

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Central Freedom of Information Team

freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our reference: VTR 3660 and IR545

Date: 6 October 2015

Dear Mr Roberts,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 31 August 2015 and subsequent internal review request. In your initial request you asked:

Reference: <https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/how-to-claim>

DWP clearly states that there is a "need" for a claimant claiming Jobseekers Allowance to bring "your email address" and "your Universal Jobmatch details" to the interview.

However, DWP has NO AUTHORITY WHATSOEVER to compel any claimant at any stage of any claim to provide details of either their private email address or details of a Universal Jobmatch account. Furthermore, provision of an email address or Universal Jobmatch detail is not a condition of receipt of any benefit, that is to say, a claimant cannot be denied a claim to benefit simply because he/she fails to provide an email address or details of a Universal Jobmatch account. It may help a claimant to provide such information but there is certainly no "need" as DWP puts it.

Quite clearly, the information published by DWP at <https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/how-to-claim> is misleading Jobseeker claimants. That being the case, please provide me with DWP's most recent information for new Jobseeker claimants that does not mislead the claimant into believing that a successful claim for Jobseekers Allowance is dependent on the claimant providing an email address or details of a Universal Jobmatch account at any stage of any claim for any benefit and which does not breach principles -

9 ("deceive or knowingly mislead Ministers, Parliament or others;") and

11 ("ignore inconvenient facts or relevant considerations when providing advice ...")

of the Civil Service Code.

In your internal review request you asked:

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 Pensions's handling of my FOI request

We have taken note of the information you provided from the link in your request and can see how some claimants may misinterpret this to mean that they must do all these things to enable them to claim Jobseeker's Allowance. This is not how we intended this to be read and we have therefore arranged for this messaging to be immediately removed from GOV.UK.

The revised information is now available to view on the GOV.UK website at the following internet address - <https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/how-to-claim>

I can assure you that all other operational guidance makes it clear to Work Coaches that claimants cannot and must not be required to do any of these things before they have made a claim to Jobseeker's Allowance. In addition to this it also clarifies that a claimant can only be required to do any of these things (after claiming Jobseeker's Allowance) if it is reasonable for them to do so.

A copy of this guidance is attached in Annex 1.

In relation to your request for an internal review; the reviewing officer upholds your complaint as the Department failed to respond to your request within 20 days and we apologise for the delay.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

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 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.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745