

23 March 2012

Dear Mr. Jackson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 2nd February 2012. You asked:

Freedom of Information request - Work Experience

Dear Department for Work and Pensions,

On the 29th Feb 2012 Chris Grayling revealed that the voluntary Work Experience scheme is being relaxed in terms of sanctions. See <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2012/feb-2012/dwp020-12.shtml>

There was also news reports stating that the jobseeker may:

- * refuse or fail to attend first day
- * leave in the first week
- * leave in subsequent weeks

...without getting a benefit sanction UNLESS they lose their place due to gross misconduct.

Please answer the following questions:-

- a) Is the above statement (with the list items) correct? And if not so please clarify.
- b) What changes in law or guidance will ensure that jobcentre advisers and decision makers do not sanction those for leaving the placement before its expected to have ended (i.e. 2-8 weeks after it started)?
- c) What constitutes "Gross Misconduct"?
- d) Will the letters to the scheme change or kept "as is" due to possibility for a sanction for gross misconduct?
- e) Please provide a copy of any and every memo, press release, notice, bill, draft legislation and statutory instrument involved in the relaxing of rules for Work Experience.

The information you have requested in point (e) is not all held centrally. You have a copy of the only press release and there are currently no legislative changes. We estimate that the cost of complying with the rest of the request to provide any and every memo would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

Because part of your request falls to disproportionate cost we are not obliged Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act to consider the rest of your request for information. However, in the interests of customer service we are happy to provide answers to the rest of your requests:

Question (a)

Yes the Minister's statement (including the listed items) is correct.

Question (b)

We are currently working with lawyers and guidance is being updated to reflect the new changes in policy.

Question (c)

'Gross Misconduct' might include, for example, theft, racial abuse and violence.

Question (d)

Letters to participants will be amended in light of the recent announcement.

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.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central Fol Team, 5th Floor The Adelphi, 1-11, John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. 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