

Freedom of Information request 2014-4805

Date received 31 October 2014

Date of response 19 February 2015

Information request

Please provide information on the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimant households with dependent children, where the claimant has received an adverse sanction decision (by level of sanction for JSA) for the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

If it is possible within the cost limit, please provide information on the number of children in the of households affected in whatever way is appropriate for your database – probably number of households affected with 1 dependent child ,2 dependent children, 3 dependent children, or 4 or more dependent children.

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 don't. 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 ESA which is affected. Any child-related premiums they receive are unaffected. Those receiving housing benefit or council tax reduction will continue to do so throughout a sanction period provided they continue to meet the JSA and ESA conditions.

The most common reasons for a Jobseeker's Allowance (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.

Employment and Support Allowance (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.

In response to your query the information you require is shown in the table below. It is worth noting that the vast majority of ESA claimants are not sanctioned; in any given month only around 1% receives a sanction.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimant households with dependent children, where claimant has received an adverse sanction decision between 1 June 2012 and 31 May 2013, by sanction level and number of dependant children in the household: Great Britain

Sanctions	Number of dependant children					
	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children	5 or more Children	Total with children
JSA Total	20,780	13,870	6,880	2,960	1,660	46,160
Low	6,360	4,200	2,020	800	450	13,820
Intermediate	5,310	3,730	1,920	870	460	12,290
High	1,080	690	340	120	70	2,300
Unknown	10	10	-	-	-	30
Level not applicable (old regime)	8,020	5,240	2,600	1,160	680	17,710
ESA Total	1,170	670	270	110	70	2,290

Source: DWP 100% WPLS data and HMRC Child Benefit administrative data.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten. “-“denotes nil or negligible. Totals may not sum due to the rounding method used.
2. Dependent children are those aged under 19. These figures are affected by the introduction of Child Tax Credit in April 2003.
3. Data is up to 31 May 2013 which is the latest available on dependent children.

Figures provided are for Great Britain, the Department does not hold information for Northern Ireland. The responsibility for statistics in Northern Ireland lies with the Department for Social Development (DSD).

More information on how to submit a Freedom of Information request to the DSD can be found at: http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/foi/foi-requesting_information.htm