

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our reference: VTR 4607

Date: 8 December 2015

Dear Carla Winks,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 27 October 2015. Please accept our apologies for the delay in our response. You asked:

"Please, kindly provide information/clarification on the following:

- 1) Are DWP Benefit Decision Makers part of its Fraud Investigation Team?*
- 2) Are the very persons (DWP Benefit Decision Makers) responsible for determining the outcome of a benefit application the ones who will initiate and carry out benefit fraud investigations or is referred to another process?*
- 3) Has the DWP received any complaints about its Benefit Decision Makers or Fraud Investigation Officers (complaints about how benefit claims or investigation was handled)?*
- 4) How many complaints in the last 3 years? How many complaints were investigated and found to be true? How were complaints were resolved with the complainant?*
- 5) How many of these complaints led to disciplinary action against Benefit Decision Makers or Fraud Investigation Officers? Any dismissals of such officers as a result?*
- 6) Have any Benefit Decision Makers or Fraud Investigation Officers been found to have engaged in misconduct or abuse of office in the last 3 years?*
- 7) If yes, how many?*
- 8) Is the DWP fully compliant with the Data Protection Act requirement of ensuring that employees accessing/processing personal data are 'reliable'.*
- 9) If a Benefit Decision Maker or Fraud Investigation Officer is found to have engaged in 'misconduct in public office', or have abused their office in respect of benefit claims or investigations, what steps would the DWP take to ensure that such persons are no longer in a position to access/process personal data of customers, and that to ensure that it is fully compliant with the Data Protection Act".*

DWP Response:

I can confirm that DWP does hold some of the information you have requested. For questions 5, 6 and 7 this information is not held centrally and to obtain this would incur disproportionate costs as it would require a clerical trawl through records held locally across the UK.

We estimate that the cost of complying with this request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing this part of your request further.

In order to comply with Section 16 of the FOI Act and to bring your request within the appropriate cost limit you may wish to limit your request. We suggest that you might do this by asking fewer questions or asking questions about a narrower geographical area. DWP will then be happy to consider your request afresh. However, we should advise that DWP cannot guarantee that any revised request will be within the cost limit.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me 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