

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Our Ref: IR 85

DATE: 1 August 2017

Dear Lee Jefferson,

I am writing in response to your review request of 15 February 2017. An internal review has been carried out by someone of a senior grade to the person who dealt with your original request. I am now in a position to respond to you. In your review request you said:

*Please pass this on to the person who conducts Freedom of Information reviews.*

*I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Work and Pensions's handling of my FOI request 'Means-checking claimants'.*

*On 18th January 2017 you stated "Thank you for your Freedom of Information request. Fol Reference: 220 You can expect a reply by 7th February 2017 unless we need to come back to you to clarify your request or the balance of the public interest test needs to be considered."*

*It is now 15th February 2017 and we have received no reply on this.*

*We have published hundreds of requests under the Freedom of Information Act giving reference to documents and not a single authority has had a problem accessing them - except for DWP who have claimed they cannot access them (via freepdfhosting). We then provided a secondary link to the document this time hosted by Dropplr but you failed to respond within the time you stated whether you could open that document or not.*

*It is necessary for journalists and members of the public to give reference to documents held in a digital format in order to better convey the requests made. You are obligated to provide information conveying acceptable links to documents which can be read by viewers of whatdotheyknow.com and yourselves.*

*Again please provide information as to whether the links presented can be read - and if not provide alternate links to where we should place the digital documents in the interests of transparency.*

*A full history of my FOI request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/means\\_checking\\_claimants](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/means_checking_claimants)*

The review concluded that it took longer than expected to respond. I realise that the extra time taken will have been disappointing and frustrating for you, and I apologise for this. Your request for a review is therefore upheld.

As we stated in our reply of 23 February 2017 the Department can not access files stored in web hosting sites and if you want to include a document as part of your FOI request, please attach it to your email. We can open most mainstream document formats.

DWP has a security policy to reduce our exposure to threats and vulnerabilities. One mitigation is having technology to support security. Therefore in this instance it is likely the website used was not approved to be on our list of accessible sites. This principle applies to social media sites, online email services and also other information exchange sites.

I hope you can understand why, a department such as DWP has to take these sorts of steps, it is not about being obtrusive but to make sure we do not potentially access information that may or may not contain viruses and other harmful software that could put departmental and customer information at risk.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy Fol Team

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**Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act**

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](http://www.ico.gov.uk)