

To: N Alter
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DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI 2880

11 October 2016

Dear Mr Alter,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 5th August 2016.

You asked:

'I refer to your replies to Mark Whitehill (FOI 1646 dated 7 June 2016 and IR241 dated 14 July 2016) regarding travelling time and access to Work Capability Assessments.

In both replies, you state that the journey time to a WCA is calculated from door to door using a web based journey planner which factors in waiting times, transport changes etc.

Also, in your reply to Angela Johnson (FOI 556 dated 1 March 2016), you say that the journey time, taking into consideration traffic conditions and public transport availability is determined using a journey planning website and that the Department continually monitors the delivery of service and the quality of those services delivered by the Assessment Providers; this includes the 90 minute journey time.

However, in answer to some queries from me, the Centre for Health and Disability Assessments has stated in a letter dated 5 July 2016:

"Transport Direct journey planners were appended to some appointment letters under the contract with the previous provider, Atos Healthcare. They stopped being appended when the Department of Transport withdrew the software licences. The previous provider asked the DWP if an alternative journey planner was required and the DWP clarified that it was not. Therefore, from the 1st October 2014, Atos Healthcare ceased to include any journey planners as the DWP could not provide a journey planner alternative following the closure of Transport Direct.

"In terms of the current contract with Centre for Health and Disability Assessments, given that the DWP has not provided a journey planner solution to us as Assessment Providers, I am advised that the part of the contract which quoted that we would supply "personalised directions from the Claimant's home to the consultation location" has been removed in a Contract Variation."

If this is correct, the information provided to Mr Whitehill and Ms Johnson would seem to be inaccurate as the use of a web based journey planner appears to have ceased during 2014. According to CHDA, Atos Healthcare asked about an alternative journey planner and the DWP clarified that it was not required.

Please supply any information relating to this agreement between the Department and Atos Healthcare as well as to the fact that a journey planner solution has not been provided to the Centre for Health and Disability Assessments and that, as a consequence, they are not obliged

to provide specific (as opposed to generalised) travel information to claimants who are required to attend a face-to-face consultation.

Please also provide me with information concerning the contract variation referred to by CHDA in their letter and the date on which this came into effect.

Please also confirm that it is still a contractual requirement that the supplier, in this case CHDA, must ensure that claimants do not have to travel for more than 90 minutes by public transport for a face-to-face assessment and that the supplier (CHDA) should ensure that only a small minority of claimants should have to make a journey of the maximum 90 minutes duration.

If CHDA as the supplier no longer has access to a web based journey planner as they suggest, please provide any recorded information which states how they should ensure that the journey to a WCA in either direction does not exceed 90 minutes and that the maximum duration applies only to a small minority of claimants.

Also, provide any recorded information which describes how the Department monitors the delivery and quality of services delivered by assessment providers, as stated in your reply to Angela Johnson, if possible with particular reference to the 90 minute journey time rule.

I would also like to know the identity of the journey planning website referred to in your reply to Angela Johnson as this could potentially be of great use to members of the public. I am already aware of various journey planning websites but would like to know which specific website you had in mind when replying to Ms Johnson.

I also note that, in your reply to Mr Whitehill dated 14 July 2016, you suggest that no information is held in respect of a responsible person within the Department who would deal with the issue of referrals to assessment centres which are more than 90 minutes travelling time from a claimant's home. Please confirm that you do not hold any information relating to such an officer within the DWP. If this is so, then please let me know who is responsible for monitoring the delivery and quality of services delivered by assessment providers, in accordance with the statement given in your reply to Angela Johnson.'

In response, the Transport Direct software licence was withdrawn by the Department of Transport on 30th September 2014. As a result the Medical Services Agreement was amended, effective from 1st October 2014 and the following was issued to administrative staff within Atos Healthcare;

'Door to door public transport information will no longer be included with Appointment Letter notifications. However, information on how to reach MECs via public transport will still be included on the enclosed map.

The Transport Direct website is now no longer available; if you are required to obtain door to door journey details, it is recommended that the following websites are used instead:

Cycling

www.cyclestreets.net

Public transport

maps.google.co.uk

traveline.info

Road journeys

www.theaa.com/route-planner/index.jsp

maps.google.co.uk

www.rac.co.uk/route-planner/

The Health and Disability Assessments (HDAS) contract was awarded by DWP to Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA) from 1st March 2015. There is no reference in this contract regarding the issue of the provision of a journey planner and the requirement for CHDA to provide specific travel information.

Claimant postcodes are mapped by CHDA to their nearest Assessment Centre within the internal CHDA IT systems. Where a postcode is identified to be further than 90 minutes by public transport; remote locations for example; it is mapped in the system with the auto enable tick box left blank. This means that the system cannot automatically allocate an appointment, allowing for staff to contact the claimant to book an agreeable appointment or offer a home visit if required.

The Health and Disability Assessment Services (HDAS) Contract can be found using the following website address/link:

<http://data.gov.uk/data/contracts-finder-archive/contract/1644334/>

Section 10.6 of Schedule 2.1 (Service Requirements) provides information relating to the scheduling of assessments.

I have provided below an extract from the Virtual Contact Centre Procedural Guide:

‘There are two scenarios where a DV (domiciliary visit) can be accepted:

The distance required to travel – known as the 90 minute rule

Claimant has a medical condition that makes travel difficult

If the customer states that public transport is not available to them to attend the appointment, you will check whether this is the case on Google Maps and select public transport or Traveline.info (whilst the customer is on the telephone).’

DWP Health Services Directorate centrally manages all aspects of CHDA performance and service delivery. The current contractual agreement between the DWP and CHDA contains numerous performance targets including throughput, claimant service and assessment report quality. DWP has put in place strong contract management and operational monitoring regime which drives the Supplier to meet stringent quality standards.

Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act is applied on the basis that personal data about a third party, in this case names of DWP employees monitoring CHDA performance who are below the Senior Civil Service (SCS) Grade, and it is Departmental policy that the names of employees below SCS grades are not released as disclosure would breach data protection principles.

The Department does not hold information relating to a DWP officer who has responsibility for the issue of referrals made at Assessment Centres which are more than the 90 minutes from the claimants home.

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@dwp.gsi.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. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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