

**WPQ 22100(2021)**

**Question:** How many, if any, investigations into benefit fraud were put on hold due to COVID-19 in total; of such investigations how many, if any, are now underway; how many, if any, have now been completed?

**Reply:** I am advised that, as at 31 March 2020, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) had 1,002 investigations assigned to Fraud Intervention Services staff. Work on these investigations was delayed due to the Ministry's work to support the COVID-19 response, including implementing the Wage Subsidy Scheme, except where the cases were at critical stages. As at 1 June 2021, the Ministry had completed 267 of the 1,002 investigations. The rest are under investigation.

**WPQ 22156 (2021)**

**Question:** What is the total number of investigators, if any, at the Ministry of Social Development who are available to investigate allegations of benefit fraud (outside of the COVID-19 wage subsidy) currently?

**Reply:** I am advised that the total number of Investigators employed by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry), as at 31 May 2021, was 100.57 FTE. These staff typically focus on benefit fraud related work. As at 31 May 2021, between 40 and 50 of these Investigators were primarily managing Wage Subsidy investigations. The Ministry may shift resources between benefit integrity and Wage Subsidy integrity work as required.

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**WPQ 22185 (2021)**

**Total number of Investigator FTE by financial year**

2010/11: 95  
2011/12: 91  
2012/13: 91  
2013/14: 109  
2015/16: 105.39  
2016/17: 102.87  
2017/18: 98.87  
2018/19: 97.1  
2019/20: 98.23

**WPQ 18130 (2020)**

**Hon Louise Upston** to the **Minister for Social Development and Employment** (08 Dec 2020): Does the Ministry of Social Development engage in data matching between the MSD data system and the Inland Revenue Department system, if so, how many individual data files between the two systems were "matched" in the last twelve months, broken down by month?

**Hon Carmel Sepuloni** (Minister for Social Development and Employment) replied: I am advised by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) that between 1 December 2019 and 29 February 2020, information shared as part of the approved information sharing agreement (AISA) listed in schedule 2A of the Privacy Act between IRD and the Ministry compared 227,746 records where Ministry clients were also receiving other taxable income.

The Ministry suspended work on recording the number of individual data files matched between the Ministry and Inland Revenue (IRD) at the end of February 2020. This was due to COVID-19 and the fact that staff were re-deployed to help stand up and maintain the Wage Subsidy scheme.

Consequently, the Ministry is unable to breakdown the number of individual data files matched between the Ministry and IRD for the last 12 months by month in a Written Parliamentary Question timeframe. The Ministry can provide you with a breakdown of the number of records matched in the three months where reporting was completed. Please see the table attached.

**WPQ 5701 (2021)**

**Hon Louise Upston** to the **Minister for Social Development and Employment** (03 Mar 2021): Did data-matching between the Ministry of Social Development and the Inland Revenue Department continue to occur, despite suspension of the work recording data files outlined in WPQ reply 18130 (2020), and if yes, is there any official documentation that demonstrates data matching occurred?

**Hon Carmel Sepuloni** (Minister for Social Development and Employment) replied: I am advised by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) that, while the processing of data matched files shared as part of the approved information sharing agreement (AISA) listed in schedule 2A of the Privacy Act between Inland Revenue (IR) and the Ministry was suspended, the Ministry continued to receive the files from IR. These files were added to Ministry systems but no action was taken as staff were redeployed to support COVID-19 response and recovery work, including standing up and maintaining the Wage Subsidy Schemes. These files compared Ministry clients who were also receiving other taxable income and require manual processing. This data matching will be resumed from 1 April 2021.