

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: 499

26 February 2013

Dear J Atkinson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 10 February 2013. You asked:

1- I understand there was a visit or visits to the local jobcentre in Pontypool by staff from the DWP fraud department starting at about the end of October 2012 and maybe more recently. Staff were seen and identified themselves as being from DWP fraud department. Was there a visit or visits and if so how many? and how many staff visited and on what dates?

2- What was the purpose of the DWP fraud department staff visit/s to Pontypool jobcentre? was there a specific purpose or tip off and if so what?

3- After the visit/s at the end of October I have it on good authority that some Pontypool jobcentre members of staff, including the manager, were not present the following day and were not seen again.

Is this true?

If so did they leave or were they sacked?

If sacked what were they specifically sacked for?

If you cannot say specifically can you confirm if any of those sacked were sacked due to the fraud staff visit?

4- Was the manager at that time sacked or did they leave?

5- Were any incidents of fraud found due to the visits/s? and if so what were they?

6- Is there any report or documentation on the fraud staff visit/s to Pontypool, if so please provide a copy?

7- I understand that at Pontypool some of these DWP fraud staff sat in on claimant appointments. Is this true? and if so what was the purpose/s of this?

8- I also understand that these DWP fraud staff were sitting in on claimants appointments without the prior knowledge or consent of those claimants . Is this true? if consent was requested prior to appointments how was this done and who did it?

9- Have there been any other visits to other local jobcentres in the South Wales areas over the last year or two. If so please detail and detail the main purpose for each visit to each site and what was the result.

10- if there are any other reports into fraud or corruption relating to or by jobcentres in the South Wales areas please detail what exists and provide a copy of each.

The Fraud Investigation Service (FIS), part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), is responsible for the investigation of fraud in benefit claims administered by DWP.

I can confirm that DWP Fraud staff did visit Pontypool Jobcentre during the time period in question and that information regarding the visit does exist. However, Section 30(1)(b) permits DWP to withhold the information requested as it relates to investigations which may lead to criminal proceedings by the authority. As DWP employees, it is not unusual for Fraud Investigation Service (FIS) staff to visit and/or maintain a regular presence in Jobcentre premises throughout Great Britain.

As DWP employees, FIS staff are permitted to sit in on interviews should there be a clear business need to do so. As indicated above, the information related to this requirement is covered by the Section 30 exemption. FIS staff are also permitted to view the records of clients should the requirements of their job dictate it is necessary.

It might be useful for you to note that the purpose of the DWP Fraud Investigation Service is to identify/investigate benefit fraud by customers. It is not their role to investigate cases of alleged fraud internal to DWP.

Staff within South East Wales District may also change their roles and / or office of employment for a number of reasons this can include developmental or promotional opportunities or the needs of the business.

Any staff moves following the visits of the Fraud Investigation Service were not as a result of those visits.

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

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, 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