

DWP Policy Group Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2019/26083

8 August 2019

Dear Fred Jordan,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 12 July. You asked:

*As suggested, the terms of my request has now been narrowed and reads as follows:*

*In its evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee's oral inquiry into Universal Credit and Survival Sex, @ Q177 Neil Couling explains that the Department has prioritised its ability to take and maintain claims by telephone and makes mention of "new enhancements" to allow it to do so :*

*<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/work-and-pensions-committee/universal-credit-and-survival-sex/oral/103092.html>*

*Please provide details of those new enhancements as laid out in policy and guidance (including memos)*

**DWP Response:**

I confirm that we do hold the recorded information to respond to your request.

The Department regularly reviews the numbers of people working at key points during our operating hours to ensure we have the right number of people available to answer customer calls. Services and staff training are continually monitored and assessed, both in real time to meet any short term peaks in demand and also reviewed for longer term improvements to ensure the service continues to meet customer service expectation. For example, a recent improvement is the new routed telephony service for Universal Credit Full Service claims, in which claimants with an existing claim are connected directly to the person or team who are dealing with their case.

The Department is taking a range of steps to improve assistance and accessibility of our services. For example, the Department is currently reviewing all call scripts and instructions for DWP telephony agents to identify necessary improvements in the assistance given to claimants requesting communications in alternative formats, such as large print, braille and audio. We have also, over the past year, extended the provision of British Sign Language to deaf claimants calling the Department through the Video Relay Service, which connects them to telephony agents via a third party translator.

In reference to the second part of your question: *'Please provide details of those new enhancements as laid out in policy and guidance (including memos)'*

Annex 1 provides a spotlight on 'claims by phone'.

Annex 2 provides a memo sent to staff working on the pilot project since May 2018.

I wish to advise you that some of the information cannot be disclosed for the reasons below.

The Universal Credit service has been developed using Agent Led Processes (ALP's) which are low level business processes. They are embedded into the service and do not stand alone as separate guidance or instructions to staff.

However, in the interest of being helpful, I have included below a summary of the process for agents.

The purpose of the process is to set up a claimant account and complete the claim gather for claimants who are unable to make a claim online.

This process, typically completed in a pre-arranged appointment, after the need for a telephony claim has already been established includes the following steps:

1. Firstly an agent is required to check eligibility and create a claimant account (including considering whether a home visit is required and recording details around why a telephony claim is being completed).
2. Next the agent completes all steps in the claim gather with the claimant, including reading all details on each screen.
3. Next an Initial Evidence Interview is arranged for the claimant to attend their local Jobcentre to provide their identification documents plus complete any other verification required (including arranging this as a home visit if appropriate).
4. Finally the claim start date is confirmed by checking when the initial contact to make a telephony claim was made.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Policy Group Fol Team

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#### **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.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.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  
Web: [ico.org.uk/Global/contact\\_us](http://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745