

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

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

**Our reference:** VTR 830

**Date:** 25 March 2015

Dear Mr Allen,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 2 March 2015.

You asked:

*Please can you provide the DWP policies regarding a claimant been accompanied by another person while attending a job centre appointment. i.e: Carer, reasonable adult, witness.*

Response:

For the purposes of Income Support, interviews may need to be conducted in connection with Living Together as a Married Couple (LTAMC) and the Habitual Residence Test (HRT). The HRT interview could be conducted over the telephone or face to face in the Jobcentre. It maybe that an interpreter is needed and there would be no objection to an interpreter accompanying the customer; neither would there be objection to the customer bringing along a family member or friend to help/support them through the interview. However there is no specific Income Support Benefit Guidance that stipulates who the customer can or cannot bring to an interview.

We also may need to collect information about possible LTAMC cases. This is a sensitive area and interviews are conducted by a Compliance Officer who has had special LTAMC training. Again however there is nothing in the Income Support Guidance that makes reference to the interviews themselves, only how to refer a case to the Compliance team to request an interview to be undertaken.

The Labour Market Guidance doesn't include any guidance covering benefit recipients being accompanied to interviews/meetings either. However there is reference on the Work Focused Interview (WFI) invitation letter about bringing a family member or friend along to the interview. Please see attached.

In terms of JSA claimants to whom the Jobseekers Act 1995 and Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations 1996 apply, the recorded information we hold that best answers question 1 ), is contained in paragraphs 162 to 165 in the Jobseekers Allowance Claimants - JSA Interviewing Good Practice Guidance which says:

162. *Some customers will ask for a third party to be present at their interview, for example, if they:*

- *need an interpreter due to language or hearing difficulties;*
- *lack confidence and need someone there for support;*
- *prefer to have a parent present; or*
- *wish to have a witness there.*

163. *In such circumstances, explain the purpose and confidentiality of the interview in a reassuring and helpful way. If the customer feels they cannot cope alone, do not object to a third party being present. Refusing to agree to a third party could provoke hostility and be counter productive.*

164. *Remember, however, that it is the customer who should receive and respond to advice given, direct questions at them, not the third party. Treat the third party with respect and courtesy, but do not let them control the interview.*

165. *If a claimants command of English, or Welsh, is not good enough for you to deal with them properly or the claimant is deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired and it is in the Department's interest, you may arrange for an interpreter to be present. Further information about our Interpreting policy is available in the Department's Interpreting Services Guidance.*

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central FoI Team

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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@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk) or by writing to: DWP, Central FoI 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](http://www.ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745