

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2019/35621

23 October 2019

Dear Charlie Halsey,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 27 September. You asked:

When the Department's Hub Strategy was introduced in approx 2017; staff were expected to work from a designated office location. How did you apply the Public Sector Equality Duty, in relation to 'working from home' requests, particularly for parents, carers and staff with a disability that impacts their ability to travel to work? What information do you hold, what advice was sought and what legal advice, information was given regarding DWP's Public Sector Equality Duty towards their staff?

DWP Response:

In July 2017 the People and Locations - Building for our Future programme was implemented when DWP confirmed changes to their estate which brought colleagues together into fewer hubs and customer-facing offices.

To inform decision making the Department undertakes Equality Analysis to consider the likely or actual effects of our policies on people with protected characteristics. This approach helps our compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Equality Analysis was embedded within the Building for our Future programme.

Any member of staff who were required to change their work location as a consequence of the programme was required to have a one to one discussion with their line manager to discuss any potential impact on them. This confidential conversation gave individuals the opportunity to discuss their personal circumstances, such as caring needs, reasonable adjustments etc, and establish the options available to them. (Both staff and line managers had access to published information and guidance to support these conversations, which included information for those who indicated they were unable to move because of disabilities or health related conditions requiring reasonable adjustment, and those with caring responsibilities).

Line managers were required to make detailed notes of the main points discussed during this meeting. After the meeting, a One to One Form was completed by the Line Manager and an electronic copy sent to the individual for any further comment before it was forwarded to a central team. Any individuals who were unable or refused to move could request a review by

an Exceptions Panel. Individuals had a right to raise a grievance and, if necessary, and make representations against a Panel decision.

Information from the one to one discussions and Exceptions Panel were referenced in the overall Corporate Centre Equality Analysis. (Equality Analysis' and Exemption Panel discussion decisions are still held centrally).

The Senior Responsible Officer leading the programme received Government Legal Department Public Sector Equality Duty advice throughout the implementation of the programme.

In addition to access to regularly published information, staff may also have received information and advice via their Trade Union representative.

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@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 or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745