

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2020/20706 & IR2020/25642

4 September 2020

Dear Mark Abraham,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 27 April and your Freedom of Information (Fol) internal review request received on 28 May. You asked:

I'd be interested in knowing the statistics on how many (if any) INITIAL repayments for UC claimants have been paused or suspended by the DWP or DWP Repayments, and if so any record if possible the underlying reason(s) for the INITIAL pause or suspension being actioned.

I haven't been able to find this information from enquiries. I'm told in theory it's possible, but from my researches so far, it seems not to have happened at all. For guidance, my hunch is there may be a glitch in the timing for calculation of the monthly benefits entitlement, and then taking any possible planned deductions being taken assessed for calculation of the actual benefit to be paid under the regulations, which would make changes impractical.

There may some information on this - perhaps from DWP repayments, and from DWP Digital teams that would reveal some information.

I look forward to hearing from you. And, of course, I know the dreaded lurgy will slow down the response time. Hey, ho, oh well, there's not much that can be done about that.

DWP response

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your Freedom of Information request(s). However due to the situation with COVID-19 it was not possible for me to reply to you within the timeframe of 20 working days.

I cannot deal with your request without clarification of the information you seek. To help me do so, I would like to know what you are referring to by "how many (if any) Initial repayments for UC claimants have been paused or suspended by the DWP..."

Under section 16 of the Act we should assist you in helping you focus your request.

From 3rd April 2020, deductions from Universal Credit for some government debt, such as Tax Credits, benefit overpayments and Social Fund Loans were suspended initially for 3 months with a review. This was done to ease the financial pressure of debt recovery on benefit claimants and to also allow Debt Management staff to be re-deployed to focus on the unprecedented volume of new claims received during the covid-19 outbreak.

You might, however, like to narrow your request by requesting only information for:

- The proportion and volume of Universal Credit claims with Third party and other deductions, by deduction type, in each month from January 2020 to June 2020. This may provide an indication of the proportion of claims that had deductions suspended from April 2020.

We will consider afresh any revised request however we cannot guarantee that any revised request will fall within the cost limit.

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@dw.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
Web: ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745