

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk)

Our Ref: VTR 5966

17 January 2014

Ian Jones  
request-190998-a2a6f6ac@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear Mr Jones,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 29 December 2013. You asked :-

*Are you currently expecting anyone to pay back Hardship Payments? If you are how many people does this involve and how much money has been recovered so far and what is the average payments being collected on a monthly basis?*

It may be helpful if I explain the role of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act provides a right of access to recorded information held by a public authority like DWP (subject to certain exemptions). The Act does not provide that a public authority must create new information to answer questions; nor does it provide that a public authority give advice, opinion or explanation in relation to issues/policies under question.

In cases where a customer does ask a question, rather than request recorded information, we do our utmost to provide the recorded information that best answers the question. Once the public authority has provided the recorded information, it has met its obligations under the Act; interpretation of the information provided is left to the requestor.

Hardship payments are not recoverable if awarded to claimants who have claimed Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

All Universal Credit hardship payments are recoverable.

As of 8 January 2014 Debt Management have been asked to recover 28 hardship payments held by 22 customers. To date recovery of £66.86 has been made from the total of £4,116.56 as recovery is not normally sought until the hardship ceases. There are currently insufficient cases in recovery to give a meaningful monthly average repayment figure.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

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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@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central Fol Team, Caxton House, 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 [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)