

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: Fol 4265

DATE: 31st October 2017

Dear Anita Bellows,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 5th October 2017. You asked:

Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

David Gauke said during a fringe event at this year's Conservative party conference in Manchester, that 'he was very conscious of the point that there are people, particularly with mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, whereby you can have a vicious circle, where the stress of sanctions doesn't result in more compliant behaviour, but... less compliant behaviour'. <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/tory-conference-gauke-admits-sanctions-can-harm-mental-health-claimants/>

As there is no publicly available detailed information on the level of compliance of people with mental health conditions like depression or anxiety, I would like to know on which evidence this assertion is based.

More specifically, I will like to have

- 1) any statistics on the number of claimants with depression and anxiety as primary conditions, and*
- 2) any statistics related to sanctions and repeated sanctions for this category of claimants,*
- 3) any internal studies or analysis undertaken by DWP on the impact of sanctions on people with mental conditions, referring specifically to depression and anxiety, which support David Gauke's assertion.*

If the cost of this request exceeds the cost limit, please only respond to Question No3

DWP Response:

In response to questions 1 and 2, we can confirm that we hold some information falling within the description specified in your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your requests would exceed the appropriate limit for central Government, set by regulations 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 it.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not therefore obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing it further.

However, under section 16 of the Act we should help you to narrow your request so that it may fall beneath the cost limit.

In respect of these two questions we recommend restricting your request to Employment Support and Allowance claimants and to a time period covered by the latest available data published by the Department.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics on the ESA caseload as part of our Quarterly Benefit Summary. These statistics are currently available up to February 2017 and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-statistical-summaries>

The Department also publishes quarterly statistics on ESA sanction decisions. These statistics are currently available for sanction decisions made up to March 2017 and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions>

These statistics are also published via the Department's Stat-Xplore website, which allows you to produce bespoke tabulations and visualisations of our data. The ESA caseload and sanction statistics available on Stat-Xplore both include a breakdown by high-level medical condition:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Guidance on how to extract the information required from Stat-Xplore can be found at:

<https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

If you have any difficulties extracting the relevant information please let us know.

In response to question 3, the Department for Work and Pensions has not undertaken any internal studies or analysis on the impact of sanctions on people with mental health conditions. Concerns and information regarding this issue were raised through the Work, health and disability: Improving Lives Green Paper consultation process as well as through Ministerial meetings with stakeholders from the mental health sector.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy 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