

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: 4737

07. October 2013

Dear Mr Powell ,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 3 October 2013. You asked for:-

*I have recently become aware of some ridiculous reasons as to why the DWP have sanctioned people. I'm going to present some of these below. For each case I would like to see a report showing what the DWP have done in each case to avoid the same thing happening in future.*

*Blunder 1:*

*Claimant's gran dies during the night. The next morning claimant's partner calls the job centre and asks if claimant can come in the following day instead. The centre agrees, and claimant signs in the next day.*

*Then claimant receives a letter stating that they failed to sign in and would be sanctioned if they didn't reply within seven days. Claimant replies, explaining the situation. The job centre gives claimant a six week sanction for not replying.*

*Source: <http://stupidsanctions.tumblr.com/>*

*Blunder 2:*

*Claimant gets a job interview. It's at the same time as their job centre appointment, so they reschedule the job centre. Claimant attends rearranged appointment and then receives a letter saying their benefits will be stopped because going to a job interview isn't a good enough reason to miss an appointment.*

*Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2347281/Unemployed-graduate-benefits-stopped-missing-job-centre-appointment-INTERVIEW.html>*

*Blunder 3:*

*Claimant signs in on time, has been to interviews and applied for work. Their job centre advisor suggests claimant makes a two-line change to their CV, which they do, but fail to give the updated CV to the job centre (claimant wasn't told they had to). Claimant was sanctioned for four weeks.*

*Source: <http://forums.moneysavingexpert.com/showthread.php?t=4638603>*

*Blunder 4:*

*Claimant works for 20 years and then misses a job centre appointment because they hadn't had the process clearly explained. They are sanctioned for 3 weeks.*

Source: <https://twitter.com/politicalhackuk/status/335082791144411136>

*Blunder 5:*

*Claimant gets a job that starts in two weeks time. Claimant doesn't look for work while they are waiting to start their job. Claimant is sanctioned.*

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/10/york-living-wage-spending-cuts-poverty-spreads>

*Blunder 6:*

*Claimant is forced to retire due to a heart condition, and they claim Employment and Support Allowance. During their assessment they have a heart attack. They are sanctioned for not completing their assessment.*

Source:

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column\\_839](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column_839)

*Blunder 7:*

*It's Christmas Day and claimant doesn't fill in their job search evidence form to show that they've looked for all the new jobs that are advertised on Christmas Day. They are sanctioned. Merry Christmas.*

Source: <https://twitter.com/PovertyAlliance/statuses/316531225198211072>

*Blunder 8:*

*Claimant is given a training appointment that clashes with their job centre appointment. The job centre is unwilling to rearrange its appointment and tells them to get a letter from the training organisation. The training organisation says it doesn't provide letters.*

Source:

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column\\_847](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column_847)

*Blunder 9:*

*Claimant applies for three jobs one week and three jobs the following Sunday and Monday. Because the job centre week starts on a Tuesday it treats this as applying for six jobs in one week and none the following week. Claimant is sanctioned for 13 weeks for failing to apply for three jobs each week.*

Source: <http://www.pontefractandcastlefordexpress.co.uk/news/local-news/benefit-cut-in-job-hunt-row-1-6038130>

*Blunder 10:*

*Claimant misses their job centre appointment due to the funeral of a close family relative. Claimant is sanctioned.*

Source:

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column\\_836](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column_836)

*Blunder 11:*

*Claimant has been unemployed for seven months and is forced onto a workfare scheme (you stated in my previous request Workfare didn't exist?) in a shop miles away, but can't afford to travel. Claimant offers to work in a nearer branch but is refused and gets sanctioned for not attending their placement.*

*Source:*

*[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column\\_836](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130319/debtext/130319-0002.htm#column_836)*

*Blunder 12:*

*Claimant has a job interview which overruns so they arrive at their job centre appointment 9 minutes late. They get sanctioned for a month.*

*Source: <http://www.consumeractiongroup.co.uk/forum/showthread.php?353511-Work-programme-is-unreal!>*

*Blunder 13:*

*Claimant can't afford to travel to look for work so they get sanctioned.*

*Source: <https://twitter.com/RTCAB/status/278572512114249728>*

*Blunder 14:*

*Claimant's job centre advisor suggests a job. When they go online to apply it says the job has "expired" so they don't (can't) apply. They are sanctioned for 13 weeks.*

*Source: <http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20130726102457AAnCm6B>*

*Blunder 15:*

*Claimant misses their job centre appointment as it clashes with their work programme interview. They get sanctioned.*

*Source: <https://twitter.com/RTCAB/status/278572512114249728>*

*Blunder 16:*

*Claimant volunteers in a youth club. The job centre thinks this is 'paid work' so they are sanctioned.*

*Source: <https://twitter.com/UkuleleKris/status/314033510748925952>*

*Blunder 17:*

*Claimant doesn't apply for an IT job as it requires skills they don't have. They get sanctioned.*

*Source: <http://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/made-a-new-claim-with-the-job-centre.307993/#post-12080631>*

*Blunder 18:*

*Claimant misses a second appointment because they are ill. Sanctioned.*

*Source: <https://twitter.com/thinktyler/status/300925274013442048>*

*Blunder 19:*

*Claimant is sanctioned for leaving an inappropriate A4e-run Launchpad course as they plan to continue their gardening diploma and volunteering. They ask to appeal the decision and are given the wrong forms.*

*Source: <http://adventuresinworkfare.blogspot.co.uk/>*

*Blunder 20:*

*Claimant gets a job interview but it's on the day of their nan's funeral. They attended three interviews the day before. They try to rearrange this one, but company reports them for failing to accept a job. Sanctioned.*

Source: <https://twitter.com/GayMentalist/status/314075259450060800>

*Blunder 21:*

*Claimant's job centre advisor tells them that emailing their CV to a company is not enough; they must physically hand over a paper copy too. They must also provide printouts of all emails to their advisor. They cannot afford this - they do not have their own printer - so are told to give the advisor access to their personal email account. They check with another advisor who tells them to do as the first advisor required. (This is illegal)*

Source: <http://forums.moneysavingexpert.com/showthread.php?t=4772115>

*Blunder 22:*

*Claimant applies for more jobs than required by their jobseeker's agreement, but forgets to state on the form that they've checked the local paper (which they've been instructed to do by a jobseeker's direction). They're sanctioned.*

Source: <https://twitter.com/steveplrose/status/335084004401352704>

*Blunder 23:*

*Claimant is on a workfare placement and their job centre appointment comes round. The job centre tells them to sign on then go to their placement – which they do. The placement reports them for being late and they get sanctioned for 3 months.*

Source: <http://alturl.com/bh3cc>

*Finally, quite a number of these blunders mention workfare yet a previous Fol response from you states workfare doesn't exist.*

[https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/workfare\\_where\\_is\\_the\\_time\\_to\\_lo](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/workfare_where_is_the_time_to_lo)

*Considering it doesn't exist there are plenty of references to it. Why are you saying Workfare doesn't exist?*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workfare\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workfare_in_the_United_Kingdom)

It may be helpful if I explain the role of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act provides a right of access to recorded information held by a public authority like DWP (subject to certain exemptions). The Act does not provide that a public authority must create new information to answer questions; nor does it provide that a public authority give advice, opinion or explanation in relation to issues/policies under question.

As the DWP cannot verify the details of the reported cases listed we are unable to ascertain whether the information exists or not. However, it is also worth explaining that information relating to an individual customer is exempt under Section 40 of the Fol Act and we would not provide such information.

In terms of your reference to 'workfare' the DWP have explained that we do not operate any scheme entitled 'workfare'. The link you have provided is a link to Wikipedia and therefore not

a DWP source of information. The DWP therefore does not hold any information relating to this request.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central 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@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.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.

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)