



Department
for Work &
Pensions

DWP Central Freedom of
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[DWP Website](https://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Our Ref: IR2021/34580

10th August 2021

Dear Frank Zola,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) internal review request received on 30 April 2021 relating to FOI2021/25645. You wrote:

"I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Work and Pensions's handling of my FOI request 'Touchbase*' not published since 9 March 2020 -
*"Touchbase: DWP news about work, working age benefits, pensions".

I am wholly unconvinced by your reasons to deny disclosure of Touchbase editions since you ceased publishing them online, there is a significant Public Interest to know how the DWP has communicated change and details of claimants rights and entitlements during the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, please review your decision not to disclose the information requested."

DWP Response

When you wrote to us on 30 April asking for us to not consider your additional request that was part of your internal review request, we mistakenly closed the whole Internal Review request down as we thought you did not want an Internal Review.

We have now reopened your Internal Review request and in response to that, we can confirm that the handling of your original request and response has now been appropriately reviewed by someone unconnected with the handling of your original request.

As a result of this review we are satisfied that the original response was handled properly and that the outcome of your original request was correct. Your complaint is therefore not upheld and the reason for this is as follows.

That the application of Section 14(1) and Section 14(2) of the Fol Act was done so correctly and we still find that the information you have asked for falls within these exemptions.

We still feel that Section 14(1) of the Fol Act applies to the first part of your request where you have asked for all email issues of Touchbase magazine since 9 March 2020 when we stopped publishing them on GOV.UK.

As was explained in our response to your previous request FOI2021/14089; in March 2020 at

the start of the coronavirus outbreak, Touchbase was issued weekly by email with information about the government's response to the pandemic. Guidance was changing rapidly and the information in Touchbase was rapidly becoming out of date. Since March 2020 we have issued in excess of fifty editions of 'Touchbase', the information contained with many of those issue is now out of date and to prepare those emails for publication in response to this request would place a considerable burden on DWP.

The non-specific nature and broad approach of your request in asking for all editions of Touchbase when we have already explained that these were being issued weekly to keep pace with the changes to government advice suggests to us that this is just a fishing exercise which will only generate further requests for information.

On this basis, the Department has decided that Section 14(1) of the Fol Act applies on this occasion and as such we are not obliged to comply with a request as it is deemed vexatious.

For part two of your request where you ask about access to an archive

Again as stated in the previous response we feel that Section 14(2) of the Fol Act, still applies we are not obliged to comply with this repeat request.

DWP is not obliged to comply with a repeat request for information where it has previously responded to a same or similar request that seeks identical or substantially similar information unless a reasonable interval has passed between the original and new request being dealt with.

In this case, the Department has already responded to a similar request from you, namely; FOI2021/14089 on 8 March 2021 and so, under section 14(2) of the Fol Act will not be responding further.

We would like to point out the request is treated as vexatious not the person making it. An individual can make multiple requests and each will be considered on its own merits.

As mentioned previously a request may be treated as vexatious, if it is aimed at disrupting the work of an authority and if the amount of time required to review and prepare the information for disclosure would impose a grossly oppressive burden on the organisation. On balance we feel that your original request still falls within this area.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team
Department for Work and Pensions

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

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.

Website: [ICO Contact Information](#) or telephone 0303 123 1113.