

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our Ref: VTR 3325

DATE 19 August 2013

Dear Bill Kruse,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received 15 July. You asked;

*Mr. Duncan-Smith is quoted in today's Daily Mail as saying
"That what we are seeing, and this is the view of lots of people working in Jobcentres.
'That they are getting people who were notified of the cap, their belief - this is advisers, they talk to me., I have been out on the ground, I have seen it myself, I talk to people actually in the Jobcentres - our belief generally is that they are going to seek work where they might not have sought work."*

*I'm assuming when he says advisers he means claimant advisers here, am I correct?
Assuming I'm right, can I ask how many advisers Mr Duncan-Smith has discussed this subject with, in which job centres please, and on which dates? How many of them have informed him that people are seeking work subsequent to being informed about the coming OBC? Can you further advise me of why these people (the claimants) who presumably were not seeking work before they were informed about the benefit cap, were allowed to continue claiming JSA? If they weren't actively seeking work, and the claimant advisers knew this, how could it be they were still claiming JSA at all? I assume they must have been claiming in order for the claimant advisers to have noticed the change in their attitude, from not actively seeking work to suddenly actively seeking work, am I right?*

Can I also ask if he's basing policy entirely around anecdotal evidence of this nature that only he seems privy too, or is there some empirical core to DWP policy regarding the benefit cap? If so, might I ask what that empirical evidence actually is please? Where are the actual figures showing how many people have actively sought work and gone back to work as a direct consequence of having been informed of the incoming OBC?

The following table provides details of the Jobcentre Plus offices the Secretary of State has visited since May 2012 when Jobcentre Plus started writing to claimants to advise them they may be affected by the benefit cap. We have no record of the offices at which the issue of the benefit cap was discussed but at all these visits he met with a variety of members of staff, including advisers, and discussed a range of issues that they raised with him.

Date	Jobcentre Plus Office
18 May 2012	Wellingborough Benefit Centre Wellingborough JCP
15 June 2012	Leicester JCP
29 June 2012	Bootle Benefit Centre Upton JCP
4 July 2012	Tottenham JCP
13 July 2012	Basildon Benefit Centre Basildon JCP
1 August 2012	Wallsend JCP
19 September 2012	Easterhouse JCP
18 October 2012	Hull Benefit Centre
12 November 2012	Yate JCP
24 January 2013	Dartford JCP
28 February 2013	Ashton under Lyne JCP Oldham JCP
27 March 2013	Musselborough JCP
2 April 2013	Stratford Benefit Centre London Bridge JCP
25 April 2013	Handsworth JCP
11 July 2013	Wigan JCP

You have asked why those claimants who have said they were not looking for work before being informed of the benefit cap's introduction were allowed to continue to claim Jobseeker's Allowance. I can clarify that not all claimants who might be affected by the benefit cap will be in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, and therefore it will not have been a requirement for all to be actively seeking work as a condition of their entitlement to benefit.

With regard to the evidence underpinning our decision to introduce the benefit cap, the Department for Work and Pension has published a number of Impact Assessments to support the development of the benefit cap policy. The latest was published on 16th July 2012 and can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220178/benefit-cap-wr2011-ia.pdf

The Impact Assessments include our estimates of the potential effects of the benefit cap. These were made using the Department's administrative records and contain the amounts of benefit to which households are entitled, including Child Benefit, and Child Tax Credit which are paid by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Since the publication of the latest impact assessment we have continued to review our estimates of the cap's possible impacts. Our latest estimate of the number of households who might be affected by the benefit cap was published in April 2013, and this can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/196895/Ben_Cap_Updated_Estimate.pdf

Our estimates assume that the situation of these households will go unchanged, and they will not take any steps to either work enough hours to qualify for Working Tax Credit, renegotiate their rent in situ, or find alternative accommodation.

The Department has made extensive contacts with households who are likely to be affected by the cap and we are offering advice and support through Jobcentre Plus, including, where appropriate, early access to the Work Programme before the cap is introduced.

On 7th August the department released data that shows that since May 2012, of the families it has contacted because they may be affected by the benefit cap:

- Jobcentre Plus has helped around 14,000 claimants into work; and
- Approximately 34,500 people have accepted an offer of employment support.

These individuals had been identified on Departmental systems to enable additional resource to be targeted at those in potentially capped households and to monitor their response.

Whilst many claimants will have received support from the Department in the past, since May 2012 Jobcentre Plus has targeted extra support on this specific group of people to help them find and stay in work.

The figures for claimants moving into work cover all of those who were identified as potentially being affected by the benefit cap who entered work. The statistics are not intended to show causation or the additional numbers entering work as a direct result of Jobcentre Plus support.

These statistics and more information on the benefit cap are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/benefit-cap-statistics>

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central Fol Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF www.ico.gov.uk