

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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**Our Ref:** FOI2019/06102 + FOI2019/9623

**Date:** 26 March 2019

Dear Frank Zola,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 11 February and 6 March 2019.

**On 11 February 2019 you asked:** *RE: Universal Credit:Written question - 204628 Department for Work and Pensions Universal Credit 204628*

*Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether trade unions and the Trade Union Congress have been consulted on the managed migration of universal credit.*

*A: The Department is working with a diverse group of around 80 stakeholder organisations, including Trade Union representation, to ensure the widest possible range of insights are played into the design of Universal Credit Managed Migration. This group will evolve over time as we work with different stakeholders at different stages in the process.*

*<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-20/204628/>*

*Please provide the names of the "80 stakeholder organisations" and a copy of the minutes or notes for the last stakeholder meeting concerning 'Universal Credit Managed Migration' and dates of Migration related meetings since 2018 and all planned future meetings, including location and details of how to become a 'stakeholder' and to attend future UC Migration meetings?*

**On 6 March 2019 you asked:** *Further to your reply, please provide the names of the "80 stakeholder organisations".*

### **DWP Response**

I confirm that the information you seek is held by the Department. However, it engages an exemption from disclosure because it relates to the formulation or development of government policy – section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act. This exemption protects the private space within which Ministers and their policy advisers can develop policies without the risk of premature disclosure.

As required by the Act, I have also assessed the public interest for and against disclosure. There is a public interest in greater transparency which makes government more accountable

to the electorate and increases trust. There is also a public interest in being able to assess the quality of advice being given to Ministers and subsequent decision making.

However, effective Government depends on good decision-making and this needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options without fear of premature disclosure. If this public interest cannot be protected there is a risk that decision-making will become poorer and will be recorded inadequately. There is also the risk that releasing information at this stage, which does not reflect the final approach being taken, could lead to misinterpretation and confusion.

On balance, DWP is satisfied that in this instance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Therefore, the information you seek will not be released.

Civil servants and, increasingly, external experts and stakeholders will be involved at various stages of the policy process. The issues under discussion at the last stakeholder meeting are so current it would have an impact on implementation policy formulation if this information was released. In effect, we are iterating the design of the pilot as it is developed and then run across the coming year, so we can make determinations about the final design for the full 'Managed Migration' phase from November 2020.

In terms of the stakeholders who have engaged with us so far, it would not be professional for us to name the stakeholders without seeking their permission first. We are mindful that our stakeholders should be able to operate freely and some have faced criticisms for working with the Department. We don't want to do anything which could harm our relationships with our stakeholders as we understand it's vitally important that we have their input into our design and implementation of the 'Managed Migration' process.

Our stakeholder engagement takes different forms and these are not accessible to the public, we have chosen a diverse cross section of organisations to help develop our policy as at the present time it is not practical to engage with everyone on mass as we don't have a formulated policy. 'Managed Migration' is still in development, all we have made public at the moment is that we will pilot an approach with up to 10,000 claimants from July 2019 in Harrogate and then once this is completed we will go back to Parliament with further regulations to undertake the process completing in 2023.

As outlined above we have not decided how the pilot will operate therefore releasing any minutes from meetings or other engagement activities where this information has been discussed is premature and could lead to confusion about what the pilot will cover. If this was to happen we would not be able to develop our policy on Migration properly and therefore wouldn't be able to go back to Parliament with regulations for how the main process will work.

We do however, plan to publish the findings from the pilot when it is finished to enable Parliament to consider when we seek their approval for the final stage of Universal Credit. We would expect, as part of this information, to set out some of the detail requested in your request.

However, whilst the stakeholder meetings are not open to the public, and while we are still developing our proposals, you would be welcome to come in separately to meet officials and share your thoughts on the co-design process.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me 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@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dpw.gsi.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 [https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact\\_us](https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745