. Food banks do not form part of benefits policy/benefits system and DWP does not monitor their usage, or have any

plans to do so. It acts purely as a signposting service for potentially eligible claimants.

In response to your question on **“Can you tell me how many people have dependent children and have been Sanctioned”** we can confirm that the Department does hold some information on how many JSA claimants have dependent children and have been sanctioned by Job Centre Plus Office. However to provide an answer would require us to combine data from multiple sources and identify the number of dependent children on the date the decision to apply a sanction was made. We therefore estimate that the cost of retrieving this information would exceed the appropriate limit of £600.

In response to your question on **“Can you tell me what is the number of people on the longest Sanction at this current time.”** we can confirm that the Department does hold some information on the duration of sanctions for JSA claimants at Job Centre Plus Office level. This includes the date the sanction was applied but we do not hold readily available information on the actual length.

To provide an answer would require us to combine data on multiple sanctions and overlapping decisions accounting for differences in dates (e.g. when a claim ends during a sanction; when a sanction is reserved for application against a future JSA claim; when circumstances change during or after a sanction). We would also need this information to calculate how much was ‘removed’ from claimants due to the application of a sanction. We therefore estimate that the cost of complying with this part of your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600

The appropriate limit, which has been used in answer to three of your questions, 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 these parts of your request and we will not be processing them further.