

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Refs: VTR 2833(IR607), 2835(IR605),  
2836(IR604), 2837(IR608), 2838, 2839(IR610),  
2840(IR612), 2841(IR609), 2842(IR611), 2843(IR603),  
2865(IR606), 2866, 2867, 2868, 2869, 2870

06 August 2013

Dear I Cau,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information review requests which we received on 21 June 2012. I acknowledge that in this instance, the Department failed to respond within the 20 working days and we apologise for the delay. Furthermore, we apologise for not keeping you updated of the progress of your request.

In reviewing your request the reviewing officer upholds your complaint as the Department failed to respond to your request within 20 days.

Thank you for your 16 Freedom of Information requests received on 19 and 22 June 2013.

You asked for:-

1. The names and email addresses of several of our staff.
2. The generic email addresses of several of our teams.
3. The geographic (non 08xx) numbers of several of our teams.
4. The address, textphone number and fax number associated with the IB Migration number 0845 6008192.

**In response to point 1:** personal information about a third party is treated as exempt information under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This is because personal information is treated under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and can only be released to you where such disclosure would not breach that person's right to privacy.

Junior, non-public facing, staff (i.e. not Senior Civil Servants) legitimately expect that their names and work email addresses will not be made publicly available. To do so would breach their right to privacy. The Department for Work and Pensions will not therefore disclose personal information to you about members of staff in this instance.

**In response to point 2 and 3:** the information you requested is being withheld because it is exempt from disclosure under Section 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act. This

exemption protects information which, if released, would prejudice, or would be likely to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

This is because disclosure of the geographic numbers and generic team e-mail addresses that you seek would result in deterioration in the customer service we provide, as a consequence of unmanaged access to our telephone and e-mail network. Jobcentre Plus is a very large organisation with many Jobcentre Plus offices open to the public, which is backed up by a network of benefit processing and contact centres that deal with nearly 60 million calls each year. We cannot risk the serious compromise to our telephony strategy that disclosure of this information would cause.

This exemption requires the balancing of the public interest for and against disclosure. In coming to this decision we have considered the arguments in favour of, and against, disclosure.

There is a public interest in making the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses available to all our customers particularly where this increases customer choice and service. The full range of contact numbers available to DWP customers can be found on the Department's website here: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus>

However, it is in the public interest that the Department is able to take full advantage of the efficiencies and service improvements provided by new telephony technology. This includes the use of specific customer help lines with appropriate automatic call routing to the correct teams able to deal with specific enquiries in our benefit processing and contact centres. Any unmanaged access to the geographic telephone number you seek would cause disruption and a deterioration of customer service for the public in general. This would result in additional costs in dealing with unmanaged calls and Jobcentre Plus would also lose key call management information essential to the planning and allocation of staff resources.

It is also in the public interest that the Department is able to manage external e-mail traffic to e-mail addresses intended for internal use. Any unmanaged access to internal e-mail addresses would cause disruption and a deterioration of customer service for the public in general. This would result in additional costs in dealing with unmanaged e-mails.

In all the circumstances the Department is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption at Section 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

We are aware of the financial difficulties that calling our 0845 numbers can cause some people and so, where a customer asks us or raises concern over the cost of a call, we will offer to call them back. The Department also provides "Customer Access Phones" in a large number of its Jobcentre Plus offices where customers can make benefits claims or pursue job applications and the customer does not have to pay when using these facilities.

The Department also encourages its customers to use online facilities as an alternative to calling its 0800 and 0845 services, where appropriate.

The Department has 32 contact centres that deliver Jobcentre Plus telephony services. These are spread across the country and deal with a range of different services. Jobcentre Plus does

not use geographic telephone numbers because the technology used ensures that calls are directed to the next available advisor with the appropriate skills to answer the caller's enquiries, regardless of from where the call is made. This enabled us to answer almost 49 million calls in the operational year 2011/12, which would not have been possible if we did not work in this way.

The provision of a single geographic telephone number for each service line would also create a disparity between customers, as those who lived in the geographical dialling area concerned would pay a local rate and those outside would pay a national rate. For example, if the geographic number was 0117, those customers in Bristol would pay the cost of a local call and the rest of the country would pay a national call rate. I appreciate that this would not be the case for customers contacting us by mobile phone, but the majority of calls to DWP are still made from landlines.

The Department strives to achieve the right balance between meeting claimant's needs and using taxpayers' money effectively. 0845 calls are charged at variable rates determined by landline and mobile phone providers. The DWP does not receive any revenue through the use of 0800 and 0845 telephone numbers.

You may be interested to know that the Department is currently reviewing its telephony numbering strategy in conjunction with OFCOM, and this includes the use of 0845 telephone numbers.

**In response to point 4:** 0845 6008192 is a non geographic number which is managed virtually through our network of contact centres. It is not therefore tied to a physical address.

Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act permits DWP to direct you to information that is reasonably accessible to you. In order to find relevant contact details (including textphone numbers) to progress a query DWP has made them available here:

<http://los.direct.gov.uk/default.aspx> . Simply type in your full postcode and the details of contacts relevant to that postcode will be supplied. Contact details of DWP offices are also available in the business section of physical BT phone directories and also online: [http://www.thephonebook.bt.com/publisha.content/en/search/business\\_by\\_name/search.publis](http://www.thephonebook.bt.com/publisha.content/en/search/business_by_name/search.publis) ha .

The official address of DWP is: Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central 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, 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](http://www.ico.gov.uk)