

Mr Taylor
C/O request-61537-90280b9b@whatdotheyknow.com

DWP Central Freedom of
Information Team
e-mail: freedom-of-information-xxxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx

Our Ref: FOI IR 2314-143

DATE 20th April 2012

Dear Mr Taylor,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 2nd August 2011 by DWP Adelphi and forwarded for me to respond to in my role as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Medical Services Contracts Correspondence Team Internal Reviewing Officer.

You asked:-

Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

Please pass this on to the person who conducts Freedom of Information reviews.

I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Work and Pension's handling of my FOI request 'Suicide and attempted suicide due to Atos Medical Examination'.

It has come to my attention that the DWP and/or your contractor ATOS do have in their possession information relevant to my request.

It appears that despite your earlier response to my request and the review that you and/or your contractors did not have information relating to the number of Incapacity benefit claimants or people claiming employment and support allowance (ESA) that have committed suicide, or attempted to commit suicide, following notification of the requirement for them to attend an Atos Medical Examination and/or a work capability assessment (WCA) that you did indeed have relevant information.

Here is a list of vulnerable people who took their own lives related to having medical tests, awaiting medical test, withdrawal of benefits related to medical tests. etc.

Paul Willcoxson, aged 33
http://www.thisishampshire.net/news/9095159.Jobseeker_took_own_life/

Leanne Chambers, aged 30

<http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/north-east-news/evening-chronicle-news/2010/08/05/body-found-in-river-wear-is-leanne-chambers-72703-27003699/>

Paul Reekie, aged 48

<http://news.scotsman.com/arts/Author39s-suicide-39due-to-slash.6438473.jp>

Christelle Pardo, aged 32 and son

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/07/mother-suicide-welfare-state>

Elaine Christian, aged 57

<http://www.thisishullandeastriding.co.uk/Woman-drowned-drain-upset-health-check/story-12927176-detail/story.html>

David Groves, aged 56

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/top-stories/2011/05/22/stress-of-tory-benefits-tests-killed-our-dad-family-claims-115875-23147158/>

And finally the gentleman, whose relatives did not want him named, who was dismayed to find his benefit claim rejected, he had appealed against the decision, and won at tribunal. But shortly after that decision, he was called in for another assessment, and for a second time scored zero points and was told he did not qualify for the benefit. He began appealing against the decision again, but a few days before another tribunal date was set, he hanged himself. This tragic circumstance resulted in a serious incident review being carried out by the local jobcentre, which concluded: "We need to review the WCA and appeal process to take the needs of our vulnerable customers into account."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/feb/23/government-reform-disability-benefits>

I would like a categorical statement of whether or not the DWP and/or your contractor ATOS were aware of any/all of the people/incidents contained in the list above, which are clearly relevant to my information request. And if so an explanation of why I have been informed otherwise.

I also require an explanation of why I have continually not been supplied with the information I have lawfully requested, and am lawfully entitled to, under the FOI Act?

Again I state: The DWP and Atos must be paid a great deal of money to implement such misery and despair in fellow human beings, what price humanity?

A full history of my FOI request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address:

http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/suicide_and_attempted_suicide_du

Yours faithfully, Mr Taylor

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to apologise for the delay in responding to your request for an Internal review. It is clear that you have not received a response to your request within the statutory timescales.

I can confirm that the DWP Medical Services Contracts Correspondence Team are aware of the allegations to which you refer, following receipt of your request and requests of a similar nature from other requestors.

In the response from the DWP Central FOI Team dated 04/03/11 (ref 1921-384) you were advised that the Department does not hold statistics relating to suicide.

In the response from the DWP Central FOI Team dated 30/03/11 relating to your Internal Review request of the decision dated 04/03/11, you were advised that the original response was correct, in that the Department does not hold any information regarding the numbers of Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance customers that have committed suicide, or attempted to commit suicide, following notification of the requirement for them to attend an Atos Healthcare medical assessment and/or a work capability assessment (WCA).

Correspondence received in DWP is generally triaged by theme, for example 'WCA/Medical Assessment'. I can advise that DWP do not keep detailed statistics relating to the factors which lead to suicide.

Information relating to a suicide may be held on the individuals benefit file and/or retained by the team replying to correspondence notifying DWP of a suicide. To comply with your request, the Department would have to identify relevant cases, investigate the nature of the case specifically relating to the Atos medical assessment, to produce the required information.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing your request further.

If you remain dissatisfied you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF www.ico.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

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.gov.uk