

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2020/46881

8 September 2020

Dear Mark Abraham,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 21 August. You asked:

What available information/advice/guidance is given to DWP staff in recognising and applying 'common sense' and 'doing the right thing' to their duties please?

I'm looking for guidance or advice given at all levels, from say, Case Managers, all the way up to including senior management. If the scope needs limiting, I'd suggest around Universal Credit, and interpreting regulations around it, and in Mandatory Reconsiderations.

DWP Response:

I confirm we hold information relating to your request.

Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act allows us to direct you to information which is already reasonably accessible to you. Some of the information you requested is available at the locations detailed below.

The Department provides copies of Universal Credit guidance to the House of Commons' Library, reflecting our commitment to ongoing publication of these documents. You can find the latest set by following this link:

https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/business-papers/commons/deposited-papers/?fd=2019-10-21&td=2019-10-21&search_term=Department+for+Work+and+Pensions&itemId=119004#toggle-980

Additionally, you may find the 'Advice for decision making: staff guide' on the GOV.UK website helpful as the incorporates Universal Credit. This can be located at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-for-decision-making-staff-guide>

Other relevant guidance documents are attached.

With regard to training material, I can provide the following information.

While 'Common sense' and 'doing the right thing' are not phrases that we use, UC Decision Making (UCDM) learning does include the following themes:

- Natural justice
- Balance of probability
- The claimant has a right to be believed unless there is evidence that it is improbable or contradictory

The UCDM learning also refers learners to complex need guidance to support the learning they receive.

When we teach Work Coaches and Case Managers about sanctions we include the following;

- applying the principles of fairness, compassion, respect and dignity
- making fair sanction decisions that comply with legislation
- considering all the facts and claimant's circumstances
- taking in account the claimant's age, vulnerability, health conditions, living situation, any caring responsibilities
- looking for any signs of complex needs and the impact to their physical, mental and emotional well being
- considering their ability to cope in a situation where they may already be under considerable stress due to being unemployed
- considering how this may affect their ability to meet their work-related requirements.

In addition to the above, learners are also prompted to think about how claimants might feel when they share information and decisions with them.

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@dwp.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
Web: ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745