



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending
watchdog

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NAO BRIEFING ON INFORMATION HELD BY THE DWP ON DEATHS BY SUICIDE OF BENEFIT CLAIMANTS

Thank you for your FOI request to the National Audit Office (NAO) dated 22 August 2022.

Your request referred to the following comments by an NAO spokesperson about our briefing [Information held by the Department for Work & Pensions on deaths by suicide of benefit claimants](#) reported in a [Disability News Service](#) article dated 22 February 2024:

*"Our 2020 report was in response to a very specific request about the cost of collating information within DWP."
"We reviewed what information DWP held and what systems DWP had in place to collate this information."
"We do not currently have any plans to repeat this work."*

You asked three questions relating to the above comments and our 2020 report. We have provided our response to each question below:

1. **"What is the referent [sic] of "the cost of collating information", "cost" in what terms, what "information" on what."**

This is covered in the 'What this briefing is about' section on page 4 of our 2020 report. The Rt Hon Frank Field MP contacted the Comptroller and Auditor General, who is head of the NAO, with a specific request relating to the response he had received from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to a Parliamentary Question relating to benefits claimants who end their lives by suicide. The DWP said that the cost of collating the information requested would be disproportionate.

2. **"As "what systems DWP had in place to collate this information" was subjected to NAO intervention, for what purpose and what cause this specific review was carried out. What were the details of the systems in place, was any changes in the "systems" on horizon."**

The scope and purpose of the review is covered on pages 4-6 of our 2020 report and the findings of the review are set out on pages 7-10.

3. **"I wonder if you have information on the link between your auditing functions and a sharp plummeted trend in data, or any auditing oversight which may have left the systems DWP had in place to collate this information prone to error."**

We do not hold any relevant information on developments since the publication of our 2020 report.

Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. I therefore hope you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not happy with this response, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days by writing to the NAO FOI Team at FOI@nao.org.uk. If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: <https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>.

Yours sincerely,

FOI and Correspondence Officer