

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: VTR477

04/03/2016

Dear Mr Slater,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 09/02/2016. You asked:

There has been a noticeable increase in the DWP citing Section 8(1)(b) of the FOI Act and refusing to process requests for information any further. This includes a significant number where, on the face of it, the name of the requester appears to be credible. Please supply the following information: 1. All guidance used by the DWP to assess/decide if a pseudonym is being used by a requester. 2. Data sources used by the DWP to assess the name of requesters to check they are 'real'.

In respect of Question 1, I can confirm that DWP holds no guidance on the use of pseudonym as we access and use the Information Commissioners guidance when needed.

In respect of Question 2, DWP has no policy to check that names are real, and therefore no data sources listed for this purpose.

To be helpful though, I assume that you are referencing the number of S8 refusals on whatdotheyknow.com (WDTK). Obviously most of these apply to 1 person and new accounts created since that refusal which have duplicated requests.

In respect of that case, information is already available on WDTK which shows that after many years of answering multiple requests information came to light that questioned the validity of the name used. This was considered enough to raise reasonable doubt rather than simply suspicion and so a section 8 refusal was supplied. This refusal has been extended to new accounts registered after that refusal duplicating those requests refused.

Beyond that, the number of refusals simply reflect the recent increase in users of WDTK registering and making requests under names which do not meet section 8 requirements (for example in only supplying a first or last name) as set out in the Information Commissioners guidance. So far this year amounts to 28 requests (22 via WDTK) excluding those referred to in the paragraph above compared to 9 made in the 4th quarter of 2015.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central 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@dwpgsi.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.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745