

To: B Jacobson
request-265626-1d92f510@whatdotheyknow.com

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our Ref: FOI 1723

13 May 2015

Dear B Jacobson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 26 April 2015.

You asked:

- '1) In the last year, what percentage of PIP applicants were sent to an assessment centre between 60 and 90 minutes of their home at the first appointment;*
- 2) In the same time, what percentage of PIP applicants were sent to an assessment centre within 30 -60 minutes of their home:*
- 3) In the same time, what percentage of PIP applicants were sent to an assessment centre reachable within 30 minutes or less to their home*
- 4)How many PIP applicants do not attend their assessment, and why;*
- 5) How many PIP applicants fail to gain PIP after they have not attended their assessment;*
- 6) Who is paying for the taxis many PIP applicants have to take to their appointments and how much this has so far cost in reimbursements;*
- 7) Since the '90 min' rule is obviously based on Google Map timings which assume applicants can use public transport, can walk 3 miles an hour, or have access to car, I would like to know the instructions the DWP gave ATOS for how the computer calculates appropriate distance to PIP appointments.'*

In response to questions 1-3, I can advise that a claimant would not be expected to travel more than 90 minutes single journey by public transport to an assessment centre. However information relating to how long a journey each claimant has travelled to each centre is not held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

In reply to question 4, 68,274 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applicants failed to turn up to their consultation appointment during the period April 2014 to March 2015.

With regard to the reason why they didn't turn up; I can confirm that we hold information falling within the description specified in your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your whole request would exceed the appropriate limit for central Government, set by regulations at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

Such information is not routinely collated and in order to locate, retrieve and extract it would entail the scrutiny of every claim to PIP.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not therefore obliged to comply with this part of your request and we will not be processing it further.

In response to question 5, while the Department believes that face-to-face consultations are an important part of the assessment process for most individuals, allowing an in-depth look at their circumstances, they are not appropriate in every case.

Where there is sufficient evidence on which to make an assessment, the individual will not be required to attend a face to face consultation; their entitlement will be assessed on a paper basis. However, these decisions will be taken on a case-by-case basis, as impairments can affect people in very different ways.

People claiming under the terminal illness provisions are not required to attend a face-to-face consultation.

If a claimant is unable to attend the appointment they should contact the Assessment Provider in advance to advise them that they are unable to attend the consultation; the Assessment Provider will offer them a further date for a consultation. They can only rearrange their face-to-face consultation once before the claim is referred back to the Department for a decision. The face-to-face consultation gives the claimant the opportunity to put across their own views of the impact of their impairment.

Should a PIP applicant fail to attend an arranged consultation appointment, no decision on entitlement will be made until the PIP assessment process is complete.

In answer to question 6, the payment of claimant expenses including taxi fares is the responsibility of the PIP Assessment Provider, the Department does not meet these costs, and therefore information relating to the cost of reimbursing expenses is not available within the Department. There is a contribution element for claimant travel built into the whole contract cost; however the Department has decided not to disclose this information in accordance with Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This exemption covers Commercial Interests.

Releasing details of the Assessment Providers underlying financial models, in particular details of claimant travel costs that they have factored into the contract would be likely to prejudice their commercial interests.

It would reveal to their competitors commercially sensitive financial aspects of their contract which would disadvantage Atos Healthcare and Capita's competitive position in the marketplace. This in turn would prejudice the ability of the Department to secure best value for the taxpayer when the contract is re-tendered. Release of this type of key financial information would also undermine the effectiveness of the Department's future dealings with Atos Healthcare, Capita or other service providers.

In applying this exemption the Department has balanced the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information and consider there is no overarching public interest argument in favour of releasing this information as the Department is unable to prejudice its commercial interests.

In reply to question 7, Paragraph 10.6 of the PIP Contract Service Specification states the following: *'The Contractor must ensure that Claimants do not have to travel for more than 90 minutes by public transport (single journey) for a Consultation. This limit is an absolute maximum and the Authority expects that only a small minority of Claimants will have to make a journey of this duration.'* It is for the AP to determine which software is used to determine the travel time.

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

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@dwp.gsi.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. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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