

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: VTR 5482

DATE: 12 December 2013

Dear Rebecca Watkins,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received 20 November 2013. You asked;

I am currently 3 weeks into a 13 week sanction on my jobseekers allowance and am currently receiving zero income. I asked about receiving hardship money but apparently am not classed as being vulnerable so i will have to wait a few more weeks before i can get any hardship payments.

Yet today when i went to sign on at the job center i was told i must sign an updated jobseekers agreement. On this jobseekers agreement it said amongst many other things "i will phone six employers a week" and "i will visit five employers a week" and "i will write to seven employers a week". I explained to my adviser that i am on a sanction and that i have nil income so how was i expected to pay for all of these things? My adviser replied "that's not my problem, you have to be available for work to be entitled to jobseekers allowance so sign this or i'll close your claim".

Again i explained, and even pleaded with this adviser that i'm in a desperate financial situation with no access to ANY money. I asked if they would pay my travel expenses six days a week if i came to the jobcentre to use their phones, i was told "no". I asked if i could claim upfront travel expenses to visit seven employers a week, i was told "no". I asked if they would give me seven second class stamps for me to write to employers every week, i was told "no". So i was basically forced to sign a contract that i can't possibly live up to.

So my question is, how on earth am i expected to fulfill my side of the contract and do everything it says on it when you have sanctioned me and i have absolutely zero income?

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 provide that a public authority must create new information to answer questions; nor does it provide that a public authority give advice, opinion or explanation in relation to issues/policies under question.

Therefore we will not be taking this request any further. However If you want a bespoke response to your correspondence outside of the Freedom of Information regime please send it to ministers@dwpgsi.gov.uk.

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.gov.uk