



Department
for Work &
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of
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[DWP Website](#)

Our Ref: FOI2022/97449

21 December 2022

Dear Ryan Jarvis,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 6 December. You wrote:

“I am writing to respectfully make a formal request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The privacy of emails sent via the @dwp.gov.uk domain is at risk. This domain does not appear to have MTA-STS configured. This means that email privacy (using TLS) is vulnerable to downgrade, allowing an attacker to read the contents of emails.

My request is as follows:-

1. Please can the department confirm why it has opted not to use MTA-STS as a potential CySec safeguard when communicating via email on the @dwp.gov.uk domain name?
2. Please can the department provide disclosure of its email security classifications policy.
3. Please can the department provide disclosure of the number of security incident reports made internally and/or externally which relate to concerns surrounding email security between the period May 2018 - May 2022.”

DWP Response

With regards to your first question, the Department may hold the information that you have requested. However, the Department would withhold any information on the basis of the provisions contained in Sections 31 and 24 of the Freedom of Information Act (“the Act”), which covers the prevention of crime, and national security respectively. Section 31 and 24 are qualified exemptions, and as such, a public interest test needs to be applied. While there is a legitimate public interest in knowing what types and versions of software the Department uses, it is not in the public interest for the Department to provide details of these as this would help to enable individuals to target the Department by means of electronic attack. Confirming what types and versions are used, particularly concerning the software systems in use, would assist an individual in testing the effectiveness of the Department’s defences against such attacks. This is not in the public interest.

With regards to your second question, we can confirm that the Department holds this information. However, the information is exempt under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act because the information is reasonably accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain.

However, to be helpful you can find the information you seek in the following links

[DWP email policy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[DWP Security Classification Policy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

With regards to your third question, we do hold the information for the period of May 2018 to 31st March 2019 however we did not have a security incident category for email disclosures at this time so locating, retrieving and extracting this information along with the following years data would exceed the cost limit of £600 specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

We do hold the information for the period 1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020, however the category used during this time was for both email and written disclosures and we are unable to break down the figures for email only. There were 835 security incidents relating to email and written (such as postal) during this time.

We do hold the information for the period 1st April 2020- 31st May 2022 and the number of disclosures relating to email is broken down into years below;

01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021 =175

01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022 = 206

01/04/2022 – 31/05/2022 = 38

The above figures are the number of incidents we have recorded as “External Disclosures – Email” which we believe most accurately answers your query.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team
Department for Work and Pensions

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@dpw.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) or telephone 0303 123 1113.