



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of  
Information Team  
Caxton House  
6-12 Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

Mr Frank Zola,  
[Requester's Address/email]

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

[DWP Website](https://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Our Ref: FOI2020/40120

17 December 2020

Dear Mr Frank Zola,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 25 July 2020. You wrote:

*Please amend my request to:*

*RE: Serious Case Panel (SCP)*  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/dwp...>

*Please email me a copy of:*

*SCP Paper 1: Actions Update*

*SCP Paper 2: Stopping payments*

*SCP Paper 2: Customer Dissatisfaction*

*SCP Paper 3: Underpayments and paying safely*

*and your "guidance and policy around safeguarding and support for vulnerable customers" mentioned in Minutes of the Serious Case Panel 2 July 2020*

*Together with your "new safeguarding guidance" that includes "requiring frontline staff to support vulnerable claimants who fail to cooperate with jobcentre staff, by liaising with other agencies such as the NHS and police" and "case conference[s]" to "provide support, not removal of benefits"*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020...>

## **DWP Response**

The Department has completed its search for the information you have requested and we are able to confirm that we do hold the information you have requested. To ensure a wholesome response I have split the response into 2 sections.

## Section 1

You asked for copies of the Serious Case Panel Papers (*Actions Update*, *Stopping Payments*, *Customer Dissatisfaction* and *Underpayments and Paying Safely*). A copy of the information that you have requested which can be disclosed is attached as Annex A and Annex B respectively. This includes redacted copies of the *Actions Update* and *Stopping Payments*.

Please note that some of the information cannot be disclosed including the *Customer Dissatisfaction*, *Underpayments and Paying Safely* papers and sections of the *Actions Update* and *Stopping Payments* paper (as noted above).

The department engages an exemption from disclosure because 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 advisers can develop policies without the risk of premature disclosure.

As required by the Act, we 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. There is also a public interest in being able to assess the quality of advice being given to ministers and subsequent decision making.

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.

In applying this exemption, the department has balanced the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information and on balance we find that withholding the information from release outweighs our obligation to release.

## Section 2

Finally, you asked for a copy of the safeguarding guidance. Within Annex C I have attached a copy of the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) guidance/policy regarding ineffective visits that was referred to by the panel. Please note that this guidance also covers your request for information relating to news article that you have quoted within your request.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team  
Department for Work and Pensions

---

**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@dpw.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dpw.gov.uk) or by writing to: DWP Central Fol Team, Caxton House, 6-12 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.

Website: [ICO Contact Information](#) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745