

Dear K Law

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 6 March 2012

You requested the following information:

(1) I wish to know what guidance is given to JobCentre Plus staff to enable them to identify claimants that should be placed on the Mandatory Work Activity and those claimants that should not be placed on it at all.

(2) Is the MWA voluntary (without sanctions) at any point? If so when?

Mandatory Work Activity is a supportive employment programme designed to help a small number of people refocus their jobsearch and gain valuable disciplines associated with employment, while also helping them move closer to the labour market.

The guidance given to Jobcentre Plus staff on the circumstances in which it might be appropriate to refer a claimant to Mandatory Work Activity, and the circumstances in which it would not be appropriate, is copied below:

Identifying claimants suitable for MWA

A JSA claimant potentially suitable for MWA is one identified through the work targeted interview process, supported by use of the Customer Assessment Tool, as lacking ,or failing to demonstrate, the focus and discipline that is necessary to effectively:

- seek out and pursue job opportunities
- secure and retain employment

MWA **may** be beneficial for a claimant that has recently received a labour market related sanction/disallowance, providing an opportunity for them to develop the skills, disciplines and behaviours sought by employers.

Given the policy intent of MWA, the following claimants must **not** be considered for referral to MWA:

- currently working (paid or voluntary)

- undertaking employment related study / training
- taking part in or recently completed* another employment measure (contracted or non-contracted) aimed at helping them move closer to the labour market

(* A claimant 'dropping-out' of an employment measure prematurely may, or may not, indicate a lack of focus and discipline on their part; it is for Advisory Teams to consider the merits of MWA referral on a case by case basis).

MWA must **not** be used as an alternative means of addressing conditionality doubts. If there are doubts about a claimant meeting JSA conditionality (i.e. availability and actively seeking) those doubts must be addressed appropriately.

If a lack of recent work experience is proving to be a barrier to finding work for an otherwise well-focused claimant, Advisory Teams must seek to address this through appropriate measures eg Work Together; MWA is **not** an appropriate measure in such cases.

The final decision on a claimant's suitability for MWA is one that **must** be made in consultation with an Advisory Team Manager eg a 'case conference' approach.

As regards your second question, for those claimants referred to Mandatory Work Activity, their participation becomes mandatory in all cases; at no point is MWA participation voluntary.

Further information about MWA, including the type of placements delivered, can be found in Provider Guidance which is published on the DWP internet site. This can be located by following the link below:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pg-part-p.pdf>

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, 5th Floor The Adelphi, 1-11, John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. 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