

Freedom of Information request 2015-1827

Date received 3 May 2015

Date of response 2 June 2015

Information request

Please could you provide me with the following information for each financial year from 2013 until 2015:

- 1) The number of people in Essex claiming disability benefits where their primary disability is drugs or alcohol addiction
- 2) If possible, please break the figures down into district areas
- 3) If this would exceed the cost limit then please only supply the figures for the Braintree and Maldon districts
- 4) If possible, please make clear a) which type of benefit they have received b) whether their addiction is to drugs or alcohol (and if possible which drugs)
- 5) For context, please include the total number of people in receipt of the benefit

DWP response

Please find the available information requested in the attached Excel document (FOI 2015-1827 Response). The tables show the number of Employment and Support Allowance claimants and the number of Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disablement Allowance claimants with a main disabling condition of alcohol misuse or drug misuse in Essex and each local authority within Essex. As requested, total claimant figures have been included for context.

Regarding question 4, to provide you with information on the types of drugs misused by claimants, we can confirm that the Department does hold some information falling within the description specified in your request, however we estimate that the cost of 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 your request further.

Under section 16 of the FOIA we are obliged to assist you in providing options to narrow your request, by reforming or refocusing it, so that it will fall beneath the cost limit. In this case, the only information relating to your query that is available within cost has already been provided, namely, the number of claimants of a particular benefit in a particular geographical area with a main disabling condition of drug misuse or Alcohol misuse.

Regarding your request for information for each financial year from 2013 until 2015, please note that the latest data available is for August 2014, which is included in the data provided. Regarding later information for 2014 and 2015, as the statistics are intended for future publication, this information is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (information intended for future publication) of the FOIA. This exemption is qualified, and is therefore subject to a public interest test where the Department considers whether the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding or disclosing the information requested.

Whilst disclosure would improve transparency in the operations of the Department, it is in the public interest to adhere to the existing publication process for official statistics to ensure that the publication of official information is a properly planned and managed process and 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 this principle.

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