

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref:4107

14 December 2012

Dear Mr Woolford,

Thank you for the following Freedom of Information requests received on 17/10/2012, and your additional question of 19/10/2012, which ask the following questions:

I refer to the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Guidance provided by DWP in your FOI response to Paula Tuitt Ref: 3819 of 06/01/12. I also refer to the DWP FOI response to 'Kevin' Ref: 2836 of 27/07/12.

In the latter response, you mention that one of the Eligibility Criteria is:

" people who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for 6 months up until referral to the Work Programme, which is typically at 9? months for 18-24 year olds and 12 months for 25 year olds and over;"*

Therefore I make the following requests for information under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act:

*1) Please indicate if and where any reference exists within the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Guidance provided to Paul Tuitt, FOI Ref: 3819 of 06/01/12, where people claiming JSA shall become *ineligible* for initial issue of a card upon "referral to the Work Programme"*

2) Referring only to JSA claimants, please clarify the interpretation of Paragraph 2 of the guidance referred to above,

viz:

"2. The agreement has the following eligibility criteria:

** JSA 18 to 24 year old claimants from 6 to 9 months unemployed*

** JSA 25 year old and over from 6 to 12 months unemployed*

**IB/ESA/IS claimants actively engaged with an adviser in returning to employment."*

3) Please indicate why claimants of JSA of any age, who have been assigned to attend the Work Programme in the UK may not access the benefit of a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card to assist them in their travel requirements during their ongoing search for work and why should this be any different for claimants attending the Work Programme in Scotland?

4) With Reference to Paragraph 3 of the Memorandum of Understanding contained in Appendix 1 of the above guidance and to any relevant legislation, please disclose any reason why claimants of JSA who have been unemployed for more than 9 months (aged 18-24) or for more than 12 months (aged 25 or over) and who are actively seeking work with an employment advisor contracted out through the Work Programme, may not be eligible for the issue of a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card.

5) With Reference to Paragraph 13 of the Memorandum of Understanding contained in Appendix 1 of the above guidance, please disclose the total annual costs of operating the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount scheme to DWP.

6) With Reference to Paragraph 16 of the Memorandum of

Understanding contained in Appendix 1 of the above guidance, please disclose the internal guidance and details of the procedures and/or processes used to:

- identify claimants who would benefit from the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Photocard arrangement;*
- bring the offer of discounted fares to the attention of claimants;*
- issue the Photocard application forms to claimants who want to take advantage of the arrangement.*

7) What procedures do DWP use to audit and monitor the effectiveness of the above provisions?

8) With Reference to Paragraph 18 of the Memorandum of Understanding contained in Appendix 1 of the above guidance, please provide a copy of the "general guidance (attached at Annex C)" referred to, if this guidance is different from that already referred to.

Additional query received;

- 9. In particular I refer to page 129 of the staff guide (page 69/101 of the PDF) which describes the conditions of issue for the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card as follows:*
- "The Work Programme is a UK government employment system comprising a number of schemes to help different social groups of unemployed people who are claiming benefit back into work. The programme changed at the beginning of November 2011; the New Deal photocard was renamed the 'Jobcentre*

Plus Travel Discount Card'. New Deal photocards will not be valid for discounted travel after the end of December 2011...

... Applying for a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card

Those on the government's Work Programme are eligible for a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card If they are claiming:

- Jobseekers Allowance, are aged 18 to 24 and have been unemployed from 6 to 9 months*
- Jobseekers Allowance, are aged 25 and over and have been unemployed from 6 to 12 months*
- Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance/Income Support and are actively engaged with an adviser in returning to employment Applications for a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card must be made through Job Centre Plus."*

It would appear very clear from this guidance that the card is available for benefit claimants who are "on the work programme", who currently meet the benefit criteria given. There appears to be no requirement that eligibility for the card will cease if their period of unemployment continues beyond 9 or 12 months (as appropriate to age). The requirement is only that they "have been" (past tense) unemployed during this period.

Please therefore include in your response to the questions in my original FOI request your reasons for providing information to claimants which differs from the above official TFL guidance.

1. Paragraph 3 of the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Guidance states that:

Work Programme participants in England and Wales are not eligible for the card. Where customers are to be deferred from referral to the Work Programme final cards can be issued at the deferral point for up to three months.

2. Jobseekers Allowance claimants that are between 18 & 24 years old may be eligible to the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card for a period from being in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance for 6 months to a point of being unemployed for 9 months which is the point of referral to the Work Programme.

Jobseekers Allowance claimants that are aged over 25 years old may be eligible to the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card for a period from being in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance for 6 months to a point of being unemployed for 12 months which is the point of referral to the Work Programme.

3. In England & Wales JSA Claimants that are referred to the Work Programme are not eligible for the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card. The funding Work Programme providers receive from DWP allows providers to pay travel expenses to claimants to attend provision if appropriate. For commercial reasons the decision as to which group of claimants have entitlement to the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card has to be agreed by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) who wholly fund the 50% reduction. Collectively ATOC decided not to support Work Programme participants as their Work Programme providers were responsible for this support.

Turning to the difference in Scotland, a separate agreement was reached with First ScotRail to allow Work Programme participants to have access to the card for two periods during their participation.

4. Same as question 3.

5. The cost of the printed cards and literature amounts to £30,000 per annum. The administration of the scheme by Jobcentre Plus advisers and Finance officers is included in general operating costs of staff.

6. Paragraph 15 of the attached guidance states; (not para 16)

15. The Personal Adviser (PA) is responsible for ensuring that all eligible claimants are aware of the travel discount scheme in England, Wales and Scotland and must issue, where relevant the:

- *ATOC Fact Sheet (Appendix 4)*
- *Application Form*
- *Terms and Conditions (Appendix 5)*

7. What procedures do DWP use to audit and monitor the effectiveness of the above provisions?

DWP have limited audit and monitoring in place around the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card as it is impossible for us to track the usage and effectiveness of the card. We do however

monitor stock levels which identifies how many cards have been issued from stock and to ensure stock levels are adequate for continued supply. Where any suspected fraudulent usage or abuse is identified our own staff, ATOC, Rail Operators and British Transport Police are engaged to stop abuse. The card is subject to inspection by rail staff and can be taken off the individual if fraud is suspected. Records of such abuse are kept but fortunately there is little abuse of the card.

ATOC have an internal recording system of card usage and monitor usage accordingly. This information forms the basis of any negotiations we have around varying eligibility.

8. This reference is to the guidance already referred to, and it is an error that the reference to annex C has not been removed.

9. Thank you for your subsequent query relating to the Transport for London (TFL) Staff guide. Unfortunately this guidance is incorrect and the criteria for receiving a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card is as in the answer to question 2 above. I will be contacting TFL to ensure their guidance is amended as soon as possible. I can confirm that the public facing guidance on the Transport for London Website is correct.

The responses in this note have been provided with reference to the current guidance and policy in place as of 26/10/2012 to meet the FOI deadlines. Please note from 29/10/2012 there will be announcements in the media, ATOC website and changes to the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card eligibility.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me 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@dwpgsi.gov.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 www.ico.gov.uk