

# **Freedom of Information request 2014-4947**

**Date received 12 November 2014**

**Date of response 30 March 2015**

## **Information request**

Could you please supply me with the, please give the number of adverse ESA sanctions decisions 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) for each month from January 2013 to June 2014 inclusive, in line with the most recent statistical release on JSA and ESA sanctions

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-june-2014>).

## **DWP response**

Claimants should do everything they can to find work if they are able to in return for benefits, and more than 70 per cent say they are more likely to follow the rules if they know they risk having their benefits stopped if they do not. 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 they 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 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and ESA conditions.

The most common reasons for a JSA sanction include failure to actively look for work, failure to take part in an employment programme and not having a good reason for missing a meeting at the Jobcentre. Claimants can always ask for us to look at the sanction decision again, and we have a well-established system of hardship payments where needed for vulnerable claimants.

The Government has introduced the Claimant Commitment for anyone making a new claim for JSA. The commitment will see jobseekers having to

account more clearly for their efforts to find work in order to receive their benefits.

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.

Information on the number of adverse ESA benefit sanctions broken down by Summary ICD classification is shown in the table below. As figures are now available up to September 2014 we have included the latest information. Please read the table footnotes carefully.

Please note that ESA sanctions are only applied to those in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), and not the Support Group, therefore comparisons should only be made with the ESA WRAG caseload and off-flows statistics published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-caseload-statistics>

**Please note that 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 (ESA) sanction referral decisions, by ICD (disease) Summary Code, Great Britain: January 2013 - September 2014**

Month	IB ICD (disease) summary code						Total
	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	
Jan-13	48	138	57	75	768	270	1,360
Feb-13	39	133	42	67	624	197	1,102
Mar-13	37	150	60	58	620	169	1,097
Apr-13	43	150	72	79	866	242	1,456
May-13	58	171	76	94	960	300	1,664
Jun-13	54	187	58	77	997	307	1,676
Jul-13	78	242	79	104	1,284	342	2,134
Aug-13	55	208	80	87	1,248	350	2,019
Sep-13	88	215	93	114	1,427	381	2,320
Oct-13	94	322	90	130	1,607	473	2,708
Nov-13	72	287	110	131	1,528	411	2,542
Dec-13	77	289	90	97	1,570	470	2,595
Jan-14	102	317	114	134	1,822	532	3,028
Feb-14	109	319	124	147	1,933	584	3,222
Mar-14	119	396	137	183	2,348	633	3,810
Apr-14	133	353	122	154	2,217	576	3,551
May-14	123	388	129	198	2,164	663	3,663
Jun-14	114	341	152	174	1,962	561	3,302
Jul-14	149	409	132	159	1,900	663	3,410
Aug-14	132	402	147	140	1,738	541	3,096
Sep-14	138	540	179	230	2,047	699	3,828

**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. 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.