



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk

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

Our Ref: FOI2020/71493

Date: 17 December 2020

Dear John Slater,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request received on 18th November 2020. You wrote:

"On 06 September 2018 I made the following request for information:

"Since 01 January 2016 has the UC full service IT system been the subject of any assessments, health checks or tests by any external organisations (excluding the IPA)? If so please disclose any reports produced by those organisations as a result."

The DWP refused to disclose the reports and the Commissioner subsequently agreed that section 31(1)(a) was engaged. I did not challenge the Commissioner's decision notice as I trusted her judgement.

However, given that more than 2 years has elapsed I see no reason why the reports cannot be disclosed as any threats documented in the reports must have been resolved. Therefore:

RFI1: Between 01 January 2016 and 18 September 2018 the UC full service IT system was the subject of assessments, health checks or tests by external organisations (excluding the IPA)? Please disclose any reports produced by those organisations as a result.

RFI2: If the IPA has reviewed the UC programme between 01 April 2019 and 30 June 2020 it will have produced reports (PARs, Gateway, Health Checks etc). Therefore, please disclose these reports. As the Department will refuse to disclose these reports please make sure that it lists the title of the reports it is refusing to disclose in its section 17 refusal.

Please note that the scope of RFI1 and RFI2 excludes all personal information that is exempt under section 40."

DWP Response

In relation to part one of your request –

'RFI1: Between 01 January 2016 and 18 September 2018 the UC full service IT system was the subject of assessments, health checks or tests by external organisations (excluding the IPA)? Please disclose any reports produced by those organisations as a result.'

I can confirm that the Department holds the information you have requested. However, the information is exempt under Section 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as release would be likely to prejudice prevention of crime.

Withholding the information is intended to prevent criminal attacks targeted at the IT system being facilitated by the material contained in the reports. Section 31(1)(a) is a qualified exemption, and as such, a public interest test needs to be applied.

Public interest test

Publically releasing information in the reports would increase government transparency and demonstrate to the public that the UC Programme regularly commissions external security audits and reviews in order to ensure protection of the security of the UC IT system.

However, release of reports of this type would provide information about technology or process vulnerabilities or weaknesses which would enable an attacker to exploit and compromise the service. Release of the information would be likely to result in a range of issues from significant personal data losses, resulting in considerable claimant distress through to financial hardship and possible identity theft; to increased departmental web enabled fraud leading to increased monetary losses. In addition, wide ranging and longer term compromises or denial of service would be likely to result in a degradation in confidence in the welfare system.

On balance, the Department is satisfied that in this instance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

With reference to the second part –

'RFI2: If the IPA has reviewed the UC programme between 01 April 2019 and 30 June 2020 it will have produced reports (PARs, Gateway, Health Checks etc). Therefore, please disclose these reports. As the Department will refuse to disclose these reports please make sure that it lists the title of the reports it is refusing to disclose in its section 17 refusal.'

I can confirm that the information requested is not held. This is because the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) has not reviewed the UC programme between 01 April 2019 and 30 June 2020 and has therefore not produced reports (PARs, Gateway, Health Checks etc).

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 happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk or by writing to: DWP Central FOI Team, Caxton House, 6-12 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.

Website: [ICO Contact Information](#) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745

