

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: VTR 3929

DATE: 02 September 2013

Dear Mr Zola,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received 17 August 2013. You asked;

"The DWP is embarking on a job search regime of expecting people to spend 35 hours per week on work search activity. Do you hold any information on how the figure of [1] 35 hours was arrived at and any information concerning [2] a growth in benefit sanctions directly relating to the number of tasks being increased to meet the up to the 35 hour requirement, as opposed to helping secure employment?"

Do you hold any information of any [3] other country requiring work search to be the equivalent of a full time job, taking account of people claiming either in work or out of work social security welfare payments?

Apparently the 35 hours was arrived at because people in the UK had been spending 8 minutes per week day looking for work, whereas in Finland it was 3 minutes (15 mins per week); Sweden 6 (30 mins per week), Belgium 7 (35 mins per week), France 27 (2 hours - 25 mins per week).*

<http://fullfact.org/sites/fullfact.org/files/styles/large/public/Jobseekers%20graph.png>

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is not held by this Department. However, you may find the following information useful.

Claimants in the "all work-related requirements" group have a responsibility to find work. Claimants should treat this responsibility as their "job" and our intention is that claimants should aim to spend as many hours looking for work as we would expect them to spend in work.

Even so, we recognise that it may not always be possible for work search to be a full time task. So first, we are clear that other work-related activities will be taken into account. Work preparation activity, such as attending a training course, will effectively be offset against the

time a claimant is expected to spend looking for work. And we will also take into account any voluntary or community work the claimant is engaged in.

Work search expectations will differ for each claimant depending on their individual circumstances and job goals and advisers will tailor requirements for each claimant, which means that not all claimants will automatically be subject to the 35 hour work search requirement. Our regulations allow that where a claimant has done all that could reasonably be expected of them - for example they have applied for all suitable jobs and undertaken all the activities set out in their work search and work preparation plan - this may be considered sufficient even where the time taken was less than the hours expected.

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@dwpgsi.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 www.ico.gov.uk