

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2018/13771

9 January 2019

Dear Mary Aitken,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 12 December. You asked:

I have been made aware that NI Numbers beginning with the letter "S" denotes a non British National and that "SH" denotes an EU National. A previous FOI response from you to another requester has denied that this is the case and stated that allocation is random. However upon checking my company's staff list of over 3000 employees and comparing their personal information with their NI number, it appears to confirm that NI numbers beginning with an "S" are indeed allocated to non-British nationals. It would be a statistical improbability for this to have been via random allocation. With this information in mind, please can you confirm the following:

- Does the letter S denote a non-British national?*
- Do the letters SH denote someone from the EU?*

If the above is incorrect, please can you confirm the correct method for identifying non-British nationals from their NI number

DWP Response:

The letter S does not denote a non-British national and the letters SH does not denote someone from the EU.

DWP is responsible for the allocation of National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) to adults the majority of which are foreign nationals. However, it also includes British Nationals who were not allocated a NINo when they turned 16.

There is no method for identifying an individual's nationality from their NINo. A NINo takes the format of two letters, followed by six numbers and then either an A, B, C or D.

The first two letters, the prefix, changes when all the available numbers between 00 00 00 and 99 99 99 have been sequentially allocated. NINOs are generated at the time of application, therefore it is likely that individuals who apply around the same time will share the same prefix (first two letters) but that does not mean that they are a non-British national.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us 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@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
https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745