

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

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xxx.gov.uk

Our reference: Fol request 889

Date: 30 March 2015

Dear Mr Wright,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 4 March 2015.

You asked:

“Under the new pilot regime ESA Claimants in the Support Group are being routinely invited to attend interviews in Leicester Jobcentres”.

"I understand that a senior member of staff decide which Claimants are well enough to be called in and then an appointment is made with a work coach".

"Assuming that the senior staff don't all operate to their own criteria I would like the criteria by which a person is judged well enough or too ill to attend an interview".

"I would like a copy of the standard letter being sent out to support group claimants inviting them to interview"

"I would like training notes from the training course that senior staff undertake before deciding whom to call or not to call in for interview".

ESA claimants are being invited to attend our offices on a voluntary basis to talk about the help and support JCP can offer into getting back into some form of work. This is not an initiative uniquely local to Leicester, but something that is being undertaken nationally.

DWP guidance stipulates that pre-interview checks need to be completed as standard before contacting the claimant. All activities relating to ESA Support Group claimants are voluntary. We always attempt to telephone claimants to clarify their understanding of the voluntary invitation and provide them with the opportunity to ask any questions. While we may discuss a claimant's health condition during the pre-checks, we are not health care professionals and therefore the final decision on whether to attend a session is with the claimant.

There isn't a standard letter that is sent to ESA Support Group claimants nationally. Locally, however, ESA letters have been drafted and been in use within Leicestershire and Northamptonshire District since January 2015 and copies of both a Group Session and individual interview letter are included with this response.

The decision to contact claimants is one of judgement; we are not medical experts. Should a claimant we have not invited for interview, wish to receive one, we will be happy to accommodate that request. The appointments are

voluntary and the ultimate decision to attend the interview is with the claimant. Therefore you will note, the letter is an invitation and not a mandate to attend.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

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 or by writing to: DWP, Central Fol 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 or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745