



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of  
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Alex Homer  
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[freedom-of-information-  
request@dwp.gov.uk](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/freedom-of-information-request)

[DWP Website](https://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Our Ref: FOI2020/82797

18 February 2021

Dear Alex Homer,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received 23 December 2020. You wrote:

*"In line with your refusal to disclose the information I first requested and clarification of when DWP's centralised records began, I would be grateful if you would treat the following correspondence as a formal refined request for disclosure of the following information, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("Fol").*

*Refined description of information sought:*

- 1. On how many occasions since 2012 has DWP recorded customer deaths where the death may have been linked to a termination of benefits and/or other relevant DWP activity? How many of those customers were deemed vulnerable customers? How many of those deaths have been investigated further by the DWP?*
- 2. How many Reports on Action to Prevent Future Deaths reports – by which I mean PFDs or PFD reports or Regulation 28 reports - has DWP received since 2016 concerning deaths of its customers?*
- 3. How many deaths of DWP customers have been recorded by the DWP since 2012 after being considered by an Independent Case Examiner?*
- 4. How many peer reviews (PRs) or Internal Process Reviews (IPRs) since 2012, has DWP carried out concerning individual deaths of customers where an allegation was made that DWP activity may have contributed to their death? How many of these were suicide/alleged suicides? How many of those PRs or IPRs were discretionary and how many were mandatory to be carried out?*
- 5. How many deaths of DWP benefits customers have been reviewed by the Serious Case Panel since 2012?*
- 6. How many further deaths were not initially investigated by any DWP internal review mechanism but were brought to the DWP's attention by media reports since 2012?*
- 7. As these customer deaths should be exceptional and limited in number, can DWP please provide the aforementioned requested data since 2012 as per the spreadsheet attached to this email, or at least in an .xls/.xlsx/.csv file format with a table with each row representing a single customer to have died, with columns providing that customer's details including the date of their death (in whatever date format you can supply), the local authority corresponding to the home address of the customer to have died, the gender of the customer, whether or not the customer was deemed vulnerable and the classification of their death – suicide/alleged suicide or other – please specify. Please also specify the method of*

*investigating that customer's death and how it was brought to the DWP's attention – whether it be via PFD/PFD report/Regulation 28 report, an Independent Case Examiner, a PR or IPR and whether that was discretionary or mandatory, whether the death was considered by the Serious Case Panel or whether the death was first brought to the DWP's attention by media reports.”*

## **DWP Response**

We apologise for the delay in our response.

We can confirm that we hold information falling within the scope of your request as outlined above.

It may be helpful if we explain the role of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It provides a legal right of access to recorded information held by a public authority subject to certain exemptions that may apply. The Act does not oblige a public authority to create new information to answer questions; nor does it require a public authority to give advice, opinion or explanation, generate answers to questions or create or obtain information it does not hold.

If you ask a question, rather than requesting recorded information, we will, where possible provide you with the recorded information that best answers the question. Once we have provided the recorded information, we have met our obligations under the Act; interpreting the information provided is up to you.

In our first response, reference 2020.41771 to your initial request that has led to this follow-up request, we cited the costs exemption, Section 12 of the Act. We estimated that the cost of meeting your request would exceed the cost limit of £600 specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3 and a half working days (equivalent to 24 staff-hours) in determining whether the Department holds the information and locating, retrieving and extracting it. We also considered Section 16, the duty of advice and assistance to help suggests ways of bringing your request within the costs threshold.

However, having received this current request, we estimate that this too still falls within the scope of Section 12 of the Act and the Department is not therefore obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing it further.

We have duly considered Section 16 of the Act and re-iterate below the advice from our initial response which is still relevant to this current request and the factors that you may wish to reconsider to help re-frame your request so that it falls within the costs threshold.

We acknowledge that you have asked for information in all instances from 2012 as opposed to the last 10 years.

In order to provide recorded information for this request, it would require a search of all records held as retained above to identify any that fall within scope. We would then have to determine whether they fall within the criteria that you have specified as per your questions.

You raised 7 questions, you may also want to consider requesting information by limiting the number of questions so we can attempt to provide you with recorded information we hold within costs.

In addition, the ask to complete the spreadsheet you provided, we estimate would also exceed the costs threshold. Under the Act there is no requirement for the Department to provide recorded information in a prescribed format

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

We hope that advice will support you in narrowing any further request.

However, in relation to some of your questions, you might find the following information helpful:

In relation to Preventions of Future Death reports received by the Department, we can confirm that we do hold information, however it is exempted under Section 21 of the Act as the information is reasonably accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain. It can be found at the following link.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-04-28/41123>

The Serious Case Panel was formed in 2019 and does not consider individual cases. The Serious Case Panel has been developed to consider themes and systemic issues that come out of case reviews and makes recommendations for improvements across the relevant areas of the Department. We have published the Terms of Reference and the Department also publishes the minutes following each meeting of the panel. Here is a link to these publications: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/dwp-serious-case-panel>

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team  
Department for Work and Pensions

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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@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk) or by writing to: DWP Central Fol Team, Caxton House, 6-12 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.

Website: [ICO Contact Information](#) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745