

Michelle Watts  
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[DWP Website](#)

Our Ref: FOI2022/90869

30 November 2022

Dear Michelle Watts,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 11 November. You wrote:

“Thank you for your response of 11 November 2022. It is regrettable that it required an internal review for you to supply the information that you did.  
In your response you state that it will take 15 minutes per case at £25 per hour = 4 cases per hour. There is a cost limit of £600 per request:  $(600 / 25) * 4 = 96$  allowable requests.

I would like you to provide the information requested in the original FOI request for the last 96 Universal Credit (UC) claims that were made but not subsequently put into payment due to the claimant holding in excess of £16,000 not declared on their application.

In your response of 11 November 2022, you wrote: "However, due to the nature of the UC system, it is not possible to readily ascertain whether we hold information to show if the claimant declared that capital at the outset of their claim, or whether this came to light via other sources prior to the claim being put into payment. "

Could you please provide clarification as to why it is not possible to readily ascertain that the claimant declared that capital at the outset of their claim? Surely during the UC application process the question is explicitly asked as to what savings the claimant holds?"

## **DWP Response**

DWP does not hold the information requested.

All claims require the applicant to declare their capital. However, data is not readily available to show how many claimants declared their actual capital before the first UC payment or, what prompted a further capital declaration to be made, and we cannot readily ascertain if this data is held.

Possible reasons for a revised capital declaration to be made include a claimant reporting a change or, capital being identified following compliance or fraud investigatory work undertaken by the department.

It would not be possible to answer the points raised in your original FOI request, which we have taken to be FOI2022/82317, based on the examination of the latest 96 UC claims that were made but not put into payment due to excess capital not being declared. This is because we would need to establish how many claims would need to be examined in order to generate a statistically representative sample, something we could only ascertain through the same type of intensive search required by your original FOI.

It should be noted, the FOI Act does not oblige the Department to create information not already held at the time the request is received, and which would be required in order to generate the data in your request. This is defined as generating new information, which is outside the requirements of a FOI Act reply.

To be helpful, and answering outside of the FOI Act, I can refer to you the DWP Fraud and Error Estimates, which include information on total benefit expenditure and causes of loss, including undeclared capital.

[Fraud and error in the benefit system: financial year 2021 to 2022 estimates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fraud-and-error-in-the-benefit-system-financial-year-2021-to-2022-estimates)

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team  
Department for Work and Pensions

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### **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@dw.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dw.gov.uk) or by writing to: DWP Central FOI Team, Caxton House, 6-12 Tothill Street, London, 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.

Website: [ICO FOI and EIR complaints](https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/foi/) or telephone 0303 123 1113.