

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2019/43456

Date: 31 December 2019

Dear K Mills,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 6 December 2019. You asked:

- 1. For phone claimants of Universal credit can you please confirm if all claimants have a "Journal" maintain by DWP Staff? or otherwise how notes and decision are kept on phone claims ?*
- 2. How can phone claimants access the records kept on their case?*
- 3. What policies and procedures the DWP follows to ensure*
 - a) that all telephone claimants are given a written breakdown of their UC Statement / award each month*
 - b) That all UC phone claimants are notified of decisions on their case and aware of how they can challenge those decisions if necessary*

DWP Response

It may be helpful if I explain the role of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act provides a right of access to recorded information held by a public authority like DWP (subject to certain exemptions). The Act does not oblige a public authority to create new information to answer questions; nor does it require a public authority to give advice, opinion or explanation in relation to issues/policies under question.

Anyone can request copies of information which a public authority already holds in a recorded form, but the Freedom of Information Act does not require the Department to generate answers to questions, or create or obtain information it does not hold.

If you ask a question, rather than requesting recorded information, we will provide you with the recorded information that best answers the question. Once we have provided the recorded information, we have met our obligations under the Act; interpreting the information provided is up to you.

In response to your queries:

- 1. For phone claimants of Universal credit can you please confirm if all claimants have a "Journal" maintain by DWP Staff? or otherwise how notes and decision are kept on phone claims?***

I can confirm, that all claimants have an online journal as default, as the Universal Credit service is accessible online, which is maintained by DWP staff. If claimants have opted to communicate with the Department via telephony only, they will be unable to login into their claim online, but are

able to contact us in person and via our Freephone number instead of using the journal to communicate with staff. Each telephone claim is tilted on the journal to ensure that the staff member is aware of the claimant's circumstances.

2. How can phone claimants access the records kept on their case?

Claimants can contact the Department via phone or in person to access their records. At each assessment period the claimant's Universal Credit payment statement is printed and sent to the claimant via the post.

3. What policies and procedures the DWP follows to ensure

- a) that all telephone claimants are given a written breakdown of their UC Statement / award each month*
- b) That all UC phone claimants are notified of decisions on their case and aware of how they can challenge those decisions if necessary*

Please see attached the 'Spotlight on Claims by Phone', which answers these queries.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central FOI 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@dwpgov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central FOI 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
Web: ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745