



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of  
Information Team  
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[DWP Website](#)

Our Ref: FOI2021/15615

2 March 2021

Dear Andy Pennington,

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

“Re: JCP Retrospective Verification Team - Repair Team - Tasked with looking at every single UC, New Style JSA, and New Style ESA claim.

Our understanding is that 'this is due to the fact that at the start of Covid in March 2020 some 1.3 million people claimed Universal Credit and we used Trust and Protect to verify their information. This could mean that identity, housing costs, children and other circumstances were verified without seeing proof as they could not visit the job centre'.

Apparently, a team has been set up called the Repair Team who are tasked with looking at every single claim and asking for the information to now be provided.

Please would you explain the processes involved and share any paperwork related to this and any guidance issued to the 'repair team'”

## **DWP Response**

Whilst the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does hold some information relating to your request, the associated paperwork and guidance are exempt under Section 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act. This exemption covers certain information which, if released, would be likely to prejudice the prevention and detection of fraud and crime.

In applying this exemption, DWP has balanced the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information.

In order to be helpful, I can state that whilst COVID 19 initially prevented DWP from being able to see people face to face and undertake some of our normal verification processes, mitigations were quickly introduced in order to reduce any potential risks.

I can also confirm that when Universal Credit applications were made in the initial period of the pandemic, customers were advised that their application was being accepted under specific COVID 19 regulations and that the Department would contact them at a later date and ask for evidence to support their application

We are now re-visiting those cases and are re-applying the verification standards that would have been in place at the time, had it not been for COVID-19. If the evidence does not support the application it will be reviewed and revised to the correct entitlement and, where appropriate, an overpayment calculated and put into recovery.

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@dw.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dw.gov.uk) or by writing to: DWP Central FoI 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.