



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of  
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[DWP Website](#)

Our Ref: FOI2020/54467

20 November 2020

Dear Francis Cassidy,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 21st September. You wrote:

“Become a Work Coach. Situational Judgement Test and Pre-Recorded interview  
[https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?  
q=cache:jrdeKdP5mgAJ:https://dwpjobs-workcoach-microsite.co.uk/application-  
process+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk](https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:jrdeKdP5mgAJ:https://dwpjobs-workcoach-microsite.co.uk/application-process+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk) [https://dwpjobs-workcoach-  
microsite.co.uk/application-process](https://dwpjobs-workcoach-microsite.co.uk/application-process)”

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, could you please email me with the following information:

Does your Work Coach Situational Judgement Test (SJT) and Pre-Recorded interview (PRi) include discussion of Claimant Commitments (CC) and Benefit Sanctions (BS)?

Extracts from the SJTs and PRi that include CCs and BS, by email to me.

A full digital copy of the SJT and PRi.

Whether the DWP uses any technical measures to prevent a Work Coach candidate copying and sharing the SJT and PRi, for their own personal domestic or wider use?”

## **DWP Response**

We can confirm that the Department holds some of the information you have requested.

In response to the first part of your request, It may be helpful if we explain the role of the Fol Act. The Act provides a legal right of access to recorded information held by a public authority such as the DWP, subject to certain exemptions that may apply. The Act does not oblige a public authority to create new information to answer questions; nor does it require a public authority to give advice, opinion or explanation, generate answers to questions, or create or obtain information it does not hold.

If you ask a question, rather than requesting recorded information, we will provide you with the recorded information that best answers the question. Once we have provided the

recorded information, we have met our obligations under the Act; interpreting the information provided is up to you.

Your request “Does your Work Coach Situational Judgement Test (SJT) and Pre-Recorded interview (PRi) include discussion of Claimant Commitments (CC) and Benefit Sanctions (BS)?” asks questions which you want us to respond to. This would need new information to be created.

As we do not hold any recorded information to answer your request we will therefore not be progressing your request any further.

However, you may find the following explanation useful. We have provided this outside our obligations under the FoI Act.

In DWP Work Coach adverts we do not explicitly refer to benefit conditionality as part of the recruitment process. At the interview stage, it would not be appropriate to include this, as we are looking to test candidates against a set of essential criteria and key skills for the role of the Work Coach.

At the offer stage, again, we do not cover any aspect of benefit conditionality. This would be covered during a work coaches Learning and Development journey and consolidation for the role once they have joined the Department.

In response to your second request, for the following:

“A full digital copy of the SJT and PRi.

Whether the DWP uses any technical measures to prevent a Work Coach candidate copying and sharing the SJT and PRi, for their own personal domestic or wider use?”

I can confirm that we hold the information requested, but we are withholding copies of the Situational Judgment test and the pre-recorded interviews from disclosure. In addition, although we hold information to the effect that this material is protected from being copied, we will not disclose any further details in relation to this.

This information is being withheld from release under the exemption at Section 36(2)(c) of the FoI Act which states;

- (2) Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person [in this context, a Minister of the Crown], disclosure of the information under this Act
  - (b) would, or would be likely to, inhibit –
    - (i) the free and frank provision of advice, or
    - (ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or
  - (c) would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

This exemption requires the public interest for and against disclosure to be assessed.

We recognise that the publication of the information requested could provide a greater understanding of how individual candidates for work coach posts are assessed and show the rigor of the selection process and assist the public in understanding the role of the work coach.

However, we have to balance this against the fact that the withheld information includes details of a sensitive nature, the publication of which would be likely to adversely affect the recruitment and selection process of work coaches, both during the current exercises and during any future exercises. Additionally, releasing information relating to technical measures taken to secure the information would defeat the intention behind exempting the information from release and we are therefore exempting this information for the same reason.

The release of this information would therefore be likely to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

There is a strong public interest in ensuring that our recruitment and selection processes are transparent and that individuals are able to assess the rigour of the questions asked during the application process and that the application process is fair and transparent.

However, we have to balance this against the fact that the withheld information includes details that may compromise the principles of fair and open competition in Civil Service recruitment by giving an unfair advantage to certain individuals, which could benefit them in the recruitment process.

There is a strong public interest in ensuring that the best candidate is recruited, It is also important that the process remains free from the potential for the results of selection to be influenced by individuals having access to additional information which could give an unfair advantage over other applicants.

The overriding public interest is in ensuring that the Civil Service principle of fair and open competition for posts is maintained. The public can only have confidence in the application of this principle if any and all compromising influences are excluded from the selection process.

Additionally, the public interest in the recruitment process achieving value for money excludes the disclosure of selection materials which, if disclosed widely, would need to be replaced at considerable expense in advance of any future exercises that may make use of the material.

On balance, we are satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

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@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.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 or 01625 545745