

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: Fol 3082

DATE: 21 September 2016

Dear A. Clerk,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 23 August 2016. You asked:

What are the earnings thresholds for Universal Credit (UC) from January 2016?

As applicable to Single people, couples and families. What date has been set for the earnings thresholds to be fully implemented?

For anyone with full in-work UC conditions, earning say £400 a month and getting around £500 UC as a single person, what sanctions can or do apply to them if they did not make any attempt to

[a] increase working hours?

[b] increase rate of pay?

[c] find an additional job/work? or

[d] move to a different job with higher earnings?

Previously you have stated that the earning threshold has been set at £330 a month for a single person and £525 a month for a couple (based on gross taxable pay). What is it now and who decides what the threshold is or can be? Please send me the regulations or memos or orders that stipulate what the earning threshold is, with the names of who issued them and details of what legal basis they have.

It may help if I explain that the Freedom of Information Act (Fol) provides people with a right of access to recorded data held by public authorities such as DWP. The Act does not extend to requests to create information, answer questions or provide comments based on individual circumstances. Your request can be in the form of a question, but DWP does not have to answer if this would mean creating information that is not already held in a recorded form.

Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act allows us to direct you to information which can be considered reasonably accessible to you. Information on Universal Credit and entitlement is already available in the public domain, but I am providing the following summary in the interests of customer service.

Regulation 99(6) of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 allows the Department for Work and Pensions to explore and test options to help claimants increase their earnings. This applies to claimants who have earnings over the AET but below the conditionality earnings threshold as described in Regulation 90 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013).

Piloting regulations - the Universal Credit (Work-Related Requirements) In Work Pilot Scheme and Amendment Regulations 2015 - support the delivery of trials within Universal Credit. These regulations can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/89/contents/made>.

The Administrative Earnings Threshold is currently £338 for single people and £541 for couples. Regulation 3 of the Universal Credit (Work-Related Requirements) In Work Pilot Scheme and Amendment Regulations 2015 amends Regulation 99(6) of the Universal Credit 2013 Regulations and formally links the Administrative Earnings Threshold to current JSA rates.

Universal Credit provides the opportunity for the first time to support those who are earning, but could be earning more, to progress in work. We are still in the first stages of learning about what works to support people who are in work to progress their earnings, and are running a series of trials to provide the necessary evidence. Central to this is a Randomised Control Trial, delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

Individuals participating in the trial will agree reasonable mandatory activity to support their progression, which is tailored to their individual circumstances. Sanctions may be applied where a claimant has failed to meet a reasonable requirement with no good reason, and would be applied in the same way as elsewhere in Universal Credit.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me 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@dwp.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