

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Central Freedom of Information Team

freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our reference: VTR 590 & IR171

Date: 31 March 2015

Dear Mr Brewster,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 13 February 2015..

*You asked: Dear Department for Work and Pensions,
Please let me know*

1: how many reviews into benefits claimants killing themselves since Jan 2012.

2: Seeing as you are killing people by your actions, can I see a copy of the latest report, as this is of paramount public interest.

3: Do you realise that you are liable for your actions, with that in mind how many staff have left the DWP since Jan 2012.

4: How many staff have been sacked for failing to install the draconian policies since Jan 2012,

5: How many whistle blowers have been sacked since Jan 2012.

6: What is your policy on vulnerable households and sanctions.

Your department is responsible for killing thousands of people in the UK by your actions, I posit that this makes you democidal maniacs Terrorists and Traitors and I demand you resign immediately.

DWP Response

1. Since the Department started keeping central records it has carried out, or is the process of carrying out, reviews in 42 cases where the Department has been advised that a person has committed or is alleged to have committed suicide.

2. I confirm that the Department may hold the information you have requested but it is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in Section 44 of the Freedom of Information Act.

The exemption at section 44 of the FoI Act

Section 123 of the Social Security Administration Act (SSSA) 1992 makes it an offence for anyone who is employed in social security administration to disclose without lawful authority any information which he acquired in the course of that employment and which relates to a particular person. All the

personal information contained in a Peer Review report is captured by this provision.

Disclosing the content of these reviews, even in anonymised and summarised form, may still allow individuals to be identified.

This triggers the FoI exemption at section 44 of the FoI Act which recognises existing statutory bars to disclosure contained in other statutes. Section 44 is an absolute exemption which means that there is no requirement to consider the public interest test in such cases.

3. 25,742 staff left the Department between 01 January 2012 and 31 December 2014.

4/5 The Department does not record the circumstances leading to dismissal of staff centrally. Accessing this data would require a manual trawl of clerically held records which would incur disproportionate costs.

The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations, and for central Government it is set 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 the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we are unable to process your request further as it would take us longer than the estimated cost time to retrieve this information for you.

Section 16 of the FOI request requires that we provide help and advice when declining to provide information on cost grounds. However, as your request is very specific we are unable to suggest how you may limit your request to bring it within the prescribed costs.

6. Work Coaches have access to the Vulnerability Guide to help them deal with all claimants with complex needs, or claimants who require additional support, to enable them to access DWP benefits or use our services. Claimants are only asked to meet reasonable requirements, taking into account their circumstances and capability, including health conditions, disability and caring responsibilities. Claimants will never be sanctioned if they have good reason for not meeting requirements. If they are sanctioned, all claimants in a vulnerable group can claim hardship payments from the date the sanction begins.

You also asked for a review on 25 March 2015

You said:-

You have delayed beyond reasonable time please respond at once with the information I requested

We have reviewed your request and uphold the decision of the department to issue a Public Interest Letter. Section 10(3) of the FOI Act allows public authorities to extend the permitted 20 working days in order to examine the public interest further. As the information you seek concerns sensitive information about various, deceased, individuals DWP thinks that it is important that all issues, with regard to the public interest, are properly examined before a decision to release the information is made. DWP considers that section 10(3) has been properly applied in this case.

We are sorry that it has taken longer than usual to process this request.

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@dwpgsi.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.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745