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

Our reference: IR664 Date: 8 January 2015

Dear R Davis,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) review request, which we received on 23 December 2014.

I have carried out an internal review and I am now in a position to respond to you.

You have asked us:

Once again, this is an inadequate reply that has ignored many of the questions posed. I now believe that you are being deliberately obtuse:

1 - This F&F catalogue doesn't appear to answer my actual question though in any event, as I am surmising that this "F&F catalogue is a general "ideas sharing resource" (or similar) where DWP staff can suggest changes/improvements to how things are done on either a local or national scale.

My specific question already posed, specifically asked whether local DWP staff operating in your Jobcentre network, have the immediate local scope to ignore published DWP policy (a significant amount of this DWP policy has been published by responding to this and many other FOI information requests which is all I reference in principle in my original enquiry) and operate singularly and independently of this published DWP policy?

If the answer to this specific question is "Yes" - please advise the process a single member of DWP staff, working in a local Jobcentre somewhere in the country, would need to go through, or the considerations they would need to make, or the authority that they would need to obtain and from whom in order to ignore published DWP policy and do something that is contrary to it on an individual basis? Please also provide all guidance that is issued either to your frontline staff, or any of their higher management structure that enables them to consider whether they can independently operate contrary to your published policy.

If the answer to this specific question is "No, they cannot ignore published DWP policy", please just say so in your response.

Since you appear to be deliberately avoiding the question posed, let me provide you with some additional generic scenarios for some specific responses:







- a) A Jobcentre Workcoach decides that they are unhappy with the effort that they perceive a Claimant is putting in to look for work they decide to "keep them busy" with a 4 week MWA placement. Can a Jobcentre Workcoach and/or Jobcentre office ignore published DWP policy and carry on this line of activity?
- b) A Jobcentre Workcoach misleads a Claimant by stating that a voluntary training course is actually mandatory at the time of offering it to the Claimant, pressurising them into accepting it when the Claimant doesn't actually have to. Can a Jobcentre Workcoach and/or Jobcentre office ignore published DWP policy and present this misrepresentation as "fact"?
- 2 Why haven't you answered the specific questions posed from the 5th December 2014?

Response

I am content that your original request was dealt with in accordance with DWP guidelines for FoI requests. To help clarify the information we sent you previously there is no immediate scope for Jobcentre staff to ignore DWP policy. There is scope via the Freedoms and Flexibilities framework for staff to raise suggestions for local improvements. We have previously provided you with a copy of the Freedoms and Flexibilities Framework and the associated catalogues. When an individual takes an idea through the framework, risks and business benefits must be identified and key stakeholders consulted. A decision is not made in isolation. Once the change has been agreed it must be delivered in a consistent approach and monitored and evaluated.

A review request we received from you on 5 December 2014. We sent you a response explaining the outcome of this review (reference IR613).

I hope this is helpful but if you have any queries about this letter please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

DWP Central Freedom of Information 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