

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: Fol 4281

DATE: 6 January 2017

Dear Mr Toy

Thank you for your FOI request of 11 November. You asked:

Does the DWP deny that welfare reform is responsible, at least to some degree, for the exponential increase in the use of food banks by British citizens since 2010 to the present day?

I am not asking for a detailed explanation in respect to every driver responsible for the explosion in food bank usage in the United Kingdom, only whether the DWP denies that welfare reform itself plays a role in compelling British citizens to resort to food banks in ever greater numbers.

Welfare reform either plays a part in respect to this phenomenon or it doesn't.

If the department doesn't deny that a causal relationship exists between welfare reform and food bank usage the only possible conclusion is that it affirms it. If the department doesn't know whether the welfare reforms it has implemented exacerbate food bank usage or not the only possible conclusion is that the DWP itself is irresponsible and incompetent.

Concerning a matter as serious as food poverty and starvation in 21st century Britain, a straightforward and candid answer would be appreciated.

The recent report by Oxford University does not provide evidence of a causal link between sanctions rates and the use of food banks.

Reasons for food bank use are complex and it is misleading to link them to any one issue.

We continue to spend £90bn on working age benefits to ensure a strong safety net, providing hardship payments, benefit advances and budgeting loans for those who need them most.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy 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@dpw.gsi.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