

To: R Sykes

DWP Business Management Team
Health & Disability Assessments (Operations)
DWP.MEDICALSERVICESCORRESPxxxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xxx.xx

26 February 2013

Dear Mr Sykes

Freedom of Information Act – Request for Information
Our Reference: FOI 0084

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 7 January 2013.

You asked:

Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

Claimants wanting recordings. DWP's distortion of fact.

Rounded to the nearest whole number, the report by Atos on the 2011 recording 'pilot' shows that of the 500 pre-selected claimants who were asked whether they wanted to have their WCA recorded, 69% said yes – of whom, the report alleges, 25 subsequently changed their mind, leaving 64% still wishing to have their WCA recorded at the last known point of contact with DWP/Atos during the 6 week trial period.

(ref. <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wca-recording-pilot-report.pdf> para. 3.1)

If or in so far as such a tiny and skewed sample can be taken to have any statistical significance at all, the 'pilot' thus showed a resounding majority in favour of having a recording of their WCA.

However, on the 14th December 2012, apparently referring to the exactly the same data, the DWP instructed Atos to put this statement on its website;-

"Less than half of those people offered a recording agreed to it and more than half were not happy for a recording to take place." (ref. "Atos Healthcare blog" 14 12 2012: http://blog.atoshealthcare.com/2012/12/the-audio-recording-of-work-capability-assessments/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=the-audio-recording-of-work-capability-assessments)

On the face of it, the website statement referred to above is not just a little inaccurate or somewhat misleading, but deliberately and materially mendacious.

Q1 If, in making that statement, the DWP is relying on data other than that referred to in Atos report on the pilot, please produce that data.

Q2. If the DWP is in fact referring to the same data, please explain a) how such mendacity came to be published and b) the steps the DWP is now taking to have such mendacity corrected.

Note 1: I am assuming Atos to be blameless in this, and only proceeding on the direct instructions of the DWP.

Note 2: I will cite any delay and/or evasion in responding to this FoI request as further illustration of the DWP's gross 'lack of transparency' as regards the rights of claimants to a recording of how they are treated, in connection with my outstanding request for the production of the DWP's legal advice confirming the illegality of its continuing obstructive behaviour.

In response to your questions there is no further data that DWP have drawn upon in relation to audio recordings. DWP do acknowledge, however, that the statement posted on the Atos blog on 14 December 2012 does not accurately reflect the findings of the assessment evaluation, published by DWP earlier in the year. DWP have contacted Atos to alert them to the error, and requested that it is corrected as soon as possible.

The published evaluation findings states on page 1 "Initially 68% of clients accepted the offer but as a result of clients who subsequently did not attend the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and those who withdrew on the day, this resulted in 46% of the 500 who were offered the opportunity of completing a recorded WCA" and also " 68% of customers agreed to the recording when contacted by telephone prior to the appointment although this reduced to 46% of the pilot sample due to clients deciding not to participate in the recording on the day and others failing to attend their appointment."

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

Yours sincerely

DWP Business Management Team
Health & Disability Assessments (Operations)

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 FoI Team, Caxton House, 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 www.ico.gov.uk