

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Our Ref: VTR 3988

DATE: 26 October 2015

Dear Mr Millward,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 18 September 2015. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying. You asked:

*"I would refer you to the following article in which the coroner stated that the death of the claimant was as a direct result of a DWP decision that he was fit for work*

<https://glynismillward189.wordpress.com/2015/09/18/coroners-ground-breaking-verdict-suicide-was-triggered-by-fit-for-work-test/>

*DWP finally promised in March this year – at the conclusion of the legal case – that it would work with Maximus, the controversial US outsourcing giant that took over the WCA contract from Atos this year, to develop a pilot programme to test new ways of collecting evidence for ESA claimants with mental health conditions.*

*But so far – more than six months after that promise, and more than 18 months after the coroner's report was sent to DWP – there has been no sign of a pilot.*

*Can you provide me with the following information;*

- 1) Will the DWP be undertaking a pilot programme to test new ways of collecting evidence for ESA claimants with mental health conditions?*
- 2) If the answer to 1) is yes, when will the pilot take place?*
- 3) If the answer to 1) is yes, how will the pilot be conducted?*
- 4) If the answer to 1) is no, why not."*

DWP is developing a pilot to test new ways of collecting further evidence for ESA claimants with mental health conditions.

Accordingly I can confirm that the information you seek is held by the Department. However it engages an exemption from disclosure as 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 advisors 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 as placing an obligation on officials to provide reasoned explanations for decisions made will improve the quality of decisions and administration.

However, good 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.

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.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy Fol 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@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central Fol 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 [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)