

Our Ref: Fol 3464

Date: 10 September 2018

To GMWRAG,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 12 August 2018. You asked:

'Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

On the 3rd of August 2018 the Twitter account for @NeilCouling stated "Nice end to the week. UC claimant on work experience in jobcentre tells whole of DWP, UC is better than JSA, feels more customer-friendly, giving people responsibility for their money means work less of a culture-shock, that change is inevitable but this one is welcome."

We asked Mr. Couling and 74 JCP accounts on Twitter which JCP this took place in. He repeatedly declined to answer and we have not received 1 response from JCP. On the 8th of August he stated that the above event did not take place at a JCP but was on social media. He stated that it "Wasn't from a jobcentre visit, which perhaps explains why jobcentres haven't responded".

This was then further clarified when asked where it actually took place. He stated "Sure, social media".

We have asked Mr. Couling which social media account. He has declined to offer any response. Consequently, GMWRAG would therefore like to ask DWP and Mr. Couling some specific questions.

- 1) Please direct us to the specific social media account and the specific item where said account addresses the "whole of DWP".*
- 2) Please explain why 74 JCP Twitter accounts failed to offer any response to the question?*

In answering both of the above please refer to

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants> and in particular the need to "check the accuracy and sensitivity of what you are posting before pressing submit".

Please also refer to <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code> and in particular the phrases

"honesty" is being truthful and open" and "You must: set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully, and correct any errors as soon as possible"

"deal with the public and their affairs fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively, to the best of your ability"

"You must not: deceive or knowingly mislead ministers, Parliament or others"

"You must: provide information and advice, including advice to ministers, on the basis of the evidence, and accurately present the options and facts"

DWP Response

1) Please direct us to the specific social media account and the specific item where said account addresses the “whole of DWP”.

This comment was feedback that was voluntarily provided to DWP colleagues by a claimant on work experience in a job centre.

The name of the person has been redacted as it falls under personal information. Personal information is treated as exempt information under section 40(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The full text of the feedback from the individual on 3 August 2018 is appended below:

“ [REDACTED] 03 August 2018 - 15:06

I'm doing work experience at the job centre and I'm on UC. In my opinion UC is much easier for customers than the old JSA system, it feels much more customer friendly. Also, giving the customers full responsibility for their money is less of a culture shock when we enter into full or even part time employment. I do understand that some of the staff are concerned about the possibility of a heavy workload due to the change of procedure, however, I think that once the change is implemented, it will make the whole process smoother for all. In every system change is inevitable, but I can tell you now, to me this is a very welcome one.

2) Please explain why 74 JCP Twitter accounts failed to offer any response to the question?

As Neil Couling clarified in his tweet of 3.56pm on 8 August 2018, the reason is that the comment in question wasn't made as a result of a jobcentre visit.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy 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@dpw.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central Fol 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
www.ico.gov.uk